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THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

VOL. I.

'Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits—and then
Remould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!'

OMAR KHAYYAM

THE

FRENCH REVOLUTION

BY

JUSTIN H. McCARTHY, M.P.

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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TO MY FATHER

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

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OF

THE FIRST VOLUME

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Erratum

Page 29, line 20, *for* Destruo *read* Destrue

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

CHAPTER I

WHENCE?

LORD BEACONSFIELD, to whom life was all paradox, was never more delightfully paradoxical than when he declared that there were only two events in history—the Siege of Troy and the French Revolution. Like most of Lord Beaconsfield's brilliant firework phrases, the shining phantasy was more than half a truth. In the antique world—that antique world which, in spite of Mr. Freeman, does seem to be set apart from us by so definite and so insuperable a barrier—no event is more conspicuous than the story of the armament of Hellenic chieftains and Princes Orgulous against a little town in Asia Minor. In comparison with that mythical or semi-mythical event the conquests of Alexander, the career of Cæsar, the very fall of Rome herself, appear to dwindle into insignificance. In much the same way the French Revolution seems to dwarf all modern history; its heroes good or bad, its shining

St. Michaels and Lucifers Stars of the Morning, dwarf other heroes of other times to the proportions of pigmies. The French Revolution shares with the Siege of Troy its legendary attributes; shares with it too the perennial charm which makes men turn like lovers to its story again and again with unabated interest and unflagging zeal. Even the Homeric Scholiasts are not more enamoured of their theme than the historians who once embark on the perilous seas of French revolutionary history.

The heroic muse, suddenly called upon, in the Homeric formula, to sing of the French Revolution, might very well be puzzled where to make a beginning. It is really hard to decide exactly how far back we must hark to get to its legitimate starting-point. Are we to seek the initial impetus in the reign of Louis XV., or in the debaucheries of the Regency, or in the spacious despotism of Louis XIV., or yet farther back in the feuds of the Fronde and Mazarin, when a queen and a dauphin fled from Paris and a Paris mob? It is difficult to draw the hard and fast line, and the conscientious historian reaching backwards into history might find himself well among the early Capets, among the Merovingians, among the enemies of Cæsar, and still come on traces of the causes of the French Revolution. To be plain, the history of the French Revolution is scarcely comprehensible without a knowledge of the history of France; the history of France in its turn is scarcely comprehensible without

that of Rome, of Greece, and so backwards to the dawn of deeds. But a history of the world would be a lengthy preface for a chronicle of the French Revolution, and each chronicler must choose his own starting-point and toe his own line.

Still, the great difficulty in approaching the study of the French Revolution is to choose this starting-point. In one sense, in what may be called a dramatic sense, it may be conveniently assumed that the revolutionary egg was hatching while Louis the Well-beloved was cynically speculating on deluges ; the shell chipped and the cock began to crow when Louis XVI. began to try to reign. Yet again, the Revolution may be said to have begun with the self-creation of the National Assembly ; in another regard, the origin of the Revolution must be placed much farther back. Indeed, it is curious to find how far back we shall have to travel when once we leave the arbitrary line which divides the Old Order from the New. The Revolution began, one authority may argue, with the struggle of the Parliaments against Louis XV. It began, according to another, with the great movement of literature and thought which evolved the Encyclopædia and the Social Contract. Another will anticipate the scepticism of the eighteenth century by the scepticism of Montaigne, of Bayle, and of Fontenelle, will see in the Encyclopædia and the Social Contract not causes but effects, and will leap back lightly to Althusen, and Hobbes, and Locke,

and Genevese deism, not without an eye, it may be, to the thoughts and theories of far Hellenic philosophies. Another dates its immediate conception from the moment when Benjamin Franklin amazed the ladies of Versailles with the sombre habit of the Pennsylvanian Quaker, and when Lafayette lent his bright sword to the service of Mr. Washington and the young Republic. Another may insist upon a summary of the various forces, accidents, deliberate lines of policy, which, from the breaking up of the great fiefs down to the death of Louis XIV., had prepared the distractions of the monarchy under Louis's descendants, or may ask, more moderately, for a chronicle of the strife of ecclesiastical factions and the battles between the judiciary and the crown. It is the old philosophic business of causation over again. Trace any single event back step by step, and you will find the event of yesterday intimately and indissolubly connected with the creation of the world. Any starting-point for any historical event whatever must be more or less arbitrary. It may be convenient to take the year 1789 as the Initial Year of Revolution; that is the year in which the Revolution, however distant its remote causes, actually did begin to be. But it is surely necessary to give such a sketch of the preceding history and condition of France as may be essential to the true understanding of the story.

For it seems impossible to appreciate the events of the French Revolution without a clear under-

standing of many of the events which immediately preceded it, and most of the social conditions which made revolution not only possible or probable, but imperative and inevitable. The volcanic character of the French Revolution is made the more impressive by contrast with the traditional conservatism of the Old Order which preceded it; just as the ruin caused by a landslip, an earthquake, or a tidal wave is most impressive to one whose eyes have long been familiar with the smiling fields, the stately town, the teeming coast which have been suddenly laid desolate. Moreover, the genius of Revolution did not leap, fully armed, out of the Jupiter brain of the National Assembly. As the meteorologist can detect the warnings of the coming storm, so the student of history can note, for much more than a generation before the summons to the States-General, the slow, steady growth of the Revolutionary Idea. That the Revolution should have taken France by surprise is in itself surprising. Revolution was in the air for long enough, had been thought of, talked of, written about, breathed abroad in a hundred ways. It was very much as if the dwellers on the slopes of Vesuvius, noting the sullen smoke-cap on the peak, noting the trouble of earth and air and sea and sky, and talking daily of the eruption that threatened, should be taken completely by surprise when at last the lava did begin to brim the lips of the crater.

There is, indeed, no better preface from a purely

literary, or shall we say, from a purely dramatic point of view, to the French Revolution than that wonderful posthumous piece of fiction which La Harpe wrote under the guise of fact, and on which Sainte-Beuve rightly bases La Harpe's claim to remembrance. Taine places it at the end of his study of the Old Order; it might more appropriately begin a record of the French Revolution. Let 'the first lieutenant of Voltaire' speak for himself.

'It seems to me,' he says, 'as if it were but yesterday, and yet it was at the beginning of the year 1788. We were dining with one of our brethren of the Academy, a grand seignior and a man of intelligence. The company was numerous and of every profession—courtiers, men of the robe, men of letters and academicians; all had feasted luxuriously according to custom. At the dessert the wines of Malvoisie and of Constance contributed to the social gaiety a sort of freedom not always kept within decorous limits. At that time society had reached the point at which everything is permitted that excites laughter. Champfort had read to us his impious and libertine stories, and great ladies had listened to these without recourse to their fans. Hence a deluge of witticisms against religion, one quoting a tirade from "La Pucelle," another bringing forward certain philosophical stanzas by Diderot. There was unbounded applause. The conversation becomes more serious; admiration is expressed at the revolution accomplished by Vol-

taire, and all agree in its being the first title to his fame. "He gave the tone to his century, finding readers in the antechambers as well as in the drawing-room." One of the guests narrated, bursting with laughter, what a hairdresser said to him while powdering his hair: "You see, sir, although I am but a poor devil, I have no more religion than anyone else." They concluded that the Revolution would soon be consummated, that superstition and fanaticism must wholly give way to philosophy, and they thus calculated the probabilities of the epoch and those of the future society which should see the reign of reason. The most aged lamented not being able to flatter themselves that they could see it; the young rejoiced in a reasonable prospect of seeing it, and everyone especially congratulated the Academy on having paved the way for the great work, and on having been the head-quarters, the centre, the inspirer of freedom of thought.

'One of the guests had taken no part in this gay conversation. This was Cazotte, an amiable and original man, but, unfortunately, infatuated with the reveries of the Illuminati. In the most serious tone he now began: "Gentlemen," said he, "be content; you will witness this great revolution that you so much desire. You know that I am something of a prophet, and I repeat it, you will witness it. Do you know what will be the result of this revolution, for all of you, so long as you remain here?" —"Ah!" exclaimed Condorcet with his shrewd,

simple air and smile, "let us see, a philosopher is not sorry to encounter a prophet."—"You, Monsieur de Condorcet, will expire stretched on the floor of a dungeon; you will die of the poison you take to escape the executioner, of the poison which the felicity of that era will compel you always to carry about your person!" At first, great astonishment was manifested, and then came an outburst of laughter. "What has all this in common with philosophy and the reign of reason?"—"Precisely what I have just remarked to you; in the name of philosophy, of humanity, of freedom, under the reign of reason, you will thus reach your end; and, truly, it will be the reign of reason, for there will be temples of reason, and, in those days, in all France, the temples will be those alone of reason. You, Monsieur de Champfort, you will sever your veins with twenty-two strokes of a razor, and yet you will not die for months afterwards. You, Monsieur Vicq-d'Azir, you will not open your own veins, but you will have them opened six times in one day, in the agonies of gout, so as to be more certain of success, and you will die that night. You, Monsieur de Nicolai, on the scaffold; you, Monsieur Bailly, on the scaffold; you, Monsieur de Malesherbes, on the scaffold; you, Monsieur Roucher, also on the scaffold."—"But then we shall have been overcome by Turks and Tartars?"—"By no means; you will be governed, as I have already told you, solely by philosophy and reason. Those

who are to treat you in this manner will all be philosophers, will all, at every moment, have on their lips the phrases you have uttered within the hour, will repeat your maxims, will quote like yourselves the verses of Diderot and of 'La Pucelle.'"—"And when will all this happen?"—"Six years will not pass before what I tell you will be accomplished."—"Well, these are miracles," exclaims La Harpe, "and you leave me out?" "You will be no less a miracle, for you will then be a Christian."—"Ah," interposed Champfort, "I breathe again; if we are to die only when La Harpe becomes a Christian we are immortals."—"Come, at least we women," said the Duchesse de Gramont, "are extremely fortunate in being of no consequence in revolutions. It is understood that we are not to blame, and our sex——"—"Your sex, ladies, will not protect you this time. You will be treated precisely as men, with no difference whatever. You, Madame la Duchesse, will be led to the scaffold, you and many ladies besides yourself, in a cart with your hands tied behind your back."—"Ah, in that event, I hope to have at least a carriage covered with black."—"No, Madame, greater ladies than yourself will go, like yourself, in a cart, and with their hands tied like yours."—"Greater ladies! What, princesses of the blood!"—"Still greater ladies than those!" They began to think the jest was carried too far. Madame de Gramont, to dispel the gloom, did not insist on a reply to her last exclamation, and contented herself

by saying in the lightest tone, "Now he will not even leave me a confessor!"—"No, Madame, neither you nor any other person will be allowed a confessor; the last of the condemned that will have one, as an act of grace, will be——" He stopped a moment. "Tell me, now, who is the fortunate mortal enjoying this prerogative?"—"It is the last that will remain to him, and it will be the King of France."'

How much would one not give that that grim fancy were very fact? Can we not see the brilliant room, shining with waxen lights, the assembly of wits and poets and philosophers and fair pedantic women, hear the ripple of light conversation suddenly shattered and startled by the astonishing suggestions of Cazotte? We can picture to ourselves Cazotte himself surveying his amazed audience with that curious face of his, the face that recalls in something our own Oliver Goldsmith, the face in which a superhuman mysticism reigns in the high forehead and the wide eyes, and a human sensuality of a sweet and simple type asserts itself in the large heavy jaw and the large uncertain lips. If La Harpe's wild dream were true, if the author of the 'Impassioned Devil' and the disciple of the Illuminati had made his astonishing prediction, we may well believe that it would have been received with incredulity and amusement. Well might the scholars and statesmen who listened smile confident in the coming triumph of advanced ideas, in the Reign of Reason, in the regeneration of the Age of

Saturn. How could they possibly credit a prophet who spoke of such unlikely horrors to the children of the Encyclopædia, to the pupils of Rousseau, to the economists who invested the name of Turgot with a kind of sanctity? There is really nothing in literature more directly tragic than this queer tale of La Harpe's, and it may well be accepted by the lovers of the picturesque in history—and history is far more picturesque than some historians would allow—as a fitting prelude to the story of the French Revolution.

The picturesque fancy may be pardoned or excused when we remember that the French Revolution, according to the semi-satiric suggestion of that curious dual historical entity the brothers Goncourt, began in the salons of Paris. The saying, like all such epigrammatic condensations of history, is neither accurate nor complete, but it contains a large measure of truth. Those brilliant assemblies, little local heavens starred with bright names grouped in constellations of thought, of theory, had drifted slowly, steadily, from the suppers of the Regency to the 'principles of eighty-nine.' As the salons grew in influence, they grew in gravity: as the pebble of speculation or dogma cast into the waters of public opinion caused a wider and ever-widening circle, those who stood upon the brink began to regard their pastime with an austerer earnestness. A Galiani bewailing Paris in his Italian exile more bitterly than Ovid in Pontus

bewailed Augustan Rome would hardly have recognised, could he have revisited it, the Paris of his light triumphs, in the serious salons of the years just before the Revolution declared itself. The reign of mere wit had withered, the audacities of a new philosophy, eager to test with a crude science all the things of earth or heaven, no longer afforded a unique delight; the dreams of Rousseau, the doctrines of the Encyclopædists, had borne their fruit, and the dainty world was dipped in a delirium of political reform, of speculations as to the rights of man and the manufacture of constitutions in the Sieyès manner.

But if there is a difficulty in choosing a starting-point, there is scarcely less difficulty in deciding upon the treatment. There are two distinct and independent schools of historians of the French Revolution. One of these schools, of which M. Charles d'Héricault is perhaps the most characteristic exponent, regards the Revolution as the sheer outpouring of the Pit, and always accords it the honour of capital lettering as a kind of tribute to its Satanic grandeur. The leaders, in its eyes, are as so many fiends in human shape specially sent into the world for the purpose of harassing a noble king and yet more noble queen and a nobility whose resplendent merits make them only a little lower than the archangels. 'The Revolution,' says M. Charles d'Héricault with all gravity, 'is the reign of Satan. God has given the evil angels for

a period which we cannot predict power over the kingdom of France;' and he goes on in this vein in a kind of breathless way, dealing largely in 'demons,' 'monsters,' and 'madmen,' as the only epithets proper to apply to any and every Revolutionist. On the other hand, however, the very elect among the angels would hardly, to his loyal mind, seem quite the peers of a half divine royal family. If, however, anything could excuse this maudlin sentimentalism, if anything could seem worse than this unscientific rhapsody, it would be the extravagance of certain of the writers who argue, or, we should say, who write on the other side. There is a M. Jean Bernard, for example, who is too clever a writer to be fitly employed in the sheer partisanship to which he has devoted himself, and who is as trying in his way as M. Charles d'Héricault is in his. To him the Revolutionists are all angels of light, to him the Royalists are all devils of more or less degrees of darkness. Every malign rumour, every foul whisper which strikes at the name and fame of any adherent of the throne, is so much gospel truth to this impassioned advocate. Both these writers might well make a serious student of the French Revolution despair. Yet both these writers are popular writers, and act as guides and teachers to large numbers of people easily impressed and with little opportunity of analysis. Small wonder if, under such conditions, Marie Antoinette is regarded as a Saint Dorothea or as a Messalina by those who think of Saint-Just

only as the murderous author of an obscene poem or as the exalted prophet of the noblest of political creeds.

A kind of impassioned prejudice seems to govern most writers upon the French Revolution. Lacretelle, Louis Blanc, Thiers, Mignet, Michelet, Lamartine, Martin, Taine, and all the cluster of the lesser writers, are brilliant special pleaders, resolute defenders of the side they have espoused. De Tocqueville and Sorel are more impartial and more judicial : so are writers like Von Sybel in Germany, and Mr. H. Morse Stephens in England. Mill would have been impartial, and we might lament that Mill never wrote his dreamed-of history, were it not that in losing Mill we gained Carlyle. Carlyle was not impartial, but he made a great book. It is curious to remember that his magnificent prose epic is actually nearer in years to the events it treats of than it is to us who read it to-day. It is no doubt very hard to be either impartial or judicial about the French Revolution. The whole affair is so dramatic, the darling creeds appeal so directly to the emotions, the central figures are so fascinating and so fatal, that it is difficult to keep cool in such a conflict and to hold one's reason from running to seed in hatred in one direction or blossoming into the rank luxuriance of an exaggerated hero-worship on the other. The great secret lies in remembering that all the figures of the French Revolution were men and women like ourselves, animated by like passions,

purposes, virtues, failings, hopes and fears; that a mob remains a mob whether it raves, bristling with pikes and capped with crimson, around an iron lantern, or overthrows the railings of a park; that we can all turn to contemporaries of our own who under slightly differing conditions might very well have played the parts of a Danton or a Lafayette, a Vergniaud or a La Rochejaquelein. It may be well for the wisest of us, in expatiating upon the faults of a Robespierre or the follies of a Marie Antoinette, to ask ourselves how we under like conditions could have withstood on the one hand the temptations of absolute power, on the other the traditions of a monarchical past. Of course this is no justification; yet, if the reflection do but serve to give us pause and to temper our invective, it will have served its turn excellently. Let us always, always remember hat we are dealing with men and women—some of them even commonplace men and women, that no fresh race of beings, either friends or angels, were invented for the Revolutionary period, and we shall do fairly well and come out in the end with a more human as well as a more humane appreciation of perhaps the greatest pages of history.

CHAPTER II

SEEDS OF REVOLUTION

We begin well if we start off with the heroic determination to be as impartial as we can in our attitude towards the actors in the great drama, to bear in mind and earnestly apply the excellent maxim 'Put yourself in his place,' and to regard each and all of them not as men and women strangely habited and removed from us by the gap of a century, but as friends with whom we may have come into contact in the chances of public, of social, of civil life. Once in this even and exemplary temper, we may with free minds turn our attention to the preliminaries of the great piece.

Perhaps we may catch the first clattering discordant note of the Revolutionary Carillon on the day when the bells of Paris were tolling for the illustrious dead. Alas for the poor Sun-King, the luckless Roi-Soleil! What a dismal epilogue to all his long and lustrous reign, filled with wars and the rumours of wars and pompous enunciations of 'L'État, c'est Moi,' and stately high-heeled passions for innumerable mistresses, from giddy Montespans and their like to grave De Maintenons, coifed and

clerical. The dingy funeral, scantily, even scurvily, escorted, the scornful populace varying indifference with actual pelting of stones; such were the sorry obsequies of the Great King. While he lived the world was ringing with his name; dead, it did not matter where they huddled him, or how. There never was a more impressive sermon on the glory and the nothing of a name. The King, whose word was law, could not bind his successors even by the solemn statements of the royal testament. His will was set aside, treated like so much waste paper. The Eighteenth Century, practically beginning with the death of Louis XIV. as the Eighteenth Century begins in England with the death of Anne, marks its iconoclastic career from the onset by its derision of the last of the despots. Absolute monarchy was never more completely exemplified than in Louis XIV., but the century which was to end in the 'culbute générale' and upheaval of the kingly principle began by treating the final wishes of a great king as of no more moment than the catch of an old song. The Revolution could not be far off when the Parisians pelted the unsepulchred coffin of the great monarch, and his last august wishes were lightly daffed aside.

The seeds of religious controversy, which Louis XIV. sowed, proved fertile in revolutionary ideas. France was by no means Ultramontane; Louis XIV. endeavoured to make it so. The early part of the Eighteenth Century is the theatre of a pitched

battle between the Jesuits and the Jansenists, in which the weight of the royal influence was given to the Jesuit camp.

Jansenius, bishop of Ypres, after passing his life largely in the study of the writings of St. Augustine, died on May 6, 1638. Two years after his death, in 1640, Frommond published at Louvain a posthumous work of Jansen's, 'Augustinus S.: Doctrina S. Aug. de Hum. Naturae Sanitate, Aegritudine, Medicina, adversus Pelagianos et Massilienses.' In his will he referred his book to the judgment of the Holy See, while expressing his belief that it contained no doctrinal error. But this declaration of Jansen's was suppressed by the publisher of the book. The book created the greatest excitement in the theological world. It rallied around it the most impassioned advocates, and against it the most impassioned antagonists. Its second edition was condemned at Rome in 1641 and again in 1642 by Urban VIII. for repeating the errors of Baius in his exaggerations of the Augustinian doctrines of grace. Baius had bowed meekly to the censure of the Holy See, but the 'Disciples of St. Augustine,' as the Jansenists called themselves, were not so meek. They rallied their forces; contested the Papal decree. In 1653, Innocent X. launched a fresh Bull condemning the five propositions in which the hostile French bishops found the pith of Jansenian doctrine. These five propositions were:—Firstly: That there are divine precepts which

good men are unable to obey for want of God's grace, although desirous to do so. Secondly: That no person can resist the influence of divine grace when bestowed. Thirdly: That, for human actions to be meritorious, it is not necessary that they should be exempt from necessity, but only from constraint. Fourthly: That the Semi-Pelagians err grievously in maintaining that the human will is endowed with power of either receiving or resisting the aids and influences of preventive grace. Fifthly: That whoever maintains that Jesus Christ made expiation by His sufferings and death for the sins of all mankind is a Semi-Pelagian.

The Jansenists did not accept defeat. While they wished to remain in external communication with the Church, they cast about for means of checkmating the Papal Bull. Ingenious Jansenist divines argued that while they accepted the Papal censure of the five points they refused to recognise that those five points were to be found in Jansen's writings. In this way they carried on the fight against their opponents in Rome and the powerful Jesuit party in France until the appearance of their great champion, Pascal. Never did any cause find a more brilliant defender. Jansenism has passed away; that great fight is over, dead and buried, but still men of all creeds and of all opinions read and delight in the immortal 'Provincial Letters.' It has been truly said by the most uncompromising opponents of Jansenism that Pascal's letters touch

every chord of the human heart, and that their sudden transitions from logic and wit to sublime and pathetic eloquence produce an effect which can be neither resisted nor effaced. But Pascal died young in 1662, and the glory of the Jansenist cause was gone. Censure after censure thundered from Rome; in France, the face of royalty was set very sternly against the sect.

Louis had come to regard the Jansenists as Republicans in the Church and Republicans in the State. His destruction of Port Royal in 1710 was a heavy blow; a heavier was that dealt in 1713 at the 'Réflexions Morales sur le Nouveau Testament' of Father Quesnel in the Papal document so famous throughout the Eighteenth Century as the Bull 'Unigenitus.'

Into the merits or demerits of the 'Réflexions Morales' it is not necessary to enter here; nor is it necessary to offer criticism upon the conception or the enunciation of the Bull 'Unigenitus.' But the Bull aroused the greatest excitement and the strongest opposition. At an assemblage of bishops in Paris, a minority of fourteen prelates, headed by Cardinal de Noailles, opposed the majority of forty who supported the Jesuit Le Tellier and the Bull. The division spread throughout the whole of the Church. The Ultramontane party stood to their guns, and took strong measures to enforce the acceptance of the Constitution. The rebellious bishops were dismissed to their dioceses; the prelates who had not been

present at the Assembly were called upon by the King to renew their adhesion to the propositions of the Bull; the Sorbonne, which had rejected it by a majority of votes, was peremptorily ordered to register it, and the same duty was sternly laid upon a protesting Parliament.

Louis soon found that he had raised a whirlwind about his ears. His suppression not merely of Father Quesnel's book, but of all writings issued in its defence; his forbidding, under heavy pains and penalties, the publication in the future of any other defence, had not the desired result. Dying, he left France distracted by the desperate fierceness of a religious feud which had affected all classes in the State, and which was in itself no small cause of the almost indecent satisfaction with which the country at large heard of the setting of the Sun-King.

In the dawn of the regency of the Duke of Orleans it seemed for a moment as if the existing conditions of things were to undergo a vital change. A cool democratic wind began to blow through the heated monarchical atmosphere. Strange democratic words were made use of by the Regent himself in his very edicts. He spoke of the 'rights of the nation;' he declared that, in the event of the absence of legitimate successors to the throne, the gift of the crown belonged to France alone. Not in words alone, but in deeds, the Regent showed himself opposed to the policy of the late King. He gave back to the Parliament its right of remonstrance, of

which it had been deprived; he set aside the late King's will; he came very near to summoning the States-General. The lettres de cachet in force were carefully scrutinised, and a large number of persons imprisoned in the Bastille were set free. In the religious controversy that was raging he took a different attitude from that of the late King. He set at liberty all the many persons who were in prison for their Jansenist opinions. The Cardinal de Noailles, who had been in disgrace, and against whom a lettre de cachet was said to be actually pending, was named President of the Council of Ecclesiastical Affairs. Le Tellier conceived it prudent to withdraw from popular dislike into voluntary exile. So far had the reaction gone that complete suppression of the Jesuits was mooted; but the proposal in the end resolved itself merely into an order forbidding them the pulpit and the confessional.

With the Regency we enter upon a new phase of French history; the gavotte begins which is destined to end in the Carmagnole. To the gravity, the pomposity, the heroics of the Great King succeed the wantonness, the license, the devil-may-careness of the Regency. Louis XIV. was profligate enough, but he environed his profligacy with a certain decorum which was wholly wanting in Philippe of Orleans. We move at once in a more buffoon world, a world of light comedy, brilliant with painted mistresses, with opera-girls, with dancers and dainty abbés, with adventurers of the sword and adventurers

of the robe—a world of intrigue and shady finance, of bright persistent debauchery, a mad, bad business, ruinous for France.

There were evil deeds, enough and to spare, in Louis XIV.'s reign. Long before its evening, a kind of crapulosity seems to have set in, which in itself was fertile stuff for the quickening of Revolution. The memoirs of the time, the writings of Bussy Rabutin, reveal to us a grave degree of corruption among the rising nobility which disagreeably affected Louis, and which was significant in its warnings. When we read of the way in which some of the young nobles, some of the bearers of famous names, such as the bearer of the name of Colbert, were banded together for debaucheries, atrocities, and excesses of the most degrading type, we can only wonder that the Revolution did not break out long before its time. The satyr-like lust and fiend-like cruelty of some of the acts recorded of these young nobles must be borne in mind when we think upon the horrors which disfigured the time of the Terror. When we read of two cases in particular in which these wearers of great names inflicted horrible torture—for the mere sake of torture—upon a woman who was their plaything, and upon an unfortunate man who died of his sufferings, we wonder if any descendant of either of those unhappy victims took part in the September massacres, and sated in those wild days a revenge that was none the less welcome because it had been long delayed.

The record of the Regency could only be considered an exhilarating study by a new Timon. Presided over nominally by a debauched prince who was suspected of being a murderer, and who was known to be a profligate and a sot; swayed by a ribald, intriguing Churchman; France was undoubtedly come to a pretty pass. The high dignity, the spacious splendour of Louis XIV., were rapidly resolving themselves into ruin. The Eighteenth Century can scarcely boast a darker, an abler, or more degraded spirit than Dubois. It produced no more perversely immoral ruler than the Regent Philip. But both were men of extraordinary ability: both were, in their strange way, statesmen. They had original ideas of foreign policy with its English leanings, stimulated, it shall be said, by English gold, with its Triple Alliance growing into its Quadruple Alliance, with its swift unmasking of Cellamare's conspiracy to which memoir-writing Jean Buvat contributed, its humiliation of Spain, its Brittany executions, its upheaval of Alberoni, its fantastic shuffling of the court cards in the European pack. They had original ideas too of finance, with their 'chambre ardente' for inquiry into the claims of Farmers-General and other public creditors, its tortures, its imprisonments, its victims, its collapse; with their John Law lunacy of an endless paper currency as grotesque as that which captivates the German Emperor in the second part of 'Faust,' its other John Law lunacy of the Mississippi scheme, with its

mushroom fortunes and final catastrophe. The most amazing thing in all that Regency is the Rue Quincampoix, with its feverish crowds, a Vanity Fair of the maddest kind, in which lords and lackeys, prelates and shopkeepers, prostitutes and princesses jostled and elbowed in the common race for wealth, and which ends with the prudent Prince de Conti exchanging his paper money for three cartloads of solid silver—one seems to see those three argentiferous carts lumbering through the narrow Parisian streets—in the universal crash, and in John Law dying in squalid poverty in Venice, without much reason to be thankful that he escaped alive from the wild hands of the Paris mob. Seldom has it been given to any single individual to accomplish such widespread desolation, such national ruin and despair, as John Law accomplished. The adventurous Scottish gentleman who was to make everybody rich—with pieces of paper—had promised infatuated Philip that he would wipe out the national debt of France, leave it as if it had never been. He left it increased to a grand total of six hundred and twenty-five millions of francs. Statesman after statesman, financier after financier, will strive to patch that business together again, to caulk the leaky places; good and bad, wise and foolish, all will make their effort to mend Law's colossal madness, all will try down to Necker, but by the time it comes to Necker's turn the work which John Law was really

sent into the world to do will have ripened to its due fruition.

A little later, in 1725, a momentous thing happened, which at first scarcely seemed momentous. An English nobleman, Lord Derwentwater, is said to have founded in Paris in this year the 'Loge Anglaise,' the first Freemasons' Lodge in France; another English nobleman, the Duke of Richmond, set up another in his Aubigny castle a little later. It would be vain and worse than vain to attempt to penetrate back into the past for the early history of Freemasonry. We may, if we please, accept with masonic writers the statement that it existed 'ever since symmetry began and harmony displayed her charms.' We may agree with Charles Kingsley that the uninitiate have little right to any opinion on the mediæval lodge of Kilwinning and its Scotch degrees, on the seven Templars who after Jacques de Molay was burnt in Paris revived the order on the Scottish isle of Mull, on the masons who built Magdeburg Cathedral in 876, on Magnus Grecus, on Hiram of Tyre, and many another name and date important in the annals of Freemasonry. It is perhaps audacious for anyone not a mason to speak of its history and its mysteries; on the other hand, masons are not, we understand, permitted to speak of the tenets or the traditions of their order. Such accounts as exist of Freemasonry differ in the most extraordinary degree according as the writers are animated by an enthusiasm for or an aversion

to the sect. Thus we shall find one set of writers leaping lovingly back to the Sacerdotalism of ancient Egypt, progressing to the Dionysia of old Greece, and dwelling affectionately upon the legend of the building of Solomon's temple and the fate of the architect Hiram-Abi, murdered for the sake of the secret word which he refused to reveal to his three apprentices with the queer names of Jubelas, Jubelos, and Jubelum. From the grave of the murdered Hiram comes the acacia plant, whose name is said to play so large a part in masonic symbolism. According to this legend the masonic mystery is to find out the lost pass-word of the temple. Other scarcely less fanciful authorities talk wild words about Manes, founder of Manichæanism, and the purpose of avenging his death at the hands of a Persian king by a regicide league striking at all kings. Others pretended that the Freemasons were simply the proscribed and ruined Templars under a new name, and that their cherished purpose was vengeance of the death of Jacques de Molay. More hostile critics, however, go no further back than the mediæval migratory Mason guilds, with their ceremonials aped from Benedictine ritual; we hear much of the disputed Cologne charter of 1535 signed at the opening of the cathedral by Melanchthon, Coligny, and others; and Elias Ashmole, the Englishman who founded in 1646 the order of the Rosicrucians, comes in for his share of denunciation for his strange blend of masonry and occultism. All

these various legends and various opinions offer interesting enough matter for the studies and the speculations of the scholarly occult. But the serious importance of the part which Freemasonry was destined to play in the history of the French Revolution depends in no degree upon the truth or the untruth of the legends about Hiram, about Manes, or anybody else before the days of Lord Derwentwater. For our purpose it is enough to accept the fact that in 1717 the Grand Lodge of England was established by certain English noblemen and gentlemen in London who met together in lodges at the Goose and Gridiron in St. Paul's, at the Crown near Drury Lane, at the Apple Tree near Covent Garden, and at the Rummer and Grapes in Channel Row, Westminster. These English noblemen and gentlemen had little thought at the time when they met together under the hospitable rafters of these pleasantly named London taverns, of the part the work they had in hand would yet play in the destinies of nations and the fates of kings. But when Lord Derwentwater and the Duke of Richmond pitched their Freemasons' tent in France they began a business which resulted most amazingly. For the thing spread and spread all over the continent of Europe. Introduced by Englishmen into Germany, Austria, Russia, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Portugal; introduced into Sweden and Poland from France, which itself owed its masonic inspiration to England, we find the English or the

Scottish lodges weaving all Europe together into the complicated web of a great organisation. Kings and princes were among its earliest initiate; Crown Prince Frederick, afterwards to be famous as Frederick the Great, Francis I. of Austria, and many a noble name besides are inscribed upon its earliest rolls. There is a name yet to be inscribed upon its rolls, the name of a prince not yet born to the House of Orleans, which will be most instrumental in aiding the work which Freemasonry was destined to do in France. In the meantime Freemasonry, waiting for the birth of Equality Orleans, grew and throve in Europe, undismayed by the Papal excommunication levelled against it in 1738.

At this particular time, however, continental Freemasonry had not dreamed of the phases through which it was yet to pass. Lord Derwentwater did not anticipate Adam Weishaupt and the mysterious Illuminati, with their strange cipher L.P.D., which, being interpreted, means 'Lilia Pedibus Destruo,' and signifies the doom of kings. He did not dream of that strangest of strange Illuminated, Balsamo Cagliostro, and all that was to come through him. We shall meet with Cagliostro in his season, and with the Illuminati and their terrible L.P.D. In the meantime it is curious to remember that a legend which seems to be something more than a legend declares that Prince Charles Edward himself founded in the town of Arras a Scottish Freemason Lodge, of which the first president was Robespierre's

father. If the story were true, it would only be one further proof of the dramatic completeness of the revolutionary story which so early associates with a body destined to play so great a part in the Revolution the name which of all others stands out most conspicuously in association with it. When we meet with the Freemasons again we shall find that they have greatly changed in power and influence from their little groups of exiled Jacobites and their small beginnings in the days of the Regency.

CHAPTER III

LOUIS THE WELL-BELOVED

It is not necessary to linger longer over the mud and swine idyl of the Regency. While growing Freemasonry was striking its tap-roots in all directions, while the financial phantasies of Law had given a further impetus to national financial ruin, Regent Philip contented himself with reeling from desire to satiety, and from satiety to desire, like a more vulgar Faust, and left everything in the hands of Dubois. In the battle of the Bull 'Unigenitus' Dubois had espoused the Bull and the Papal Court, and had obtained the archbishopric of Cambrai. It is one of the eternal ironies of history that among the names supporting Dubois in his claim to the archbishopric is that of the good, the just, the noble Massillon. In spite of all the opposition that the desperate and despairing Jansenists could make, Dubois forced the Jansenistic Parliament of Paris to register the combated edict, and the constitution embodied in the Bull became established law. In the February of 1723 Louis XV. attained his legal majority, Orleans resigned his regency and became President of the Council of State, which

included among its members Dubois. But just in this crowning moment Dubois died in the August of 1723, and in the December of the same year the Regent followed him, and there were two scoundrels the less in France.

Philip of Orleans dead and out of the way, the Duke of Bourbon obtained from the young King the position of first minister. Ignorant of everything except the chase, a humble servant of the Marquise de Prie, a tool in the hands of financier Paris Duvernay, the Duke was eminently calculated to carry on all that was worst in the government of Philip of Orleans. The religious war still raged. The Jesuits grew more and more powerful, the Jansenists more and more feeble. The young King's bride, Maria Leszczynska, daughter of the King of Poland, then resting in pensioned exile in Alsace, received the surname of Unigenita in graceful allusion to the famous and triumphant Bull. In the very earliest years of the young King's reign the spirit of sedition asserted itself; the spirit of constitutional resistance to aggravated authority made itself felt. The scarcity of bread, that unfailing source of popular disaffection, caused several serious riots in 1725. Caen, Rouen, Rennes were the scenes of desperate conflicts. In Paris itself some two thousand rioters straggled through the streets, shouting and pillaging. They were dispersed at the point of the sword; two of them were hanged on high gallows in the chief street of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine; but the

spirit of hungry discontent still muttered ominously underground and was only silenced, only staved off by measures which lowered the price of bread. But a more serious sign was shown in the conduct of the Paris Parliament when it protested in the very presence of the King himself holding his bed of justice against certain taxes, including one of a fiftieth upon all the revenues of the kingdom, which had not been previously submitted to the magistrates.

'Do not be late for supper, Duke,' said Louis XV. graciously to Bourbon on June 11, 1726, as he left Versailles for Rambouillet, whither he bade the Duke follow him speedily. The Duke did not appreciate the fine point of irony in the King's civility till the King had gone. Then an order arrived, signed with the royal hand, dismissing Bourbon to his domain at Chantilly. And so, like the Eastman in the Gunnlaug Saga, he is out of the tale. Madame de Prie was whistled down the wind to Normandy; Duverney was clapped into the Bastille; Fleury was raised to the rank of first minister, and the Cardinal's red hat soon reached him from Rome. For seventeen years Fleury, who was seventy years old at the time of his triumph, held well-nigh royal sway in France. Astute, subtle, of gentle and simple bearing, Fleury united the sagacity of a fifth-rate statesman with the decorum of a fifth-rate Churchman, and between his sagacity and his decorum he held his own. Those wild popular commotions which characterised the administrations of the Regent and

of Bourbon died away; the manners of the Court and of the great nobles were modified to something dimly approaching to decency; financial economy restored public credit; foreign policy was guided in the direction of peace; a pinchbeck Saturnian age seemed to be established. But the retrospective observer can discern that revolution is still afoot. The desperate battle of Jesuits and Jansenists still raged, and the Jesuits found in Fleury, who had been an ardent Jansenist, a devoted champion. The miracles reported from the grave of the Jansenist Paris at St. Médard Cemetery led to the closing of the cemetery in 1732 by order of the Government, and to the promulgation of the famous epigram:

> De par le Roi, défense à Dieu
> D'opérer miracles en ce lieu.

Condemnation after condemnation fell upon the heads of those who still protested against the Bull 'Unigenitus.' Yet its opponents multiplied. The majority of the Parisians were opposed to it; and the ranks of opposition were swelled by all Adullamites, by all who were discontented and in danger and in debt, by all who disliked the Government or who liked disturbance, by all those floating forces of agitation if not of disaffection which are rendered for the moment homogeneous by a great opposition movement. The battle over the Bull 'Unigenitus' was one of the training schools of the Revolution. Not that very many of its fiercest opponents knew or cared to know what the Bull really was or what

it really meant. It may be fairly said that in general nobody understood anything about those questions of doctrine with which the Bull was concerned. There were people who called it 'la belle Genitus.' But it served as a rallying cry, as a common banner; it set people thinking, talking, acting; the Parliament of Paris was in the forefront of the fight. The proposal of Benoît XIII. to amplify the Breviary by a lesson in which Gregory VII. was lauded for having excommunicated an emperor and released his subjects from their oath of allegiance was combated by the Parliament, and a printed sheet set in circulation and containing the new lesson and prayer was suppressed by the Parliament.

The fight raged and was to rage yet for generations. On the one side the puppet King and the dexterous septuagenarian man of schemes his minister and all Ultramontanism; on the other, the Parliaments and all the waning strength of Jansenism, swollen and supported by all possible elements of disorder that could be attracted to a struggle against a government. We may note a fiery Abbé Pucelle, at white heat of impassioned Jansenism, sneering at Fleury—quantum mutatus ab illo!—and informing an astounded King that duty to the sovereign sometimes compelled disobedience to his orders. We may note contumacious parliaments defying royal authority to a certain point, and yielding when the royal screw is put on heavily, always under the guidance of the grave, imperturbable Fleury. No wild writings

on the wall invoking destruction on the Constitution and its supporters could alarm that determined old man ; could alarm, indeed, his determined colleagues. The dwarfish, humpbacked Bishop of Laon, half an Aramis and half a De Retz, of whom it was said that he would have been the devil of a fellow if he had only been a musketeer, declared that the only way out of the whole difficulty was to hand the greater part of the public power back into the hands of the bishops in order to save a hereticised France from destruction. The Parliament ordered the suppression of these utterances. The Bishop retorted by threatening excommunication to anyone who should venture to read the parliamentary order, and recited the prayers against the enemies of the Church.

At Rome the Holy See solemnly burnt the famous 'Consultation,' in which forty advocates pleaded the cause of as many curés who appealed to the Parliament against the censures of their bishops. This document, among other things, advanced such significant theories of statecraft as that the Parliaments were the senate of the nation and the King was to be regarded only as the chief of a sovereign nation, while phrases like 'public authority' and 'public power' were used with ominous iterance. The forty advocates, pushed into a corner, declared in a later document that they recognised that France was a monarchical state, and that the sovereign authority rested in the person of the monarch and of the

monarch alone. As a reward for this submission an Order of Council cleared them of the crime of rebellion; but the Archbishop of Paris, dissatisfied, issued an ordinance in which he declared that the whole of the forty advocates were heretics, and asserted that the bishops had, in virtue of their divine origin, a coactive power independent of the secular authority. The Parliament of Paris suppressed this ordinance, whereupon an Order of Council ordered both the high disputing parties to keep an absolute silence upon the whole question of the rights of the two powers. A little later, however, the Government allowed the Archbishop of Paris to promulgate his ordinance, whereupon the forty advocates declared that the minister associated himself with the charge of heresy brought against them and refused to plead. The legal order as a body followed their example. Ten advocates were promptly punished by exile. Their departure was converted by popular enthusiasm into a triumph, and there was considerable danger of riot. Laon's wild bishop attacked the Parliament bitterly; the Parliament retorted by summoning him before the Assembly of Peers for trial, and the peers were summoned for that purpose to attend the Parliament. Fleury, to avoid the scandal, suppressed the Bishop of Laon's mandate, and the Parliament issued its order of September 7, in which it set forth 'that the temporal power was independent of all other power, that to it alone belonged the right to "control" the King's subjects, and that the ministers

of the Church were accountable to Parliament, under the authority of the King, for the exercise of their jurisdiction.'

Immediately an Order of Council, launched by Fleury, suppressed this parliamentary mandate, and an usher of the Council was despatched to strike with his own hand the mandate from the parliamentary register. At this juncture the Parliament rose for its habitual vacation of two months from September 7 to November 12. When it met again it was faced by a direct order from Fleury forbidding it to deliberate upon the action of the Government with regard to the mandate of September 7. The Parliament sent a deputation to the King, which the King declined to receive, whereupon it decided to make a protest 'at some more opportune occasion.' Fleury took these words to mean when he should be no more, and was indignant. The Parliament was summoned to Versailles and roundly reprimanded, and nothing more was heard of the mandate of September 7.

The battle, lulled for a while, began all over again when the Archbishop of Paris condemned the 'Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques.' The Parliament proceeded to discuss this condemnation; the King ordered them to keep silence till they learned his good pleasure; the Parliament protested; the King retorted by exiling the Abbé Pucelle and clapping another councillor into Vincennes. Then the Parliament defiantly forbade the distribution of the

Archbishop's mandate, and for fear that this order should be erased, as was the order of September 7, they had it printed at once and issued broadcast. The Government cancelled the order and exiled four more councillors. Thereupon the majority of the magistrates, to the number of one hundred and fifty, signed their resignations and solemnly marched out of the palace two by two amidst the applause of an enormous crowd, who hailed them as Romans and fathers of their country. This was on June 20, 1732. Fleury, amazed and perturbed, by a policy of blended menace and cajolement induced the Parliament to resume its functions. But it was a truce, not a peace. Fleury would have liked to abolish the Parliament altogether, but, as this was too comprehensive a step, he began by endeavouring to reduce its powers. On August 18, 1732, he addressed a declaration to the magistrates which changed all the order and usage of the Parliament and limited much of its authority. The Parliament protested. The King held firm, and the declaration of Fleury was solemnly registered at a bed of justice held in the Guards' Hall at Versailles. The magistrates who had to attend the bed of justice seized upon the law which prohibited the changing of the seat of Parliament to declare the bed of justice null and void. The Government immediately sent one hundred and thirty-nine of the mutinous magistrates into exile, and then, in November, as if fearful of its own boldness, revoked the exile, recalled the

banished magistrates, and practically withdrew the Fleury declaration. This comparative triumph for the Parliament stirred up the Jansenists to fresh activity. Montpellier's bishop in a pastoral letter spoke with ominous prophecy of 'a coming revolution which will substitute a new Church for the existing Church.' On the other hand, the Jesuits waged fiercer war than ever. Fleury was denounced for his yielding to the Parliament. The faithful were called upon to rally in defence of a threatened faith. In the midst of all this welter a young King of four-and-twenty hunted and supped most tranquilly and an aged minister oscillated in irritated despair between the two factions.

In the very white heat of the Jesuit-Jansenist wrangle France found herself at war again, much against Fleury's will. But France could hardly in those days stand idly by and see Stanislas Leszczynska, the French King's father-in-law, beaten rudely out of Warsaw by Augustus III. and the Russians. The war, which, like all wars at that time, raged in ever so many places at the same time, came to an end honourably and advantageously for France with the treaty of Vienna in 1738 and landed Stanislas Leszczynska, not again on the throne of Poland, but comfortably enough in the duchies of Lorraine and Bar. To the despair of a peaceful minister, however, war blazed out again in 1740; the European powers were all wrangling together like boys at a muss, and France got very much the worst of it. A

picturesque young Archduchess of Austria, hardly pressed, set Hungary aflame with enthusiasm at Presburg. 'Moriamur pro Rege nostra!' became an historical phrase, and a crippled French army found itself in hot retreat from Prague to the French frontier in the January of 1743. This retreat was as fatal to Fleury as Austerlitz was yet to be to Pitt. Old, broken, despairing, he died at Issy on January 29, 1743. He was ninety years old; he had done his best for himself and after himself for France: a better, stronger, wiser man than he could scarcely have saved her under the conditions of the game; he left her in the hands of a young King of whom the country and the world as yet knew little, of whom the country and the world was soon to know a great deal. From this point onwards the state drifts steadily from shame to shame towards its doom: we stand upon the threshold of the most disastrous, the most degraded period in the history of France.

The little that was known about the young King was not much to his credit. He had already disgraced himself as a husband by his brutal indifference to his wife and by his more than Oriental extravagance of desires. Already he was remarkable for his mistresses. He had honoured one stately family, the family of Nesle, by choosing in succession no less than four daughters of its house to be his mistresses. Of these four mistresses, the latest was Madame de Châteauroux, youngest and fairest of

the four sisters, who was in the full noon-tide of her effulgence when battered old Fleury gave up his cunning and died. She was the real influence in the state. Chancellor D'Aguesseau, Marine Minister Maurepas, War Minister D'Argenson, and Cardinal Tencin recognised and submitted to her authority over the young, indolent, sensual King. Madame de Châteauroux, to do her justice, does seem to have tried her best to make something more like a man and less like a hog out of her Louis. She urged him to play a bold part in facing the foes who were now combining against France. England was now actively helping Maria Theresa; Prussia was sated in neutrality by the confirmation of stolen Silesia; Naples and Sardinia, under English influence, withdrew from coalition with France, who thus found herself alone. The desperate defeat of Dettingen in 1743 occasioned more enthusiasm than it deserved in the capitals of London and Vienna. The next year an event of much greater moment nearly came to pass. Louis XV., travelling with his army like an opera king of cooks and lackeys, was suddenly struck down by malignant fever at Metz and nearly given over. But he did recover; the influence of his evil star was not yet exhausted. Louis, always easily influenced by theories of religious or ethical decorum while he was in bad health, consented to become reconciled with his unhappy wife and to whistle his beautiful ambitious mistress down the wind. Perhaps the indolent voluptuary was

getting a little tired of a mistress so proud, so impetuous, so eager to make something manly out of her languid monarch as Madame de Châteauroux. Anyhow, she was banished and Louis saw her no more. Louis' rescue from the jaws of death seems to have aroused a good deal of misplaced enthusiasm among his subjects. The title of 'Well-beloved' was conferred upon him by popular sentiment, a good deal, it would seem, to the monarch's own surprise. 'What have I done that my people should love me so much?' he is reported to have said—perhaps in good faith, more likely with the queer cynical irony which was a characteristic of his fatal nature.

Though the death of the Emperor Charles VII. in the January of 1745, and the terms to which the new Elector of Bavaria came with Maria Theresa, removed all reason for continuing it, the war still raged until Fontenoy gave, in the May of 1745, the signal for a series of French victories which ended in the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle.

It might be very reasonably maintained that the first serious impetus in that downward movement which culminated in the 'culbute générale' was given by the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. If the reign of Louis XV. had ended before 1748, it would have been, as kings and reigns went in those days, a not inglorious reign. Under the ministership of Fleury the prestige of France was kept to something like the standard of the spacious days of the Sun-King, and Louis XV. himself, with his fine new title of

the Well-beloved hot upon him, had not yet, by his private debaucheries, eclipsed the degradation of the Regency. In 1748 France was a great and powerful kingdom, victorious in arms all over Europe, with a growing empire in India, a growing empire in America, with a roll-call of victories as brilliant as any that followed the fortunes of the marshals of Louis XIV. Before the genius of Saxe, the armies of England had been driven in defeat at Fontenoy and at Lauffeld; before the genius of Dupleix the navy of England had retreated in despair from Pondicherry; the siege of Maestricht was the last word of a long and glorious catalogue of triumphs. But the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle afforded France no reward for her long and successful struggle. 'I wish,' said Louis the Well-beloved, 'to negotiate like a prince and not like a merchant,' and he made practically no terms for France in the treaty. Glory was enough for Saxe and his generals, the reflected glory was enough for the Well-beloved and the lords and ladies of the Bull's Eye; but to that vast France of which nobody took any heed, and which was composed of quite others than lords and ladies, marshals and generals, and Well-beloved kings, glory was but a barren business. The national debt was enormously increased; the fighting strength of the country had been reduced by victories only less fatal than defeats, commerce shattered, the navy weakened; and for all this there was nothing to show

except the gilded record of some bloody and triumphant battles. Hungry France, thirsty France, trouserless France, might have felt a more appreciable affection for a king who had a touch more of the merchant in his composition, might have felt a keener sympathy for the kingly institution if it had known a little better how to combine the dignity of its high office with something of that business-like common sense which in the opinion of Louis set merchants apart from and beneath princes. France got nothing by the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, and from the moment of the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle France, or rather the French monarchy, began to go down the hill. The twenty-six years in which by the ordinance of Providence Louis XV. was still permitted to reign over France were years of deepening degradation for the monarchy, of deepening misfortune for the country and its people.

CHAPTER IV

THE PHILOSOPHES

WHILE France was slipping faster and faster on its glacier descent to destruction, while a young king was growing older without growing wiser or better or at all more serviceable to the state, a movement was taking place in literature which was destined to have the most momentous results. While Jansenist and Jesuit plucked at each other's throats, while the King occupied his ignoble life by selecting mistresses with the gravity of a grand signior and the sensuality of a satyr, new forces were coming into play, whose influence in fermenting the revolutionary impulse is not to be over-estimated.

'The authority of the King has dwindled and is obeyed in no particular.' So D'Argenson could write in 1731 in the face of the Jansenist and Jesuit Iliad which was raging, and which had for the moment eccentrically erected the Paris Parliament into the champion of popular rights against the oppressions of a despotic ministry. The fantastic and extraordinary case of Father Girard and Miss Cadière was promptly made use of as a weapon against the Jesuits. New and strange allies were found swelling the Jansenist

ranks. A certain number of men were gradually drifting together into a kind of unconscious alliance, guided by a common sympathy and a common scepticism. Certain men of letters, certain philosophers, certain thinkers, were slowly forming themselves into a body destined to be bitterly abused, to be accused of all manner of crimes, to be misunderstood alike by their enemies and their blind admirers, and to effect the most comprehensive changes in thought. In the early part of 1732 a blow was struck at this loosely adherent, scarcely formed party which had considerable effect in causing it to cohere more closely. A book appeared, which the Parliament condemned to be burnt as dangerous alike for religion and for the order of civil society. The book was the 'Letters on the English.' The author was one of the most popular men of letters, Voltaire.

François Marie Arouet was born at Châtenay on February 20, 1694. So puny was the child, so poorly fitted for the struggle for life, that it was feared at first that he could not live at all, and neither the excellent and well-to-do notary his father nor the keen-witted mother who died when the child was seven years old could have ventured to dream of the long life that lay before the frail creature. In 1704 he went to the college of Louis-le-Grand to learn under the Jesuits, according to his own statement, nothing worth the learning. From college his godfather, the Abbé Châteauneuf, took the lad into the dazzling society which was soon to revolve around the

sinful splendour of Regent Philip. Under the guidance of Châteauneuf, under the influence of another abbé, Chaulieu, the young Voltaire saw a great deal of life of a brilliant evil kind, and met a great many brilliant evil people and a good many who were simply evil without being brilliant. Chaulieu was a very typical abbé of the Regency. A dainty rhymer of the lightest and loosest verses, a champion of all the obscene reaction against the severity of the Sun-King's setting days, the intimate of an aristocracy whose chief ambition it was to excel in corruption and to be fancifully original in sin, Chaulieu was the most amazing Mentor that young Telemachus Arouet could have found in his voyage through Paris. It is scarcely matter for surprise that Arouet the father, that eminently respectable notary, did not rejoice in the course of his son's conduct or the choice of his friends. They were an ill-assorted sire and son. They had nothing in common; to Voltaire the narrow respectability of his father was at once galling and ridiculous; Arouet the elder was not sufficiently keen-sighted to see that the flippant boy who consorted with a lewd nobility was a man of genius. By way of mending matters and forcing the blood-horse into the mule's mill walk, Arouet the elder induced Châteauneuf's diplomatist brother to take young Arouet with him on a mission to the Hague. At the Hague, Voltaire fell desperately in love with a young countrywoman, a Mademoiselle du Noyer. Mademoiselle du Noyer

was the amiable daughter of a most unamiable mother who drove a queer traffic in libels. Pity as well as love urged the young Arouet to hope to withdraw the girl from such an influence. The intrigue was discovered, and the amorist was sent back in disgrace to Paris. Years after, Mademoiselle du Noyer married a Baron de Winterfeld, and always cherished an affectionate admiration for the great man who had been her boyish lover. Destiny did not draw closer the relationships of father and son. To please the father, the son studied law under Attorney Alain in Paris, but he hated the legal trade and sought happiness in Caumartin's library at St. Ange. The advent of the Regent in 1715 was hailed by the appearance of a bitter and clever poem, 'Les j'ai vu,' satirizing the condition of France and assailing the Jesuits. Voltaire did not write the poem, but the authorities thought that he did, and sent him to the Bastille to reflect for nearly a year upon the dangers of dissatisfaction with things as they were in France. In the Bastille he worked hard mentally, for it seems he was not allowed ink and paper — finishing his 'Oedipus,' which was played with success shortly after his release, and in planning the 'Henriade,' in which he hoped to succeed where Ronsard had failed and give epicless France her epopee. The 'Henriade' was to be all that the 'Franciade' was not. For the next six years the young Arouet worked hard and played hard, flitting hither and thither in a passion for

wanderings, falling in and out of love, writing much, reading more in printed books and the bigger book of the world, welcome in the bravest society, rejoicing in his own youth, wit, and ambition, hating Paris and loving the country with a passion that seems exotic and old world in eighteenth-century France. Arouet the elder died in 1722, as bitter against his shining stubborn son as ever, and with his death Arouet the younger also fades from knowledge, and in his place the world has to accept a young Voltaire. Where the name Voltaire came from, why he chose it, and what it signified to him or to others, is and must remain a mystery. It has been puzzled over, guessed at, reasoned upon; it is really not of the slightest importance. It may be, as has been ingeniously suggested, compounded of an anagram upon his name of Arouet with the 'U' converted to a 'V' and the initial letters of the words 'Le Jeune' pressed into the service to make up the sum. The new name was soon to be better known than the old. Its owner got into the famous quarrel with an insolent bearer of the name of Rohan. Voltaire was wittier than Rohan; Rohan revenged himself through the cudgels of his lackeys. Voltaire, as bitter as creatures physically slight and weak may well be under brutality, applied himself with passion to the art of fencing, and challenged Rohan. Rohan refused to fight, but through the influence of his family he got Voltaire sent for the second time to the Bastille. There he suffered for six months; when he was at

length released he was immediately ordered to leave Paris. In the May of 1726 Voltaire arrived in England.

England was at that time and for long after a kind of Mecca to continental lovers of liberty of thought and action. Frederick the Great paid, in his 'Memoirs,' his tribute to the great men, such as Hobbes, Collins, Shaftesbury, and Bolingbroke, who, in his eyes, had done so much to widen thought. 'The freedom of opinion,' he wrote, 'prevalent in England contributed greatly to the progress of philosophy.' All manner of Frenchmen, from Raynal to Roland, from Montesquieu to Marat, visited it during the golden prime of the eighteenth century; Voltaire was not the pioneer. He had formed a friendship with Lord and Lady Bolingbroke in France, and, when the world was all before him where to choose, he very naturally turned towards the country of which he had heard so much from the illustrious St. John. 'Before Voltaire became acquainted with England through his travels and his friendships,' says Cousin in his 'History of Philosophy,' 'he was not Voltaire, and the eighteenth century was still undeveloped.' In England he passed three years, which were years full of admiration for the country, for the freedom which he admired when he did not always understand it, for its men of genius who were beginning to revolutionise thought—its Newton, its Locke, its Swift, its Addison, its Pope. He studied English

literature with something like appreciation, though he thought too highly of Addison's 'Cato;' he studied English science, then just dawning into something like scientific methods; he studied English philosophy, and he studied English theology. Seldom were three years of exile more industriously, more laboriously employed.

While in England he published his 'Henriade,' which Lord Chesterfield, who did not admire Homer, admired, and which we may be allowed to consider perhaps the dullest epic in the world. It was well subscribed for; it laid the foundation of his fortune. After three years he came back to France and his most famous love-affair with Madame du Châtelet. He was happy in a literary life, producing successful plays, writing and planning histories, when the 'Lettres sur les Anglais' saw the light. They do not seem very terrible to-day, they did not seem terrible in a little while even to his enemies, but the Parliament had them burnt, and the Parliament prepared to level a lettre de cachet at the head of their author. Voltaire dreaded the Bastille; he would probably have returned to England if it had not been for Madame du Châtelet's existence. In consequence of Madame du Châtelet's existence he retired to Cirey, in Champagne, the château of the Marquis du Châtelet—there, with the learned lady and her lord, lived six secluded years while it was given out that he was in England.

Seldom has the service of literature been obeyed

under more curious conditions. The urbane marquis, the scientific marquise, the philosophic poet and poetic philosopher lived a life that might not unfairly be called eccentric at Cirey. The gifted man and the gifted woman were devoured by a positive passion for work. Madame du Châtelet passed the major part of the twenty-four hours shut up in her own room, translating Newton, competing with Euler, devoting all the energy of her fine intellect to the cause of science. Voltaire was no less strenuous, but more catholic, condemning waste of time as the most unpardonable of offences, studying science with desperate eagerness, writing histories, writing plays, consumed by a very demon of work, and yet always ready to play too for the amusement of stray guests. It cannot be said that his life lacked fulness. At one moment he was great at magic lanterns and puppet plays, convulsing wandering gentlewomen by Puncinella singing 'fagnana, fagnana;' at another he was flying to Holland to avoid lettres de cachet. The influence of Madame du Châtelet would have been unfortunate if she had succeeded in leading him entirely into the service of a sternly rationalistic science. But Voltaire had the good sense to feel doubts of his capacity to shine as a man of science, the good sense to submit those doubts to a famous man of science, and the good sense on finding those doubts confirmed to accept the situation.

When Madame du Châtelet died, Voltaire declared himself inconsolable. 'I have lost the halt

of my life,' he said, consciously or unconsciously imitating the exquisite tribute of Horace to Virgil. He knew well enough that the gifted lady was no more faithful to him than she was to her husband; the episode of Voltaire and Châtelet opening a locket of hers after her death and finding that it contained the portrait of neither of them but of her lover St. Lambert has been worked upon in many literatures. Voltaire was not inconsolable, however. It is in one of his own exquisite short stories that he speaks of the despairing pair who in the end ceased to despair and raised together a temple to Time the consoler. Time was always Voltaire's great consoler. He lived so long and lived so thoroughly that his keenest personal griefs did inevitably fade into a far perspective. Then came the storm and stress of the melancholy Prussian period, when a great king and a great writer behaved with the absurd incivility of angry schoolboys and converted a famous friendship into a yet more famous enmity. Neither Frederick the Great nor Voltaire comes well out of the quarrel. The whole thing was pitiable, mean, and ridiculous, not to be willingly lingered over. Then Voltaire settled down at Ferney, and made for a long time the little village on the Swiss lake the Mecca of the philosophic thought of Europe.

It was from Ferney that Voltaire fulminated all those thunders against the 'Infamous' which have earned for him an exaggerated censure and an exaggerated praise. It was while at Ferney that he

gave most strenuous expression to that 'fierce indignation,' that 'saeva indignatio,' which harassed his spirit all his life very much as it harassed the spirit of Jonathan Swift. To Ferney came men from all parts of the world to visit the great writer, the great James Boswell of Auchinleck for one, Dr. Burney for another. It was at Ferney that that most amazing scoundrel and liar, Jacques Casanova, had those interviews with Voltaire which he records in those astonishing volumes in which a kind of grotesque satyriasis alternates with shrewd and entertaining judgments upon men and things. If it were ever possible to take Casanova's statements at the foot of the letter, it would be amusing to accept as in some degree truthful his account of his arguments with Voltaire over the respective merits of 'Merlin Coccaie' and the 'Pucelle.' But especially it was to Ferney that the minds and thoughts turned of that body of men who were destined to make the epoch of the Pompadour illustrious and the French Revolution possible, the Encyclopædists Diderot, D'Alembert, D'Holbach, Helvétius, and Grimm.

In his own mind Voltaire looked for fame to his longer works. To me, however, Voltaire's happiest style is to be seen in his short stories. His capacity for producing effective and precious trifles was, as has been said in words which I may adopt and adapt, something wonderful—not mere curiosities, but condensed triumphs of genuine satire, whose

meaning grows and deepens as they are studied. What, for instance, can surpass the concise humour of 'Scarmentado's Travels'? Or 'The Blind Judges of Colours,' with its whimsical conclusion, in which, after the recital of all the quarrels and battles which took place among the blind disputants, each of whom claimed to be an infallible judge of colours, we are gravely told that a deaf man who had read the tale admitted the folly of the sightless men in presuming to decide questions of colour, but stoutly maintained that deaf men were the only qualified musical critics? Or 'Bababec and the Fakirs'? A Mussulman who is the supposed narrator of the tale and a good Brahmin, Omri, visit the fakir groups by the banks of the Ganges, at Benares. Some of these holy men are dancing on their heads; some inserting nails in their flesh; some staring fixedly at the tips of their noses, in the belief that they thus will see the celestial light. One, named Bababec, is revered for special sanctity because he went naked, wore a huge chain round his neck, and sat upon pointed nails, which pierced his flesh. Omri consults this saintly sage as to his own chances of reaching Brahma's abode after death. The fakir asks him how he regulates his life. 'I endeavour,' says Omri, 'to be a good citizen, a good husband, a good father, and a good friend. I lend money without interest to those who have need; I give to the poor, and I maintain peace among my neighbours.' 'I am sorry for you,' interrupts the pious

fakir; 'your case is hopeless; you never put nails dans votre cul.' Such specimens, however, are only like the brick which the dullard in the old story brought away for the purpose of giving his friends an idea of the beauty of the temple. The seeds of the Revolution were nowhere more surely sown than in these short stories. Voltaire developed the satirical capability of the French language to a degree equalled by no other man. So much sarcastic force was, probably, never compressed into so few and such simple words as in many of these little fictions. The reader is positively amazed at the easy dexterity with which subjects are placed in the most ludicrous light possible. Sometimes Voltaire's ideas become extravagant, but his style never does. Sydney Smith frequently lacks simplicity, but Voltaire is always simple and never strains. What an admirable pamphleteer Voltaire would have made had he but been an Englishman! What inextinguishable ridicule he would have scattered over a Ministry or over an Opposition! How irresistibly people would have been forced to think anything he laughed at deserving of laughter! How he would have written up some measure of emancipation and made a reluctant Government afraid to refuse it! That Voltaire appreciated English freedom of speech we have already seen. Had he but understood the genius and the worth of our best literature as well, it would have been better for his critical, and

perhaps for his dramatic fame. Voltaire of course made fun of English ways now and then. My Lord Qu'importe, or What-then, who said nothing but 'How d'ye do' at quarter-hour intervals, is the prototype of many a caricature drawn by succeeding hands. But in the very chapter which contained this good-humoured hit at our proverbial insular taciturnity, he calls the English the most perfect Government in the world, and adds, with a truth which prevails at this day as much as ever, 'There are, indeed, always two parties in England who fight with the pen and with intrigue, but they invariably unite when there is need to take up arms to defend their country and their liberty.' Well might Goldsmith, in his 'Citizen of the World,' well might Disraeli, in 'Contarini Fleming,' pay their tributes in turn as Englishmen to the genius of Voltaire.

A noble weapon was that Voltaire owned, for one who used it rightly—who understood, as Sydney Smith said, how to value and how to despise it. It would be idle to deny that Voltaire sometimes used it unfairly. Fantastic, hot-tempered, sensitive, spiteful by nature, how could such a man have such a stiletto always unsheathed, and not sometimes give a jealous stab, and sometimes thrust too deeply, and sometimes wound those who were not worth piercing at all? He often imported petty personal spleens into his satires, and used his giant's strength upon some poor ephemeral pigmy, some Fréron or some

Boyer. But so did Horace, and Pope, and Swift, and so did Thackeray even in later and milder days. Voltaire has got a worse name for meanness of this kind than almost any other man of kindred genius, and yet seems, after all, to deserve it less than most of the great satirists of the world. Indeed, posterity has, upon the whole, dealt very harshly with Voltaire's errors, and made scant allowance of the praise which his purposes and efforts so often deserved. Few of the leading satirists of literature ever so consistently and, all things considered, so boldly turned their points against that which deserved to be wounded. Religious intolerance and religious hypocrisy, the crying sins of France in Voltaire's day, were the steady objects of his satire. Where, in these stories at least, does he attempt to satirize religion? Where does he make a gibe of genuine human affection? Where does he sneer at an honest effort to serve humanity? Where does he wilfully turn his face from the truth? Calmly surveying these marvellous satirical novels, the unprejudiced reader will search in vain for the blasphemy and impiety with which so many well-meaning people have charged the fictions of Voltaire. Where is the blasphemy in 'Zadig'? It is brimful of satire against fickle wives and false friends, intriguing courtiers, weak beings, intolerant ecclesiastics, and many other personages tolerably well known in France at that day. They might naturally complain of blasphemy who believed themselves

included in the description of the learned Magi who doomed Zadig to be impaled for his heretical doctrines concerning the existence of griffins. 'No one was impaled after all, whereupon many wise doctors murmured and presaged the speedy downfall of Babylon,' was a sentence which probably many in Paris thought exceedingly offensive and impious. Possibly yet greater offence was conveyed to many minds by Zadig's famous candle argument. Zadig having been sold into slavery, fell into the hands of a very humane and rational merchant, named Setoc. 'He discovered in his master a natural tendency to good, and much clear sense. He was sorry to observe, however, that Setoc adored the sun, moon, and stars, according to the ancient usage of Araby. . . . . One evening Zadig lit a great number of flambeaux in the tent, and, when his patron appeared, flung himself on his knees before the illuminated wax exclaiming, "Eternal and brilliant lights, be always propitious to me!" "What are you doing?" asked Setoc, in amazement. "I am doing as you do," replied Zadig. "I adore the lamps and I neglect their maker and mine." Setoc comprehended the profound sense of this illustration. The wisdom of his slave entered his soul; he lavished his incense no more upon created things, but adored the Eternal Being who made them all.' Is it impious to satirize the glory of war, the levity of French society, the practice of burying the dead in close churchyards in the midst of cities, the venal

disposal of legal and military offices? All these are the subjects on which the author pours out his gall in the 'Vision of Babouc.' The travels of Scarmentado simply expose religious intolerance in France, Spain, England, Italy, Holland, China. The letters of Amabed denounce fanaticism coupled with profligacy. Anything said against the manner in which the vices of Fa Tutto are exposed must apply equally to Aristophanes and Juvenal, to Rabelais and Swift, to Marlowe and Massinger. The 'History of Jenni' is a very humdrum argumentation against atheism; inefficacious, we fear, to convert very hardened infidels, and serving only to demonstrate the author's good intentions and his incapacity for theological controversy. 'The White Bull,' if it have any meaning whatever beyond that of any of Anthony Hamilton's Fairy Tales, means to satirize the literal interpretations of certain portions of the Old Testament in which very stupid theologians delighted. To accuse of blasphemy every man who refused to accept the interpretations which Voltaire in this extravagant parable appears to reject, would be to affix the charge upon some of the profoundest of our own theologians, some of the best and wisest of our thinkers. It is unquestionable that Voltaire was deficient in that quality which we call veneration. He had no respect even for what Carlyle terms the 'majesty of custom.' With all his hatred of intolerance, he was himself singularly intolerant of error. He did not care to conciliate

the feelings of those whose logical inaccuracy he ridiculed. Frequently and grievously he sinned against good taste, against that kindly, manly feeling which prompts a gentle mode of pointing out a fellow-man's error and follies. But there is nothing in these stories, at least, which affords any real foundation for a charge of blasphemy or wilful impiety; and these volumes more truly and faithfully than anything else which remains of him reflect to posterity the real character and spirit, the head and heart of Voltaire. In these we learn what Voltaire thought deserving of ridicule; and with that knowledge, on the great German's principle, we come to know the man himself.

What is the moral of all these satires? Voltaire gave them to the world with a moral purpose, and, indeed, marred the artistic effect of many of them by the resolute adherence with which he clung to it. Do they teach anything but that truth, unselfishness, genuine religious feeling, freedom, and love, are the good angels of humanity; and falsehood, selfishness, hypocrisy, intolerance, and lawless passion, its enemies and its curses? Why accept Juvenal as a moral teacher and reject Voltaire? Why affix to the name of Voltaire a stigma no one now applies to that of Rabelais? Voltaire mocked at certain religious teaching, unquestionably; and it is not, under ordinary circumstances, amiable or creditable to find food for satire in the religious ceremonials or professions of any man. To do so now would be

inexcusable, because it would be wholly unnecessary. Where each man has full and equal freedom to preach, pray, and profess what he pleases, nothing but malignity or vulgarity can prompt anyone to make a public gibe of his neighbour's ceremonials of worship, even although his neighbour's moral practices may appear somewhat inconsistent with true worship of any kind. To satirize the practices or doctrines of the established church of any civilized country now argues not courage, but sheer impertinence and vulgarity. But things were very different when Voltaire wrote. Where it might entail banishment, worldly ruin, or even death, to speak a free word of criticism upon the doings of the hierophants of a dominant authority, it was a very excusable and praiseworthy act to expose the folly of some of the deeds, the inconsistency and immorality of some of the teachers. It is more easy to pardon this than to pardon the 'Pucelle,' that brilliant, indecent burlesque of Chapelain's solemn muse which Richelieu suggested, which Malesherbes adored, which its author affectionately called 'Ma Jeanne,' which the yet to be famous author of 'Organt' desperately imitated. The 'Pucelle' is as unjustifiable to-day as when Voltaire wrote it; the stories no longer need to be justified.

Gessler may wear his hat any fashion he chooses, and only ill-breeding would laugh at him so long as he does not insist upon anyone performing any act of homage to his humour. But when he sets his

beaver upon a pole in the centre of the market-place, and orders imprisonment or exile for every subject who will not fall down and worship it, that man does a brave and wise act who sets the world laughing at the tyrant and his preposterous arrogance. The personages who used to sing comic songs and dance the clog-dance during certain performances of divine service several years ago were vulgar and culpable boors. Whatever they might have thought of the service, they were not compelled to attend it, and in our days theological differences are not decided by mobs and hob-nailed shoes. But if the incumbent of the church had the power to bring down penal disqualification, or exile, or worldly ruin upon the heads of all those who declined to acknowledge his ceremonials as their worship, the first man who raised a bold laugh at the whole performance might be very justly regarded as a hero. Something, at least, of this qualified character is to be said in palliation of the irreverence of Voltaire. Much that was stigmatized as blasphemy a century ago, most people regard as plain truth now. Much even of the most objectionable of Voltaire's writings may be excused by the circumstances of the time, by the feelings with which he wrote, by the distorted and hideous form in which Christianity was presented in the dogmas of so many of its professional exponents. Much, it is true, may be admitted to be wholly inexcusable, for did he not produce the 'Pucelle'?

But no one claims for Voltaire an immunity from some severe censure. All that is sought for him is a more general and generous recognition of the praise he merited and the motives which impelled him, a mitigation of the sentence which so many have pronounced upon him. No other man from Voltaire's birth downwards, not even excepting Rousseau, has borne such extravagance of praise followed by such a load of obloquy. He was not a profound thinker; he was not a hero; he was not a martyr for truth; he was not a blameless man. But he had, at least, half-glimpses of many truths, not of his own time, which the world has recognised and acknowledged since. He had probably as much of the heroic in him as a man constitutionally nervous and timid could well be expected to have. No one would ever have relished less the endurance of the martyr's sufferings in his own person, but he made odious and despicable those who had caused or connived at their infliction upon others, and he did something to render future martyrdoms impossible. For his time and his temptations, his personal offences were not very many or very great. If people would but cease to think of him as a philosopher either of freethought or of infidelity, and would merely regard him as a political and social satirist, they would recognise in his satirical works, not only the memorials of a genius unrivalled in its own path, but the evidences of a generous nature, an enlightened perception, and an earnest desire

for the happiness and the progress of human beings.

With these words we must take our farewell of Voltaire. Never was there a greater force in literature: never has a man been more wildly worshipped or more wildly execrated. His bitterest enemies can afford to think well of the champion of Rochette, of Calas and Sirven, of La Barre and Lally. His greatest admirers may regret the squabble with Frederick. But the whole life of Voltaire was one gallant fight for freedom. The influence he obtained in his own time was simply enormous, only rivalled by the enormous influences which his name and work have exercised since his time It is impossible to read, without being deeply touched, of that return to Paris in 1778, after an absence of well-nigh a generation, of the enthusiastic triumph accorded to him by the whole city, and of his death, whether from over-excitement or an overdose of laudanum, on May 30 in that same year. He had waged a life-long war against tyranny, oppression, and injustice of all kinds; if he was the great general of the war, he had the good fortune to rally round him the brilliantest of lieutenants—most brilliant of all, the greatest of his disciples, Diderot.

Denis Diderot was born at Langres in 1713, the son of a studious, intelligent sword cutler and a worthy woman; he had a 'divine Diogenes in petticoats' for a sister and a devout Jesuit for a brother. In his early youth he went to school with the

Jesuits, and became so enamoured of them that he sought to escape from Rome in order to join the order in Paris. His father intercepted the escape, but, with wise indulgence, took him himself to Paris to the Collège d'Harcourt. There the young Diderot had two years of excellent training; then the father announced that it was time he should begin the world, and offered him his choice of law or medicine. Denis Diderot disliked both. Medicine seemed to him as murderous as it seemed to Faust; law the intolerable doing of other folks' business. Diderot senior thereupon promptly and decisively cut off the supplies and Denis found himself thrown on his own resources. To be thrown upon one's own resources in a great capital with much ambition for success chiefly of the literary kind, and no money wherewith to ensure bed and board, is not a very agreeable experience in the present day, but it was very much more disagreeable in the last century. The life of a man of letters who wished to live by his pen was desperate, uphill work. He was often hungry, he was often homeless, his raiment often scanty, his linen often ragged. He was worse off than the gipsy because he would not steal; he was worse off than the tramp because he would not beg; he was worse off than the labourer because he was troubled by the thoughts, the hopes, the dreams which lifted him from the possibility of content in almost animal occupation and almost animal gratification of the imperious desires. Diderot was

destined to see the man of letters a man of power in France; but when he first launched his bark upon the perilous sea the man of letters was hardly recognised as better than an adventurer or a drudge.

Diderot for the first hard decade of his working life was both adventurer and drudge. He did some teaching, got a tutorship in the house of a wealthy man, and deliberately gave it up because it interfered with his scheme of existence. He did as much borrowing as he could. The needy Bohemians of Murger's immortal story did not live a more desperate life than he. Paris is the true Prague of Bohemia, and Diderot was free of the city. He knew what it was to starve. A kind landlady once forced a supper upon him when he was almost dying of hunger. He swore that if ever brighter hours dawned for him he would never refuse aid to any living creature or help to condemn him to such misery. It is pleasant to record that Diderot kept his oath. But the time for keeping the oath was far off. In the meantime he tramped Paris, wrote and read and hungered and thirsted; studied rather the book of life than books about life; married in the reckless Bohemian way a seamstress named Antoinette Champion, and made a dismal match of it. Men of genius are not always the pleasantest companions for the hearth and home, even where the sordid claims of daily life do not intrude and disturb. But Diderot was wretchedly poor, and the seamstress naturally brought no portion with her. She was full

of the domestic virtues, pious, prudent, careful. But she was rather older than Diderot, she could not possibly understand him; in the end his wild humours, his infidelities, wore out her patience and the bond galled. Poor little Lenette in Jean Paul Richter's masterpiece was much to be pitied for marrying Siebenkaes, though Siebenkaes was as moral as an apostle. But, on the other hand, Siebenkaes was to be pitied in that he was a man of genius and a poet who had married a mere Haus-Frau. We must pity Antoinette Champion; we may also pity Diderot. He should not have married, he was not meant for marriage; he could not keep the compact he had entered into; he could not do without intellectual companionship. Unlucky Antoinette Champion could give him her devoted affection, her untiring work, her poor hoarded pence for his cups of coffee, but she could not talk about the things nearest and dearest to his heart, and he inevitably drifted off to those who could. Who can help pitying her or blaming him? To have lived the life due to his marriage would have been suicide to Diderot, but not to live it was little short of murder—murder of the domestic hopes, the domestic yearnings, all that made life sweet to the poor seamstress. Philosophers are often bad house-fellows. After all, we have never heard Xantippe's side of the story.

For many bitter years Diderot toiled and drudged in Paris, doing all manner of hack work, befriending

all who sought his friendship, readily cheated and deceived by all who strove to cheat or to deceive him, translating Shaftesbury, penning pamphlets, enduring domiciliary visits from the police, even going to prison. A lampoon upon a courtly minion caused him to be arrested and sent to Vincennes, where he might have rotted to death but for the efforts of Voltaire. In the woods of Vincennes Diderot was allowed to wander, while he was still nominally a prisoner, in the company of Rousseau; it was while he was in Vincennes that he learnt his first sharp lesson in the infidelity of woman. He imagined that his new Egeria, Madame de Puisieux, would at least be true to him. He strangely fancied that genius, wit, scholarship, could bind a lewd woman to his side. She betrayed him, while her professions of love and devotion were still warm upon her lips; he was convinced of her treason and he gave her up. It is one of the most whimsical curses which Nature inflicts upon such men, that while they are themselves untrue they expect to find truth in others. Full of his friendship for Rousseau, whose flagging purposes he had animated with his own philosophical fire, full of bitter reflections upon the treachery of woman's love, Diderot left Vincennes a free man after three months of captivity, and set himself with all swiftness to giving the final touches to the first volume of the 'Encyclopædia.'

Much is expected of those who have the fortune or the misfortune to be called upon to play their

part in an epoch of transition. Diderot's part was played in such a time; he was almost unconsciously, but not quite unconsciously, preparing the way for the Revolution. The whole social order around him was wheeling swiftly into a new orbit, and Diderot put his shoulder to the wheel with a will. It is not easy even for the greatest of men to be absolutely certain that they live and move in a time of radical change, a kind of grand climacteric of life and order and law. But Diderot worked in a time when the grand climacteric of the political and social life of France was fast approaching, and he was distinctly conscious of the approaching change. What shape the change was to take, how great, how convulsive the change was to be, he can have hardly guessed, but he worked like a hero in the cause of change; any change from the condition of life, mental, social, political, in which the France of his youth was set. How far Diderot was prepared to go, at least in theory, we may learn from the passages which he interpolated into the Abbé Raynal's history of the two Indies. Take for example this sentence. 'Until a king is dragged to Tyburn with no more pomp than the meanest criminal, the people will have no conception of liberty. The law is nothing unless it be a sword suspended over all heads without distinction, and levelling all which elevate themselves above the horizontal plane in which it circles.' No wonder that Mallet du Pan declared that such sentences 'serve as a prelude to the revolutionary code.'

To an age like ours, so rich in the means it affords to all of knowledge, so fertile in the systematization and the spread of information, it is difficult at first to realize the literary revolution which was effected by the appearance of the 'Encyclopædia.' It was really the first of its kind, the 'Hero Eponymus' of encyclopædias. There had been encyclopædias before, but hardly in the sense which is now, since the days of Diderot, attached to the word. If Albertus Magnus made a kind of compilation, if Vincent de Beauvais wrote a 'Speculum,' if Roger Bacon in an Opus Majus set up the vestibule to an unfinished temple of knowledge, the 'Compendium Philosophiæ,' if a Ringelberg of Basle in the sixteenth century, and an Alsted in the seventeenth century, and a Chambers in the eighteenth century published cyclopædias, none of these ventures could at all compare with the 'vast operation' which Diderot and his friend so gallantly undertook and so gallantly carried through. Englishmen may well feel, however, a sense of gratification in thinking that the inspiration of the 'Encyclopædia,' nay more, its pattern and model, came from England. 'Our principal debt,' Diderot himself wrote, 'will be to the Chancellor Bacon, who sketched the plan of a universal dictionary of sciences and arts at a time when there were not, so to say, either arts or sciences.' The impassioned admirers of Bacon who seek to adorn his great memory with the authorship of the plays of Shakespeare and the essays of Montaigne might do better

in remembering the tribute that Diderot in the prospectus and D'Alembert in the preliminary discourse paid to the memory of Francis Bacon.

The very plan of the 'Encyclopædia' was modelled upon an English example, upon the cyclopædia of Ephraim Chambers which was published in London in 1727, and which was translated into French half a century later with a view to its publication in Paris. Le Breton, the Paris publisher, wanted a man of letters to help him in bringing out the book. He turned to Diderot, who had some reputation among booksellers as a needy hardworking author. Diderot examined the work, saw with the swift inspiration of genius what a great deed was to be done, and suggested to Le Breton that it should be done. Diderot's eloquence inspired Le Breton, inspired even D'Aguesseau; in the January of 1746 a privilege was procured, and a kind of syndicate of publishers formed to run the concern. Even Diderot, with his wide knowledge and desperate capacity for work, felt that he could not accomplish an encyclopædia, a 'book that should be all books,' single-handed. He wanted a friend, a colleague, an ally; he found that ally, that colleague, that friend in D'Alembert.

One wintry November night in the year 1717 a newly-born child was discovered, well nigh dead from exposure, on the steps of the church of St. Jean le Rond. A kindly hearted woman of the people, a glazier's wife, whose name curiously enough seems to have been Rousseau, adopted the deserted child.

The child was the son of the natural son of Madame de Tencin, an authoress of some small reputation and a courtesan of no reputation, who had been the mistress of a large variety of illustrious persons, including English Bolingbroke and French D'Argenson. No very illustrious person, however, parented the young D'Alembert; his sire was artillery-officer Destouches-Canon, the brother of Destouches the dramatist. Mr. John Morley, who is rather fond of sweeping criticisms, and who is little in sympathy with the lighter literature of the eighteenth century, is pleased to describe D'Alembert's uncle as 'the author of some poor comedies.' The criticism is neither just nor happy. The comedies of Destouches are scarcely so delightful as the comedies of Regnard, but Destouches is nearer to Regnard than Regnard is to Molière, and some of Destouches' comedies are both excellent and entertaining. When Destouches, the artillery-officer, discovered that his son had been adopted by the poor glass-worker, he allowed himself to feel some natural promptings of duty, if not of affection, and paid from time to time certain small sums for the child's education. It is one of the many curious and ironic facts attendant upon the genesis of the French Revolution that one of the master minds of the age, one of the dominant forces of the 'Encyclopædia,' should owe to the fostering care of the people the right to breathe, which was well-nigh denied to him by the soldier his sire and the harlot his mother. The eighteenth century in

France, so largely swayed by harlots and by soldiers, was fated to fall before the strange alliance of the philosophe and the prolétaire, and never did philosophe owe more to the prolétaire than D'Alembert, or more keenly remember the debt. Years after, when he had become famous, and Madame de Tencin was eager to claim her kinship with him, he repelled her proudly with the words, 'I am the son of the glazier's wife.'

Yet if he was the son of the glazier's wife—if he abided with her for no less than forty years, he was not entirely a source of satisfaction to his foster-mother. His passion for learning, which distinguished him from the moment when in 1730 he entered the Mazarin College, was the life-long despair of Mistress Rousseau. 'You will never be anything but a philosopher, and a philosopher is only a madman who makes his life miserable in order that people may talk about him after he is dead.' Such was the poor opinion held by the glazier's wife of philosophers. Nevertheless D'Alembert remained obstinate, remained a philosopher. His career resembles that of Balzac's Daniel d'Arthez in its single-minded devotion to study. He was happily constituted with a perfect genius for work. How many men of letters there are, harassed by constitutional infirmity, who begin each morning of their waking life with the melancholy reflection, 'What can I avoid doing to-day?' D'Alembert belonged to that happier class who salute the day with the

cheerily courageous question, 'What can I do to-day?' Yet this exquisite temperament was not due to physical health. His physique was as feeble as Voltaire's, as feeble as Rousseau's; all his life his health was bad, and his health reacted naturally enough upon his temper and made him fretful and impatient. D'Alembert was the only one of the great sceptics who was fostered by the sheltering wings of Jansenism. Most of the other Encyclopædists had been brought up under Jesuit influences; D'Alembert alone was nurtured on Jansenism. When the 'Encyclopædia' was started Diderot's thoughts turned at once to D'Alembert. D'Alembert was a great mathematician, one of the greatest in France; geometry was to him the passion that poetry or that pleasure is to men of different mould. In many ways, indeed in most ways, D'Alembert was strangely dissimilar to Diderot. All that was wild, reckless, wanton in Diderot's nature was entirely wanting to D'Alembert's character. Diderot, as we have said, was a Bohemian of Bohemia; D'Alembert was precise, even austere, scholastic. Some of his utterances on the scholastic life remind us of the later loneliness and reserve of Arthur Schopenhauer. Even the alliance which D'Alembert formed in later years with Mdlle. de l'Espinasse had nothing in common with Diderot's wild amours. His affection for that greatly gifted and amazingly sensitive lady was not a cause of great happiness to D'Alembert, but it was an affec-

tion of a high type, and if Mdlle. de l'Espinasse could only have included among her gifts the art of being faithful she might have sweetened instead of embittering the career of the great philosopher.

Around these two men the little army of writers for the great work grew up and held together. High stood Holbach the wealthy, the aggressively atheistic, who came from a childhood in the Palatinate to live out his life in Paris, and whose 'System of Nature,' written under the pseudonym of Mirabaud, was attacked by both Voltaire and Frederick the Great; born in 1723, he was to live till the dawn of Revolution and die in the great year 1787. High, too, stood Grimm—Frederick Melchior Grimm—who, born in the same year, was to outlive the century and die in 1807 at Gotha with a mind stocked with marvellous memories—memories of the war against Rameau on behalf of the Italian music and his headship of the 'coin de la Reine,' memories of the great 'Encyclopædia,' memories of the great Revolution. He was given by the fates nearly a century of life, and he was lucky in his century and the lines his life was cast in. High stood Claude Adrien Helvétius, who was born in Paris in 1715, the year of the Sun-King's death, of a race of quacks and physicians; who was in turns Farmer-General, versifier, man of letters. He wrote a book 'On the Mind,' which came near to teaching Utilitarianism, but only succeeded in laying down the doctrine that the love of pleasure and the dislike of pain were the

sole motives for our actions. The book shocked the youth of Madame Roland, roused the critical wrath of Turgot, and was publicly burned. Helvétius was otherwise remarkable for marrying a very pretty wife, whom we shall meet again, and for being the friend of the Great Frederick. If he made a hard and unpopular landlord, he did at least shelter the Young Pretender generously in his hour of need and pension Marivaux. He died in 1771. These were the generals of the Encyclopædic army. It was a strange and miscellaneous army. The greatest thinkers of the time wrote on the topics to which they had devoted their profoundest thoughts; ladies of fashion sent dainty fragments of information about clothes and coquettish minutiæ about the dressing of the hair. The 'Book that was to be all Books' was to be as catholic as the world itself and to contain all things. Nothing in the history of literature is more remarkable than the way in which all these people, philosophers and fair ladies, economists, scholars, soldiers and wits, worked together at the great work in loyal and even loving unison. There was no writer for the 'Encyclopædia' who did not take a personal pride in the 'Encyclopædia.' The influence of the 'Encyclopædia' upon the thought that tended to Revolution is incalculable. It was only not as great an influence as that of Voltaire, and the influence of Voltaire himself was not so distinctly instrumental in bringing the Revolution about as was the influence of the self-torturing sophist, wild Rousseau.

CHAPTER V

THE APOSTLE OF AFFLICTION

The first spot which the stranger seeks in visiting Geneva is the little island which bears the name of Geneva's greatest citizen. It is but a little handful of earth, carefully banked against the wear of the waters, carefully railed and kept scrupulously trim. It presents the usual medley of the sublime and the ridiculous essential, or at least inevitable, to all show-places. One of the most conspicuous objects on the little island is a refreshment kiosk, where a placard informs the thirsty that American drinks are compounded. The other is the statue of the greatest thinker and teacher of the eighteenth century, Jean Jacques Rousseau. Here he loved to come in the days of his youth when the confines of the island in their natural shape met the waves and ripples of the lake, and when what is now called the Old Town was the only Geneva extant, rising tier upon tier of dull brown roofs along its hill, clustering about the antique towers of its church, with the eternal lines of the twin Salève hills for a background. The new Geneva, the Geneva of the traveller and the tourist, had not come in existence then ; but the Geneva of

to-day, which offers its shelter to the Nihilist and to the cosmopolitan revolutionary, is practically in spirit the same Geneva which sheltered the Protestant family of Rousseau from the wrath of a persecuting king.

Rousseau was born in Geneva on June 28, 1712. Early in the sixteenth century, Didier Rousseau, a bookseller of Paris, carried his Protestantism from Paris to Geneva, and there set up his staff. A son Jean begat a son David, and a son David begat a son Isaac, and the son Isaac begat Jean Jacques, and with him, all unwittingly, the 'Contrat Social' and the French Revolution. Rousseau's birth cost his mother her life. To use Mr. Morley's fine phrase, Rousseau 'was born dying.' 'My birth,' he writes himself in the 'Confessions' with that note of almost intolerable pessimism which he always loved to strike, 'was the first of my misfortunes.' The motherless child had the strangest imaginable education. Isaac Rousseau was an imaginative dreamer, and he communicated the grave malady to his son. There is nothing in the last century at once more pleasing and more poignant than the picture Rousseau draws of the long evenings he and his father spent together, the man and the child of seven, reading to one another in turn the novels and romances that the mother had collected together. Through the long hours of the night, the strangely assorted pair would sit and follow with feverish delight the long-winded evolutions of last century fiction until the

music of the morning birds would arouse them from their paradise to the consciousness of a workaday world outside which was waking up and busy. When the undiluted fiction was exhausted, then came the service of the scarcely less fanciful muse of history. Before the eyes of Isaac and Jean Jacques the glittering brocaded panorama of Venetian history unfolded itself, and the mind of the child gave itself up in wondering homage to the worship of Plutarch and the Plutarchian heroes. 'Every healthy child is a Greek or a Roman.' Such is the axiom of a very different philosopher from Jean Jacques, of Transatlantic, transcendental, Bostonian Emerson, himself the heartiest lover of Plutarch of modern times. Rousseau was not a healthy child, but he shared the common lot of all intelligent children in becoming an antique hero. The heart of any child in which the least seed of the heroic is by good fortune sown always swells over the splendid pages of Greek courage and Roman fortitude; it is possible that the heart of a sickly sensitive and highly imaginative child beats all the quicker for the very difference which chymic destiny has made between him and the breed of heroes. However that may be, the heroes of Plutarch came out of the dead past, and walked abroad with the child Rousseau, welcomed him to their fellowship, hailed him as a peer. It is a proof of the amazing, delicious, self-deceptive affectation of childhood that we find the young Rousseau on one occasion startling

his hearers, in recounting the myth of Mutius Scaevola, by stretching his little arm over a hot chafing dish, and so quickening the spirit of the ancient legend. A like tale is to be told in later days of another disciple of Plutarch, a disciple of Jean Jacques, the young St. Just.

Rousseau was left at an early age practically an only child. There was an elder, most unruly brother, who took to himself the key of the fields and vanished from the knowledge of his kinsfolk and from the knowledge of history for ever. Imagination, which always stands on tiptoe by the side of her stern sister, History, would dearly like to speculate on the fate of that lost child of the Rousseau race. He was seven years older than Jean Jacques, who does not even tell us his name; he was brought up to the father's trade of watch-making; he was a libertine and a rascal; he was tenderly loved by Jean Jacques. Once Jean Jacques flung himself between the brother and a beating which the father was bestowing on him, and received the blows until the father stayed his hand. Let us hope the brother was not ungrateful. 'He loved me,' says Rousseau, 'as much as a scapegrace can love anything.' At last the scapegrace took himself off altogether; a vague rumour reached his relatives that he had gone to Germany; he never wrote them a line; that was the end of him. For all that they knew, for all that we know, he may have been dead and buried within a year of his flight; or he may have changed his

name and his mode of life, and ended not dishonourably. Who knows? There may have been in some German town a Rousseau who followed with wonder and delight the rising fame of Jean Jacques, and said to himself, 'Behold my brother.' But if he did he kept his admiration to himself, and Jean Jacques never heard of him again.

His early education was with an aunt, a singer of sweet old songs, the memory of which clung to Jean Jacques and brought tears into his eyes in days long later. Then his father quarrelled with the operations of the law in Geneva, broke up his home, and sent Jean Jacques, then ten years old, to M. Lambercier's school at Bossey village. Here he first learned his passion for the country; here too he gained that other extraordinary passion which he has set forth so crudely in the 'Confessions,' and which may well be left there. True to that strange principle with which he set out in writing his life, the principle of leaving 'nothing to tell to God,' he regards the sensual dawnings in the feeble body of an imaginative child with a direct simplicity which would make one loathe virility if it were not that the absence of virility was the quickening cause of Rousseau's diseased, unhappy imaginings. Let us pity and pass on. While at Bossey a rigorous punishment for an offence which he had not committed roused in the childish mind that first sense of the Swift-like 'fierce indignation' against injustice which became the key-note of his life. To the

hysterical temperament of Jean Jacques the sense of wrong was like the travail of a new birth, sharply dividing the old childish life from the new. From Bossey, Rousseau came back to Geneva to live with his uncle and to prepare for the vocation of a minister. But he was sent first to a notary's office, and when he was promptly dismissed thence for incapacity he was apprenticed to an engraver. The engraver was a rough, brutal man; his brutality converted Rousseau into a liar, a coward, and a thief. At last, in sheer terror of his savage taskmaster and of a promised chastisement, Rousseau followed the example of the ne'er-do-weel elder brother and in his turn ran away. He was then sixteen years old. Without a penny in his pockets, without a trade, without an object, without any friends save those he was leaving behind him, he faced the world and stepped boldly forth into the unknown. It is a curious example of the strangely contrasted nature of Rousseau that the spirit which shrank in despair from a physical punishment confronted with an almost heroic indifference the perilous possibilities of the vagabond life. But the old note of romance was once more set a-stirring. Rousseau saw himself on his fool's errand as the hero of all manner of wonderful and delightful adventures; he noted no darkness on his dubious course, but only a nursery world of festivals, of treasures, of adventures, of loving friends and complaisant mistresses, and he stepped out with a high heart like a child in a fairy

tale. He drifted for a day or two among the vil lages adjacent to Geneva, tasting the ready hospitality of the peasant. Then he made his way to Confignon village, in Savoy, where a zealous priest dwelt, M. de Pontverre. Rousseau visited the priest, listened to his arguments, accepted his dinner and his Frangi wine, found his arguments excellent, and intimated his readiness to enter the Catholic Church. To hasten that end M. de Pontverre sent his young disciple post-haste to Annecy, to Madame de Warens and his fate.

After three lazy lounging days, singing under every château window in the hope of evoking the adventures which never came, Rousseau found himself at Annecy, and entered upon the epoch of his life which, as he says himself, decided his character. He expected to meet a wrinkled devotee ; he found the fairest face, the bluest eyes, the most dazzling complexion, the most enchanting throat, all the charms that a young and pretty woman possesses in the eyes of an imaginative, sentimental lad. Here, on the threshold of the long-looked-for adventure, Rousseau pauses to give a portrait of himself, and we may well pause with him to look on the picture. A slight, well-proportioned figure, a neat foot, a fine eg, a dainty mouth, black hair and brows, eyes deeply sunk and small but full of passionate fire, a manner unusually awkward and timid, such were the characteristics of the young convert who presented himself to Madame de Warens. A pretty fellow

enough, indeed; but he says that he was quite unconscious of his physical advantages, which perhaps we may slightly doubt. His eyes were evidently the feature of his face. In the memoirs of Madame d'Epinay two independent tributes are to be found, written in later years, to the attractions of his eyes: 'eyes that overflow with fire,' says one witness; 'eyes that tell that love plays a great part in his romance,' says the other. But those eyes did not just then overlook Madame de Warens. She received the youth courteously, kindly; despatched him to a monastery in Turin to complete his conversion. Once again Rousseau tramped along, cheered by a bright enjoyment of the changing scenes of each day's journey. At Turin the curious process of Rousseau's conversion was completed; at Turin he faced for the first time in a foul adventure some of the most horrible facts of life. Soon he found himself alone in Turin without money, with dreams of adventures still buzzing in his head, but never taking tangible shape. He became a lackey in a lady's house; he stole a piece of ribbon, and charged the crime upon an honest comely girl a fellow-servant, and was haunted by regret for his baseness all his life; he starved in garrets and became again a lackey and was dismissed this time, and, having no better thing to do, thought of Madame de Warens, and turned again his adventurous footsteps towards Annecy. In the autumn of 1729 he appeared for the second time before Madame de

Warens. With her for nearly ten years his life became identified. Much of these years were still what the Germans would call Wander-Years, years spent in drifting here and there, now to Lyons, now to Paris, now to Freiburg, seeking an occupation, seeking employment, seeking an aim in life, with no great assiduity, with no consistency—a vagrant, drifting creature. He was declared too ignorant to be a priest; he had not sufficient application to become a fine musician, and the story of his audacity in attempting to conduct a concert at Lausanne without knowing anything about music is rich in solemn caricature. In 1732 he settled down at Chambéry with Madame de Warens and with her friend Claude Anet in the most extraordinary family union ever recorded.

But this household, like all other households, had its term. Anet died, and Rousseau wept for him and wore his black coat. Then he and Madame de Warens retired to that most famous farmhouse, Les Charmettes, and Rousseau dallied with nature and vexed himself over theology and tried unsuccessfully to learn Latin and fencing, dancing and chess. Then in process of time the Charmettes idyll broke up. Rousseau, unfaithful to Madame de Warens, was much surprised and pained to find that she was unfaithful to him. They parted, and the happiest hours of Rousseau's unhappy life came to an end. Dismally poor, he drifted to Paris and tried to convince the Academy of Sciences of the merits of a system of musical notation which he considered

that he had discovered. Poverty held him for her own till, in 1743, he was made secretary to the French Ambassador to Venice, M. de Montaigu, whom Rousseau soon cordially hated. Eighteen not unhappy months in Venice came to an end in 1745, which found him in Paris again, in a squalid Sorbonne hostelry, which it had been better for him never to have seen. For here he met Thérèse Le Vasseur, pitied her, loved her, and most madly made her the companion of his life. She was as ignorant as a Digger Indian, yet Rousseau was fond of her, remained fond of her when she had ceased to be fond of him. We need not dwell upon the melancholy story of the children of this strange union, deposited, each in its turn, in the Foundling Hospital and untraceable for ever even to the kind-hearted Maréchale de Luxembourg. The speculative mind, the mind of the romancist, might employ itself not unprofitably in wondering what became of those five children, the nameless bearers of the blood of Rousseau. But if Thérèse did take to drinking brandy and to running after stable boys, we must admit that she had some excuse in the conduct of a husband who forced her against her will to be so unnatural a mother.

Rousseau's life is not a pleasant life to dwell upon. Stern poverty did not ennoble him, though it made him utter noble words. His friendships with Diderot and with Grimm ended only in miserable squabbles : his love affairs were too often

ludicrous; fame, which never brought him wealth, never brought him dignity in his attitude to life. He seems to have thought that every woman should fall in love with him: he seems to have thought that every other man of genius was one in a plot to conspire against and to injure him. His visit to England was but an acrid Odyssey, and added his friend and host, Hume, to the list of his fancied enemies. His grim end by his own hand, at that Ermenonville where he loved to botanize, is the stern conclusion of one of the saddest lives ever wasted on our wasting planet.

It is pleasanter to think of the books than of the man. His first great success was the 'Nouvelle Héloïse,' one of the most exquisite romances ever written. The happiest judgment is expressed by Lord Beaconsfield in his last novel, and in some of the most graceful words he ever penned, when he speaks of 'those feelings which still echo in the heights of Meilleraie, and compared to which all the glittering accidents of fortune sink into insignificance.' Then came the 'Social Contract,' with the Revolution in its womb, and 'Emile,' for which the imbecile Paris Parliament ordered his arrest. The social success of 'Emile' was something surprising; it rivalled the fame of the sorrows of the divine Julie. Taine draws a skilful picture of the woman of the Court, to whom love is mere gallantry of which the exquisite polish poorly conceals the shallowness, coldness, and, occasionally, wickedness;

to whom life means only the adventures and personages of Crébillon the younger. One evening, however, this idle creature finds the 'Nouvelle Héloïse' on her toilet-table; she reads, and keeps her horses and footmen waiting from hour to hour; at last, at four o'clock in the morning, she orders the horses to be unharnessed, and then she passes the rest of the night in reading and in tears; for the first time in her life she finds a man who knows what love really means. In like manner, those who would comprehend the success of 'Emile' must call to mind the children of the age; the embroidered, gilded, dressed-up, powdered little gentlemen, decked with sword and sash, carrying the hat under the arm, bowing, presenting the hand, rehearsing fine attitudes before a mirror, repeating prepared compliments, pretty little puppets, in whom everything is the work of the tailor, the hairdresser, the preceptor, and the dancing-master; the precocious little ladies of six years, still more artificial, bound up in whalebone, harnessed in a heavy skirt composed of hair and a girdle of iron, supporting a head-dress two feet in height, so many veritable dolls to which rouge is applied, and with whom a mother amuses herself each morning for an hour and then consigns them to her maids for the rest of the day. But when this mother reads 'Emile' she immediately makes sentimentally sensible resolutions to dress her offspring better and to nurse her next child herself.

Seldom have men been more misappreciated

during and since their lifetime than was Rousseau. We think with despair of that letter of the Comtesse de Boufflers to Gustavus III., published by Geffroy. 'I entrust,' says this rash critic, 'to Baron de Lederheim, though with reluctance, a book for you which has just been published, the infamous memoirs of Rousseau entitled "Confessions." They seem to me those of a common scullion and even lower than that, being dull throughout, whimsical and vicious in the most offensive manner. I do not recur to my worship of him, for such it was; I shall never console myself for its having caused the death of that eminent man David Hume, who, to gratify me, undertook to entertain that filthy animal in England.'

We think with despair, too, of M. Taine writing that 'an effort of the will is required to read the "Nouvelle Héloïse,"' and of Mr. John Morley's slighting remarks upon that marvellous book—remarks which make it clear that he has never read it with the care it deserved, and has unconsciously misunderstood and misrepresented some of its most essential features. Yet Mr. Morley can in general appreciate Rousseau, although there is a coldness in his great biography which Mr. Morley seems to feel towards every man but Burke. Yet M. Taine can appreciate Rousseau, as he shows when he describes Rousseau as the artisan, the man of the people, ill-adapted to elegant and refined society, out of his element in a drawing-room; the man of low birth, badly brought up, sullied by a vile and precocious

experience, highly and offensively sensual; the man of morbid mind and body, fretted by superior and discordant faculties, possessing no tact, and carrying the contamination of his imagination, temperament, and past life into his austere morality and into his purest idyls; the man who has no fervour; the man who is the opposite of Diderot, avowing himself that his ideas arrange themselves in his head with the utmost difficulty, that certain sentences are turned over and over again in his brain for five or six nights before he puts them on paper, and that a letter on the most trifling subject costs him hours of fatigue; the man who cannot fall into an easy and agreeable tone, nor succeed otherwise than in works which demand application. 'As an offset to this, style, in this ardent brain, under the influence of intense, prolonged meditation, incessantly hammered and re-hammered, becomes more concise and of higher temper than is elsewhere found. Since La Bruyère we have seen no more ample, virile phrases, in which anger, admiration, indignation, studied and concentrated passion, appear with more rigorous precision and more powerful relief. He is almost the equal of La Bruyère in the arrangement of skilful effects, in the aptness and ingenuity of developments, in the terseness of impressive summaries, in the overpowering directness of unexpected arguments, in the multiplicity of literary achievements, in the execution of those passages of bravura, portraits, descriptions, comparisons, creations, wherein,

as in a musical crescendo, the same idea, varied by a series of yet more animated expressions, attains to or surpasses, at the last note, all that is possible of energy and of brilliancy.'

This is skilful criticism, keen as a knife, clean-cutting, dexterous ; but there is even keener to be found in a great English writer. Hazlitt has never been happier than in his study of Rousseau. Rousseau, he says in an essay informed with fine sympathy, 'had the most intense consciousness of his own existence. No object that had once made an impression on him was ever after effaced. Every feeling in his mind became a passion. His craving after excitement was an appetite and a disease. His interest in his own thoughts and feelings was always wound up to the highest pitch, and hence the enthusiasm which he excited in others. He owed the power which he exercised over the opinions of all Europe, by which he created numberless disciples and overturned established systems, to the tyranny which his feelings in the first instance exercised over himself. The dazzling blaze of his reputation was kindled by the same fire that fed upon his vitals. His ideas differed from those of other men only in their force and intensity. His genius was the effect of his temperament. He created nothing, he demonstrated nothing, by a pure effort of the understanding. His fictitious characters are modifications of his own being, reflections and shadows of himself. His speculations are the obvious exaggerations of

a mind giving loose to its habitual impulses, and moulding all nature to its own purposes. Hence his enthusiasm and his eloquence, bearing down all opposition. Hence the warmth and the luxuriance as well as the sameness of his descriptions. Hence the frequent verboseness of his style, for passion lends force and reality to language and makes words supply the place of imagination. Hence the tenaciousness of his logic, the acuteness of his observations, the refinement and the inconsistency of his reasoning. Hence his keen penetration and his strange want of comprehension of mind; for the same intense feeling which enabled him to discern the first principles of things, and seize some one view of a subject in all its ramifications, prevented him from admitting the operation of other causes which interfered with his favourite purpose and involved him in endless wilful contradictions. Hence his excessive egotism, which filled all objects with himself and would have occupied the universe with his smallest interest. Hence his jealousy and suspicion of others; for no attention, no respect or sympathy, could come up to the extravagant claims of his self-love. Hence his dissatisfaction with himself and with all around him; for nothing could satisfy his ardent longings after good, his restless appetite of being. Hence his feelings, overstrained and exhausted, recoiled upon themselves, and produced his love of silence and repose, his feverish aspirations after the quiet and solitude of nature. Hence, in

part also, his quarrel with the artificial institutions and distinctions of Society, which opposed so many barriers to the restrained indulgence of his will, and allured his imagination to scenes of pastoral simplicity or of savage life, where the passions were either not excited or left to follow their own impulse—where the petty vexations and irritating disappointments of common life had no place—and where the tormenting pursuits of arts and sciences were lost in pure animal enjoyment or indolent repose. Thus he describes the first savage wandering for ever under the shade of magnificent forests, or by the side of mighty rivers, smit with the unquenchable love of nature.' Never has the master mind of the last century been more admirably appreciated. It is gratifying, too, to find that Hazlitt shares with Lord Beaconsfield that fine enthusiasm for the 'Nouvelle Héloïse' which helps to console us for Mr. John Morley's somewhat ungenerous treatment of that enchanting book.

The writings of Rousseau which had the most direct influence in bringing about the Deluge so composedly anticipated by the fifteenth Louis were the 'Discourse on the Influence of Learning and Art,' whose appearance in 1750 effected, according to Grimm, a kind of revolution in Paris; the 'Discourse on Inequality,' published in 1754; and, above and beyond all, the 'Social Contract,' which came upon the world like a thunderclap in 1762. The essay on the 'Causes of Inequality among Men'

contained, it has been happily said, 'the germs of the whole radical democratic system which he developed in his numerous subsequent writings.' In the second essay Rousseau declares civilization to be a disease, and civilized men a degenerate race. All the customs and institutions of a developed society are in his opinion unnatural and artificial. To abolish society, therefore, and return to what he chooses to call the 'state of nature,' is the one thing necessary to happiness. Inequality among men is the result of their degeneration; and this degeneration is caused by society; which, he admits, may develop the capacities and perfect the understandings of men, but makes them morally bad. This assertion he attempts to justify by saying that the existing social order had been produced by an unnatural measure of power on the one hand, and an unnatural weakness on the other.

Rousseau soon leaves the solid ground of reality, and deduces from the ideals of his own brain, as premises, all manner of conclusions. The first man, he cries, who, after enclosing a piece of land, dared to say, This is mine, and found other men simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civilization. What crimes, what wars, what murders, what misery and horror would have been spared the human race, if some one, then, had torn down the enclosure, and had cried to his fellows: 'Beware of listening to this impostor; you are lost, if you ever forget that the fruits of the

earth belong to all in common, and the earth itself to no one.'

Not unnaturally the plebeian Rousseau, 'living from hand to mouth, by turns valet, clerk, tramp, tutor, copyist, author, fugitive,' was filled with fitful hatred of the rich and powerful. This fitful hatred, together with an abiding love of humanity, made him burn with the desire to overthrow society and carry men back to that state of 'nature' which he conjured up in his imagination. Are not all the advantages of society, he indignantly asks, for the benefit of the powerful and the rich? Are not all lucrative employments filled by them alone? And is not public authority entirely in their favour? When one of them robs his creditors or commits other rascalities, is he not sure of impunity? Are not the clubbings that he administers, the acts of violence that he commits, the murders and assassinations of which he is guilty, mere matters that are hushed up, and after six months no longer mentioned?—But let this same man be robbed, and the entire police force is immediately on the alert; and woe to the innocent man whom he chances to suspect.—A rich man has to pass a dangerous place? See how many escorts he has.—The axle of his carriage breaks? Everyone flies to his assistance.—There is a noise at his door? He speaks a word, and silence reigns.—The crowd incommodes him? He makes a sign, and the road is clear.—A waggoner gets in the way of his carriage?

His flunkeys are ready to beat the waggoner to death, and fifty honest pedestrians would be crushed under the wheels rather than that the gorgeous equipage of one puppy should be retarded. How different is the picture of him who is poor! The more humanity owes him, the more society refuses him. All doors are closed to him, even when he has the right to have them opened; and if he sometimes obtains justice, he does so with more difficulty than another would have in obtaining pardon for a crime. If there is a forced labour to be undertaken, or militia to be levied, he is selected to do it. In addition to his own burden, he bears that which is shifted upon him by his richer neighbour. At the least accident that befalls him, everyone deserts him. Let his poor cart upset, and I hold him lucky if he escapes the outrages of the brisk lackeys of some young duke. In a word, all free assistance flies him in time of need, for the very reason that he has nothing with which to pay for it. But I regard him as a ruined man if he is so unfortunate as to have an honourable spirit, an attractive daughter, and a powerful neighbour.—Let us sum up briefly the relations between the rich man and the poor man: You have need of me, for I am rich and you are poor. Let us then make a bargain. I will vouchsafe you the honour of being my servant, on condition that you give me what little you have left, to repay me for the trouble I take in lording it over you.

This utterance is but one example of the bitterness

with which Rousseau attacked the existing order of things. Nor can it be denied that much of what he said of civilization in general was but too true of the rotten fabric of Old France. It may be said, it has been said, that at the first glance it might seem that Rousseau's imprecations upon intellectual education, science, and art were diametrically opposed to that spirit which produced the feverish thirst for knowledge characteristic of the time. But both movements were revolutionary, both were products of the profound discontent and longing for some radical change which pervaded men's minds before the Revolution. It is obvious that the deep hatred of the existing social system was common to all the various Utopias that were dreamed of by different men. It is quite true that all kinds of enemies were using their various weapons in the attack on the tottering fortress of the Old Order; that infantry, cavalry, artillery, regulars, guerillas, free lances, high-souled heroes, and stealthy assassins, made each his own species of attack, but all attacked.

The living words with which Rousseau, with all the fierce conviction of a genius that neared to madness, painted the ideal and idyllic bliss and innocence of men in a 'state of nature,' freed from the curses and corruptions of civilization, had an absorbing attraction for men who were vexed at every hour by the privileges, the pomp, and the insolence of a nobility and priesthood that had ceased to perform their proper functions, and lived by drain-

ing the heart's blood of the people. If Rousseau did not spare them, he did not spare the monarchy in its turn. Society was due, he said, to an iniquitous compact between oppressors and oppressed, which permitted a child to govern old men, an idiot to rule wise men, a handful of men to gorge themselves with dainties, while the famished multitude lacked the necessaries of life. For him the whole occupation of kings and their ministers had but two aims, to extend their domination without, and to make it more absolute within. When they pretended to have other aims they deceived. The expressions, public good, welfare of our subjects, glory of the nation, so stupidly employed in public edicts, were ever the harbingers of disastrous measures; and the people groan in advance when their masters allude to their paternal solicitude. But Rousseau has a remedy against tyranny, for the compact between the governors and the governed may be dissolved; the despot is master only so long as he is stronger than the people, and as soon as they are able to expel him, he can make no complaint of their violence. It will always be absurd for a man to say to a man, or for a man to say to a people, 'I make a contract with you according to which you bear all the expenses and I reap all the profits —a contract which I will observe only so long as I choose, but which you shall observe so long as I see fit.' If madmen sign such a treaty, their signatures are not valid. If men who are prostrate upon the

ground with a sword at their throats accept these conditions, their acceptance is null and void. The idea that men under compulsion, or madmen, could have contracted a thousand years ago for all subsequent generations is absurd. A contract, for a minor, is not binding when he becomes an adult; and when the infant has arrived at years of discretion he is his own master. At last we are adults, and we have only to act like rational men, in order to reduce to their true value the pretensions of that authority which calls itself legitimate. It possesses power, nothing more. But a pistol in the hands of a highwayman is also a power; will you, he asks, therefore say that I am in duty bound to give him my purse?—I yield only to force, and will recapture my purse as soon as I can seize his pistol.

When Rousseau declared war upon the Government, France and Europe rang with applause. The day will come, says Condorcet, when the sun will shine upon none but freemen who acknowledge no master save their reason; when tyrants and slaves, priests and their stupid or hypocritical tools, will no longer exist, except in history and upon the stage; when men will no longer speak of them except to pity their victims and their dupes, to maintain a useful vigilance by recalling the horror of their excesses, and to be able to recognise and to crush beneath the weight of Reason the first germs of superstition and of tyranny, if they should ever reappear. This was the Utopia of a philanthropist

who was destined to take poison in prison to escape from men more extreme than himself, eager to bring that gracious reader of Horace to the guillotine! This is, indeed, one of the most tragic aspects of the Revolution—the aspect which gives it at once its fascination and its terror. If men need shed few tears over the fate of insolent nobles, who thought no more of driving over a peasant than of killing a mouse, nor of libertine bishops, whose episcopal palaces were little like Christian places, they must needs mourn the fate of those great-hearted men who, imbued with a world-wide philanthropy, burned with a desire to usher in a millennium of bliss for oppressed humanity, but awoke from their dreams to the bitter reality that the populace were not always the idyllic and amiable beings that Rousseau had painted them, but occasionally too ferocious and too ignorant to distinguish friend from foe.

It is urged that the men of whom Rousseau speaks in his famous book on the 'Social Contract' are not concrete, tangible individuals, but pure abstractions, mathematical units of equal magnitude. Every man, according to him, is by nature innocent, affectionate, grateful, good. He is still more. He is also an entirely rational being—capable of assenting to a clear abstract principle, and of moving in the straight line of logical syllogism from the premises to the ultimate conclusions. In the dramas, dialogues, and other writings of the time, says Mr. Dabney—and this is true of other countries as well

as of France—appear gardeners, jugglers, peasants, country parsons, philosophers, tattooed barbarians and naked savages, all discoursing, reasoning, marching in the rectilinear path of syllogistic deduction from abstract ideas. Rational, good, perfectly equal and perfectly free—such are the abstract entities which Rousseau calls men, and who, he says, came together at some unknown epoch to make a social contract. Their aim in making this contract was to discover a form of association which should defend with the whole power of the community the person and the property of each associate, and by which each man, though uniting himself with all, obeyed in reality only himself, and remained as free as before. This united assembly of abstract individuals is called simply the State when it obeys its own will or remains passive; the Sovereign, when it acts upon itself; a Power, when compared with other similar assemblages. In the same way the individuals united in a State are called, when regarded collectively, the People; regarded as participants in the sovereign power, they are called Citizens; regarded as under the necessity of obeying their own laws, that is, the laws of the State, they are called Subjects. All this abstract juggling with words is employed by Rousseau in the specious but vain attempt to reconcile the absolute freedom of the individual with his absolute obedience to the will of the majority. Sovereignty, he says, is inalienable and indivisible. The general will can

never err. All error arises from party spirit; wherefore societies and corporations within the State should be either prohibited or so multiplied that no single one can have an appreciable influence. 'The sovereign, consisting merely of the sum of the individuals who compose it, has and can have no interest opposed to theirs; and consequently the sovereign power has no need of guaranteeing the subjects against tyranny, because it is impossible that a body should desire to injure all its members.'

In all this it is said everything is abstract. In the real world we live in we see concrete individual men, women, and children, with different desires, different passions, different intellectual capacities, and different moral characteristics. Not so in the ideal world which issued from the brain of Rousseau. All his men of the social contract are equal, all free, all good, all eager to obey cheerfully the general will. The people, not the King, are the sovereign. The King is but the people's clerk—nay, less than their clerk—their lackey. The contract between them is not of indefinite duration, and not one 'which can be annulled only by mutual consent, or by bad faith on the part of one of the contracting parties.' By no means. For, 'it is contrary,' says Rousseau, 'to the nature of the body politic for the sovereign to impose a law upon itself which it can never infringe.' No sacred and inviolable constitution to bind the people for ever! 'The right to change the constitution is the prime guarantee of

all other rights.' 'There is, there can be, no fundamental law obligatory for all time upon the whole people, not even the social contract.' For a prince, or an assembly, or magistrates to call themselves the representatives of the people is usurpation and falsehood. Sovereignty cannot be represented, for the same reason that it is inalienable. The moment a people elects representatives, it is no longer free, it no longer exists. The English, he argued, imagined themselves free, but they were vastly mistaken; they were free only during the election of members of Parliament; so soon as the election had taken place, they were slaves, they were nothing. The deputies of a people, thus, neither are nor can be its representatives; they are only its commissioners, and can make no final conclusions. Every law that has not been ratified by the people directly is null and void; it is not a law. 'It is not sufficient that the assembled people should have fixed the constitution of the State once by giving its sanction to a body of laws; they must hold, in addition, fixed and periodical assemblies which nothing can abolish or prorogue, so that on fixed days the people may legally assemble without the necessity of any formal convocation. At the moment when the people has thus assembled, all jurisdiction of the Government cases, the executive power is suspended.' Society starts again, and the citizens, restored to their original independence, renew, for so long as they please, the provisional contract which they had made

only for a term of years. The opening of these assemblies, the object of which is the maintenance of the social contract, should always begin with the decision of two questions which should be separately put to the vote. The first question is this: Is it the pleasure of the sovereign people to maintain the present form of government? And the second: Do the sovereign people wish to leave the administration in the hands of the present incumbents? In submitting, therefore, to leaders, the sovereign people merely delegate to them a power which they exercise in the name of the sovereign people whom they serve but which can be modified, limited, or re-assumed by the sovereign at will.' Thus the people possess not merely the legislative power, which belongs to them, and can only belong to them, but they delegate and take back again at will the executive function as well. So runs much of the gospel according to Rousseau.

The influence of Rousseau in bringing about the Revolution can hardly be overrated. In the midst of a thoroughly artificial life, social and political, he suddenly uplifted a voice of passion and pathos which made itself heard everywhere and called the men of his time to come back to nature. It was the cry of a prophet half-crazed by the fury of his emotion. Rousseau was intensely earnest. He seemed like a man who had never laughed. He was like one who looks over life from some Stylites' pillar, but whose whole soul is with the writhing, struggling, suffering mortals

he sees below him. 'Man is man's brother,' he cried out; 'in this world there are no masters and no slaves; or at least there should be none. Where now there is nothing but guilty luxury on one side, and hopeless misery on the other, there ought to be equality, love, brotherhood, and happiness.' He appealed to all that was noblest in human nature. He appealed to the high as well as the lowly. Most of his arguments were absurdities if they were to be treated as philosophic or economic reasonings; but he had got firm hold of his half of the whole truth—the fact that society was rotting because of its artificiality; that artificial and not natural distinctions stood as barriers between one set of men and another, between all men and true happiness. 'Pull down the artificial barriers,' was one part of his appeal, the part which told with most tremendous effect. That was what people cared about; they did not much mind the appeal to return to nature, to the condition of the natural man. Rousseau, in fact, like a great many other philosophers of the more poetic order, created a natural man; invented a being who never had existence, a creature of absolute truthfulness, courage, honesty, purity, health, and happiness. All the eloquence in the world would have failed to induce any considerable number of people to return to the condition of the natural man. They could not do it if they would; and they would not find themselves any better off even if they could. All that part of Rousseau's appeal might as well have been called

out to solitude. But the other part of the appeal sank deep into every ear which it reached. It thrilled conviction into hearts and minds. The rich and privileged themselves admitted its justice and its sincerity. The broad principles of Rousseau became positively fashionable among the aristocracy of France. Great ladies in the splendid salons of Paris raved about the new prophet—'the apostle of affliction' as Byron so happily styled him. Among the oppressed all over France his eloquence brought into flame a resentment that before had been only smouldering in vagueness and the dark. To them it told of the wrongs heaped for so many generations on them and on theirs; it put before them a picture of what they actually were, and side by side with that a picture of what they might be and what they ought to be. It dinned into their ears the too terrible truth that not natural laws of any kind but purely artificial regulations were answerable for all that misery with which a whole nation was accursed. 'Down with the artificial barriers!' was the refrain of every appeal. Rousseau did not mean revolution by force. He was not thinking of that. He wanted the whole people—princes, peers, peasants, and paupers alike—to reform themselves by a common effort. Nor is it by any means impossible that his genius, his energy, his passion might have done much to bring about such a great moral and social revolution—if only events could wait. But events could not wait. The growth of the moral revolution

would have been too slow. Things had gone too far. So when the other revolution began to show itself the people remembered what Rousseau had taught about the artificial barriers, and they levelled them with a crash which is echoing even still through Europe. Rousseau had many faults both as a writer and as a man. But as a writer he was endowed with a power of eloquence and of pity such as has rarely in the history of the world poured forth from platform or from pulpit. As a man he was filled by what a great English statesman of our own day, speaking of another reformer, not Rousseau, called 'a passion of philanthropy.' That one merit almost empties him of faults.

CHAPTER VI

THE POMPADOUR

A NEW influence had already taken its place in social and political life. The middle classes, the high bourgeoisie, financiers, farmer-generals, commercial giants, had taken their prominent place in the State, rivalling and overgrowing the nobility in the influence of their wealth and enterprise. The great names of France are no longer the names of old and illustrious families alone; they are the names of a Bergeret, of a Brissart, of a Bouret, of a Bragousse, of a Camuzet, of a Caze, of a Chevalier, of a Gaillard, of a Delahaye, of a Delaporte, of a Dupin, of a D'Arnoncourt, of a De Villemur, of a Grimod, of a Helvétius, of a L'Allement de Nantouille, of a Le Riche de la Popelinière, of a Lenormant de Tournehem, of a Rolland, of a Savalette, of a Thiboux. These are the men of the enormous fortunes who are forcing their way to the front, who are building themselves palaces, whose luxury eclipses the pride of princes, who are getting the offices of the State within their influence, who are marrying their daughters to the bluest blood and the noblest names of France. They are the patrons of the arts; the

painter, the poet, the man of letters, the wit, the philosopher, the sculptor, the architect, throng their ante-chambers, compete for their favours, and laud their names. The part of Maecenas is played by some wealthy man of business who began life in a counting-house or a wine-shop, and whom poets will gladly hail as 'dulce decus meum,' heedless of the absence of kingly ancestors.

The Pompadour offers to the world a further proof of the triumphs of the bourgeoisie. She was the daughter of a gentleman of the unpoetic name of Poisson, who had been sentenced, not undeservedly, to be hanged for malversation, but had saved his neck by a self-imposed exile. Honest or dishonest, rogue Poisson did get back to France after a time, did succeed by desperate pushes of Court favour in preserving his neck untwisted. It would have been a worse thing for Sieur Poisson, but an infinitely better thing for France, if the hanging had been duly and decorously effected, and effected before Madame Poisson had borne him a fair daughter; though, indeed, upon due reflection we must admit that the hangman's fingers would have saved France no whit. Madame Poisson was a lady of the lightest possible character; she was involved at the time of the Pompadour's birth in an intrigue with Lenormant de Tournehem, who, no mean authority on the matter, considered himself to be the girl's sire. He manifested for her all the affection of a father, provided for her education in the most liberal

way; if he had set himself the task of preparing a morsel for a king he could hardly have better set about it. All that the art, the culture, the polite muses of the age could do for Mademoiselle Poisson, they were called upon by Lenormant de Tournehem to do. No expense was spared in procuring her the best masters in all departments of social art. Guibaudet had taught her how to dance—Guibaudet the illustrious; Jeliotte had taught her to sing; she danced, we are told, as well as any dancing girl of the Opera; she sang as well as any professional singer, and Georges Leroy quoted against her the saying of Sallust concerning Fulvia, that 'she danced and sang better than was becoming to a decent woman.' The instruction that money could not buy, friendship gave. Crébillon deigned to teach her elocution, to instruct her in the acquirement of a perfect diction. She learnt to draw, to paint, to back a horse with more than common skill, to touch the harpsichord with distinction, to engrave. She ran the gamut of all the accomplishments befitting a great lady in an age that liked its great ladies to be, or to seem to be, cultured. She refined and tempered her quick intelligence in the society of men of letters, men of wit; she spared no pains, and no pains were spared for her, to make herself as attractive as possible, to heighten the effect of her physical beauty by the ornament of a many-sided culture. Whatever she did, she did well; her singing and playing were the rage in the little social

court of which she was the acknowledged queen. Thanks to Lenormant de Tournehem, she was fairly launched upon the glittering sea of wealthy Parisian society ; thanks again to his fostering care, she solidified her position by a wealthy marriage with his nephew, Lenormant d'Étioles. Her husband was not a comely man, and she does not seem to have professed to care much about him. Her marriage with him was to her but one step in the career which was to bring her so near the throne.

For the curious thing about the woman is that she seems to have been early inspired with the laudable ambition to become the King's mistress. It would almost seem as if she took all the labour and pains to make herself so brilliantly accomplished solely that she might become in fulness of time the mistress of the Well-beloved King. While she was yet a little girl Madame Lebon prophesied that she would become the mistress of Louis XV., and the prophecy seems to have exercised its guiding influence upon all her life. There is something melancholy to the moral, something entertaining to the cynical, in this picture of a girl slowly growing up into beauty and culture, and informed during all the years of her young maidenhood and all the years of her young married life with the one desire, the one hope, the one purpose of becoming the mistress of a satyr king. Soon after her marriage she said with a smile to some talk of love and lovers that the King alone in all the world could shake her

fidelity to her husband. The hearer thought, no doubt, that the fair D'Étioles was jesting; but the fair D'Étioles was perfectly serious. She would not be unfaithful to her husband with any save the King, not because she thought the King so hopelessly out of her star that the saying in itself implied eternal fidelity, but because she meant to be unfaithful to him with the King. It was a daring ambition even for the spoilt child of the wealthy bourgeoisie.

From the moment of her marriage in 1741 Madame Lenormant d'Étioles set herself to captivate the King. She crossed his path whenever she could, she sought to fire his voluptuous imagination with a vision of a rare and radiant creature, always beautifully attired, always smiling, always dazzling the world with her beauty and her wit. In the royal hunts at Sénart Wood she flitted before the kingly eyes a Boucheresque Diana very much to the indignation of Juno Châteauroux, who, discerning a rival and a dangerous rival, sternly banished the beautiful Diana from the royal hunt. The banished Diana bided her time. She could not afford to fight against Madame de Châteauroux, but she could very well afford to wait. There came a moment when it seemed as if she had waited in vain, as if the prophecy of her youth had cheated her. When Louis lay nigh unto death with that malignant fever at Metz, no heart in all the kingdom, not even Châteauroux's, can have mourned for the ailing King more

than Madame Lenormant d'Étioles. But the very fever helped her. Under its influence Louis was persuaded to banish Madame de Châteauroux from his presence and Madame de Châteauroux did not long survive the banishment. Louis recovered, earned his title of Well-beloved, and the way was clear for the ambition of the younger Poisson. She had underground influence at Court, and she plied it hard ; a faithful Binet, a faithful Bridge, an industrious Madame de Tencin pushed her cause. She appeared at a masked ball before the King, teasing and tempting him with her wit and her beauty. She dropped her handkerchief, Louis picked it up, and everyone said that the Sultan had thrown the handkerchief. Yet still Louis hung fire, even after a supper party where the royal delight in Madame's physical beauty was counterbalanced by a vague alarm at certain ambitious notes in her intellect. A bishop, too, made his appearance in the game, Boyer, bishop of Mirepoix, doing his best to prevent the threatened conjunction. But the stars were on the woman's side ; there was another intimate supper ; Madame d'Étioles was divinely charming, discreetly unambitious. But even while she welcomed the King's affection she painted such a terrible picture of the murderous fury of her deceived husband that she persuaded Louis to allow her to hide herself in a corner of Versailles Palace in the rooms that had belonged to Madame de Mailly. Once fairly installed in Versailles, Madame d'Étioles was not the woman

lightly to leave it. The unlucky husband was in despair, talked of killing himself, talked of tearing his false wife from the King's arms. Then passing from the tragic mood to the pathetic, he wrote a letter to the mistress imploring her to return to him. Luckless, diminutive, uncomely D'Étioles, what words of his, though he spoke with the speech of angels, would have brought her back to him now! She read the letter composedly, and handed it to Louis to laugh at. Louis, who had some of the instincts of a gentleman, said after reading it, 'Your husband, madame, is a very worthy man.' But, worthy or no, he was sent away from Paris into a kind of exile, and Madame d'Étioles had won the first trick in her great game.

The other tricks she took rapidly. She was soon made Madame de Pompadour. She was presented at Court and received with a strange melancholy civility by the Queen, and with cold indifference by the Dauphin. In a moment, as it were, she became the central figure in the State. A party was formed against her, fierce, virulent, and persistent. A party was formed for her, a party of all those who live by the favour of favourites, of all who thought to influence the King through the mistress, a party as virulent and as unscrupulous as its opponent. Roughly speaking, outraged virtue counted for little or nothing in the attacks upon and the intrigues against the new favourite. Indignation was chiefly aroused by the facts of her birth and

station. Hitherto the recognised mistresses of the King had been ladies of the noble order, ladies of name and race. In one case the King did a stately family the honour of raising all its daughters in turn to the purple. But to take a recognised mistress from the middle classes, from the third estate, from the bourgeoisie, to elevate a lady whose maiden name was Poisson, and whose married name was Lenormant, this was indeed an outrage upon decency and upon civilization. As a matter of policy it certainly was imprudent. It broke down one of the barriers of prestige with which the Old Order fenced itself from attack.

Whatever else the reign of Pompadour may have been, it was undoubtedly an Augustan epoch for the arts. It is usually in a period of decadence that the fine arts are most passionately cultivated, that the most eager attention is given to all the fair details of life—to exquisite architecture, to highly wrought literature, to decorative painting and sculpture, to delicate handicraft of all kinds, to engraving, to verse-making, to the binding of books. The courtly poets clustered round Madame de Pompadour like bees around a comb; they sang her praises with the sickly classicism of the time. A Court poet is usually an odious creature, but he seems nowhere more pitiful than when he is cutting his apish capers to win the smile of some royal mistress. The brazen Abbé de Bernis, leering over his triple chin, clung to the Pompadour's skirts and saved himself from ship-

wreck. Naturally he was grateful to his patroness, and he reeled off a world of insipid verses in her honour. Bernis is the stage abbé of the eighteenth century, witty, mean, voluptuous, neat at epigram, quick in turning a madrigal, great at a lady's toilet table, great at a rich man's banquet, suave, supple, smiling, servile, Epicurean in a sense which would have made Epicurus despair, pagan only in the baser way, a miserable creature. There was nothing better for such a fellow to do than to sing of Madame de Pompadour's dimples, and he sang of them with nauseating, wearisome iterance which might have disgusted even the woman to whom they were offered.

The luxurious, the decorative arts flourished under her sway. All the costly elegancies of life were dear to her, the potteries of China and Japan, the porcelain of Dresden, the glass work of Venice. Under her patronage the porcelain of Sèvres rose into triumphant rivalry with the skill of Saxony and the genius of the East. The condescension of Madame de Pompadour gave to the master workers of Sèvres a palace wherein to live and labour, a domain in which to rest and recreate. The artists of Sèvres, like the glass workers, were graced with the right to hunt, and they could avail themselves of the privilege in the Sèvres woods after their long hours in the work-rooms—long hours sometimes shared by Madame de Pompadour, who loved to come to Sèvres to assist in the choice of tints, and to supply

her colony with designs of her own composition. Madame de Pompadour loved to play at art, loved to be thought an artist. The lovers of the art of the last century delight in the slender folio which bears the title 'L'Œuvre de la Marquise de Pompadour,' in which her own designs, signed 'Pompadour fecit,' mingle with her reproductions of the designs of others, inscribed 'Pompadour sculpsit,' and with examples of her love for gems graven after the fashion of the antique. The nymphs and satyrs, the vines and children-cupids of the last century antique, have a peculiar charm of association when they are designed by Madame de Pompadour.

She had a great affection too for binding, for that exquisite art which reached perhaps in the last century its highest point. Under her patronage flourished Padeloup, the great Antoine Michel Padeloup, binder for kings and king among binders. Louis Douceur, Padeloup's contemporary, Padeloup's rival in the affections of the great, designed for Madame de Pompadour a blotting-book which is held by the learned to be the masterpiece of his art. M. Léon Gruel, the bookbinder and historian of bookbinders, sighs quaintly for the secrets that have lain beneath the covers of that book of citron morocco, wrought with Douceur's favourite lace design, 'A petits fers,' and emblazoned with the arms of Madame de Pompadour, the three castles on the escutcheon. Who, he asks, will tell us the secrets that this blotting-book has held? Think that she for

whom it was fashioned lived for twenty years the uncontested mistress of the destinies of France! Why cannot things of this nature speak and tell us of all that they have seen? So the master binder bemoans, and yet that blotting-book has its voice too, and bears its testimony to the innate love for beauty, for luxury, for exquisite refinement of all artistic workmanship, which is the especial characteristic of the Pompadour epoch.

Literature as well as art received her patronage. Her library was large, not from affectation. She sought culture in all directions; she was as eager to enrich her mind as to adorn her body, and the range of her reading was wide and varied. In history, in theology, in philosophy, her shelves were richly stored, for she felt an interest in all the creeds and all the scepticisms. Her love for the stage displayed itself in her splendid collection of theatrical works from the earliest dawn of the drama in France to the lightest Court ballet that was footed before the eyes of Louis XV. Nor was romance forgotten. It is a curious proof of the many-sided nature of the woman that in an age so gracefully artificial, so daintily gallant, she delighted in the rough old Carlovingian epics and the frank vigour of the legends of the Round Table. It must be remembered to Madame de Pompadour's honour that the patroness of Marmontel was the means of giving the concluding part of Galland's 'Mille et une Nuits' to the world, and that the goddess of Crébillon the

elder could take pleasure in the deeds of Roland and the loves of Lancelot of the Lake.

Yet the long period of Madame de Pompadour's sway over France is an unexhilarating study of public indecency, incapacity, and injustice. To her and to her creature, Controller-General Machault, France owed the ruinous invention of those 'acquits au comptant,' those bills at sight upon the King's signature which had always to be met and never to be explained or justified. During her reign the religious war raged with a new ferocity. Madame de Pompadour declared war upon the Jesuits, who, triumphing in the blows they had dealt to a reeling Jansenism, thought they could successfully defy the new influence at the foot of the throne. They were mistaken. The brilliant minister Choiseul was their enemy; Madame de Pompadour was their enemy; the philosophers, the Encyclopædists were their enemies. An alliance stronger than Jansenism ever could rally to its standards was formed against the Jesuits; blow after blow fell upon them with significant success: in 1762 the order was formally abolished by the Paris Parliament, its vast property confiscated to the Crown, and its members secularized. Madame de Pompadour's triumph was great; she had done to the Jesuits as they had done to the Jansenists. But if their defeat was a triumph for Madame de Pompadour, the years of her sway record few triumphs for France. The loss of the French colonies in Canada to the English, the fatal alliance

with Austria with its sequel of calamities, the crushing naval defeats at Lagos and Belleisle, the disastrous Carrickfergus expedition, the pitiful Peace of Paris—these are the jewels in the crown of the Pompadour glory. She died in the April of 1764, being only forty-four years of age. During all the years in which she had lived with the King she had kept her influence over him unimpaired, and had used that influence most evilly for France. Madame de Pompadour was not a great woman; she was the mistress of a very worthless king.

But bad and base as the reign of Louis XV. was, when the King was reigned over by Madame de Pompadour it was a reign fruitful in new and great influences in art and letters and thought. If Pompadour patronised Padeloup, she also patronised Voltaire, and under the shadow, as it were, of the genius of Voltaire the set of men grew into public attention who were the very immediate precursors of the Revolution; while a thinker of a very different school was calling upon civilization at large to shake off its superstitions, and return to the sylvan savagery of the early man. Voltaire and the Encyclopædists on the one side, Rousseau and the followers of Rousseau on the other, represent two irreconcilable influences, which had, however, the same effect of making directly for Revolution. No two publications have ever influenced their own times more directly than the famous 'Encyclopædia' and the no less famous 'Social Contract.' No two publications

had more direct effect in undermining the whole existing conditions of social order, and in advancing that new condition of things, which was to begin with the National Assembly, and to end—where? The Encyclopædists sprang into existence under the fostering influence of Voltaire. Voltaire, who was a sceptic but not an atheist, though he has often and absurdly been called so, was the leader of a school of thinkers many of whom were, so far as the term is ever applicable to philosophic thinkers, atheists. Rousseau was horrified by any suggestion of atheism; he was an impassioned Deist, and Deism was the creed of his consistent followers, was the creed of that consistent, most curious follower, Maximilien Robespierre.

Bad too as was the epoch of Madame de Pompadour, it had at least the merit of being better than the epoch that followed it. Four years later, two years after the death of Stanislas had united Lorraine to France, unhappy Maria Leszczynska died, and afforded Louis XV. the opportunity for a famous display of false sentimentality. He bewailed ludicrously enough the woman he had outraged and insulted all her life, and for a brief period he played a sickening comedy of repentance and reform. It did not last long. Maria Leszczynska was not a year in her grave when Louis, reeling along the familiar road of royal debaucheries, found in his path his fate and the fate of France in the person of the Du Barry.

CHAPTER VII

'HOW WILL BERRY PULL THROUGH?'

HIS Well-beloved Majesty Louis XV. had a certain sardonic humour of his own. His phrase about the Deluge was the epigrammatic summary of his own policy of pleasure and despair. Scarcely less epigrammatic, scarcely less significant, is another of the royal sayings. 'When I am gone,' he asks, and the words are underlined with a sneer, 'I should like very much to know how Berry will pull through with it.' The Berry of this bitter saying was the Dauphin of France, for whom destiny was reserving the crown and title of Louis XVI. The second son of Louis the Dauphin, son of Louis XV., death had steadily removed all obstacles to his succession. In 1765, when he was only eleven years old, his father died with the strange Roman words upon his lips, 'How astoundingly easy it is to die!' The little newly made Dauphin was immediately brought to Louis XV. and announced as 'M. le Dauphin,' and Louis is reported to have uttered some sentimental expressions of pity for poor France with a King of fifty-five and a Dauphin of eleven. The time was yet to come when the poor

little Dauphin of eleven might envy that elder brother of his who died in 1761, leaving it to his brother Berry to become the heir of France. Louis XV. did not love the new Dauphin, and always persisted in calling him 'Berry,' as if, with that kingly impression that words are as good as things, if not better, the calling the child by another than his rightful title would in some way relieve Louis from the dislike of regarding in him the future sovereign.

When little Louis was thirteen years old his mother died, poisoned, as she declared and as many believed. The dread of poison was common in the Court of France for many reigns, and any death at all suspicious or not easily explicable was sure to be set down to plot and to poison. Popular clamour inside the Court, popular rumour outside the Court, not merely asserted that the Dauphiness died poisoned, but named the instigator of the crime, the arch-poisoner, and even named his tool. Choiseul, so rumour said—and all the tongues with which its garment is traditionally painted talked this thing loudly—Choiseul was the arch-poisoner; Lieutaud, the Court physician, was the no less criminal tool. Lieutaud, the Court physician, took a curious method of replying to the rumours. He published his 'Médecine Pratique,' with a picture representing his version of a classic story, according to which the physician of Alexander, accused of planning to poison his royal master, drank off himself the draught he had prepared. As for Choiseul, he held his head high,

and defied rumour. But rumour, and such rumour, was very advantageous for political purposes. It strengthened tremendously the hands of Choiseul's malignant, strenuous rival, the Duke d'Aguillon, and his faction; very possibly it was through this rumour that such influence as the young Dauphin possessed passed into the hands of the D'Aguillon party. It seems certain that Louis XVI.'s repugnance to Choiseul was largely inspired by the impression made upon his childish mind that in Choiseul he beheld the murderer of his father and mother.

Louis XV. had the least possible affection for his grandson. He saw in him the most inappropriate successor, the most unkingly person, according to his ideas of kingliness, that could wait for a dead king's crown. A young gentleman who was ambitious to be remembered in history as 'Louis le Sévère' had obviously little in common with the man of many mistresses. Perhaps the King, who was so fond of cooking and wood-turning, might have felt some sympathy with the grandson whose most pronounced tastes were in favour of amateur lock-making and hunting. But the cold respectability of grandson Louis' mind, the unattractive awkwardness of grandson Louis' body, the blundering shyness of grandson Louis' bearing, were all so many insurmountable barriers to sympathy between Louis XV. and the Dauphin of France.

Everything about the young prince betokened a bourgeois mind, a nature inspired by all the bour-

geois virtues and marred by not a few of the bourgeois vices. He was well-educated in a commonplace way; he could read English well and hate England well; he had a pretty taste in geography; he loved making locks, and practised it later, to his cost, with a scoundrelly locksmith named Gamain; he liked looking through telescopes with his short-sighted eyes; he liked orderliness, formality, regularity; he was great at commonplace-books, classified extracts, compilations; he was grotesquely economical where economy was of no importance; he had a certain affection for the character of Richard III. of England, whom he considered to be a most ill-used man. To this commonplace, dull, respectable bourgeois prince the destiny that watches over princes gave as a wife the most unsuitable woman in the world, the beautiful Marie Antoinette of Austria.

Maria Theresa, ambitious daughter of the Pragmatic Sanction, ambitious mistress of the partition of Poland, dreamed of an alliance with France. The dream was fostered by Kaunitz, it pleased the mind of Louis XV.; it was decided that the grandson of the French King should marry the youngest daughter of the Austrian Empress. Marie Antoinette, who was born on November 2, 1755, was the last of the sixteen children that Maria Theresa bore to her husband, Francis I. It is recorded that on the day of the birth of Marie Antoinette a great earthquake convulsed a large part of the world; this earthquake, which ruined Lisbon, and impressed so differently

Voltaire and Goethe, seemed to certain superstitious courtiers an omen of significance concerning the young princess. The education of the royal children was careful and domestic. Francis I. and Maria Theresa were much attached, were devoted to their family. Hunter Francis died in the August of 1765, when the little Marie Antoinette was barely ten years old, and the increasing cares of the state interrupted the close intercourse between the mother and daughter. Her son Joseph, who was born in 1741, was formally crowned Emperor of Germany, but the power remained in the hands of Maria Theresa, and to better wield that power Maria Theresa was obliged to leave the education of Marie Antoinette to other hands than her own. Royal princes and princesses are always said by the chroniclers of their childish days to have been prodigies of learning and of virtue; but it is not difficult in piercing through the courtly eulogies of the young archduchess to learn that she, capricious, self-willed, charming, was quick to learn whatever pleased her, but not too eager or too willing to apply herself to unattractive studies. An amiable, feeble Madame de Brandis, a strong-minded Countess de Lerchenfeld in turn, guided the mind of Marie Antoinette until the time came when her hand was formally sought for a son of France. Her education then was imperfect. She spoke French fairly fluently, but wrote it very badly. Italian she had learned, and learned well, from that amazing Abbé de Metas-

tasio, whose strange fortune it was all through his life to be loved and admired above his merits. She danced exquisitely, and she adored music. Music won her the adoration of the young Mozart, who, when he was younger, yet dreamed with nursery audacity of making a bride of his royal playmate; music won her the adoration of Gluck, the great master of eighteenth-century music. When the time was at last ripening for the royal marriage which was to ally the two reigning houses of France and Austria, it was decided by Choiseul that someone should be sent to instruct the future Dauphiness in all the knowledge that was necessary to make her shine in the Court circles of Versailles. He found this someone in the Abbé de Vermond, suggested to him by Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse. Over the choice many bitter words have been spoken. There are writers who see in the Abbé de Vermond a very corrupter of youth, the evil genius of Marie Antoinette. We may assume that Vermond was a well-meaning man of a narrow knowledge, able to attract the mind of the young Archduchess, but wholly unfitted for the grave task of guiding her safely through the difficulties that were likely to lie in her way. He did not captivate Mercy, the wise and faithful Mercy, whose lengthy residence at Versailles and whose clear intelligence enabled him to appreciate very keenly the difficulties, the perils even, to which the young Dauphiness was likely to be exposed. Mercy came to Vienna him-

self to give the finishing touches to the veneer of French modes and French thoughts which Vermond was applying to his charge; he dwelt long, earnestly, and unsuccessfully upon the absolute importance of appreciating the formalities of etiquette which swayed the Court of France. Mercy knew well enough the difference between the ways, the well-nigh domestic ways, of the Austrian Court and the elaborate, glittering ceremonialism which prevailed in France. One thing at least the young Archduchess could and did learn—to dance. She danced divinely, winning the heart of her dancing-master, who declared that she would be his glory. Such as she was, a somewhat spoilt, ill-educated, graceful child of fifteen, trying desperately to play at being a French princess at a time when she had better have been playing in the nursery, she was sent out into the new strange world of Versailles. When Maria Theresa trembled, thinking of that vicious Court, Kaunitz reassured her diplomatically. 'We must give a lily to gain a lily,' he urged sententiously, and so the lily was given. On April 19, 1770, the Archduke Leopold solemnly wedded his sister, Marie Antoinette, in the Augustine Convent in the name of the Dauphin of France, and the young Dauphiness set out upon her memorable journey from her old to her new home.

Let the young Goethe speak. He was at Strasburg playing at law, and learning card-playing and dancing, and winning the hearts of his dancing-

master's daughters. If these and other things disturbed his studies, 'yet this dissipation and dismemberment of my studies was not enough, for a remarkable political event set everything in motion, and procured us a tolerable succession of holidays. Marie Antoinette, Archduchess of Austria and Queen of France, was to pass through Strasburg on her road to Paris. The solemnities by which the people are made to take notice that there is greatness in the world were busily and abundantly prepared, and especially remarkable to me was the building which stood on an island in the Rhine between the two bridges, erected for her reception, and for surrendering her into the hands of her husband's ambassadors.' The embroidered tapestry with which this pleasure-house was lined greatly attracted the young poet, and he paid many a silver coin to its porter for the privilege of going in and looking at it. Two of the rooms had tapestry worked after Raphael's Cartoons, which filled Goethe with indefinable delight; the hangings of the third and chief saloon greatly shocked and startled him. The picture presented the legend of Jason and his two brides, the dark witch woman of Colchis, and the fair girl Creusa of Iolchos. At the left of the throne, poor Creusa struggled with the merciless flames in the midst of despairing sympathizers; at the right the distraught Jason beheld his murdered children; above, the sorceress drove in her dragon-car along the clouds. Small wonder if the impe-

tuous young Goethe called upon his companions to witness such a crime against good taste and feeling. 'Is it permitted,' he asked, 'so thoughtlessly to place before the eyes of a young queen, at her first setting foot in her dominions, the representation of the most horrible marriage that ever was consummated? Is there, then, among the French architects, decorators, upholsterers, not a single man who understands that pictures represent something, that pictures work upon the mind and feelings, that they make impressions, that they excite forebodings? It is just the same as if they had sent the most ghastly spectre to meet this beauteous and pleasure-loving lady at the very frontiers.' The something sibyllic in these utterances of the youthful, indignant Goethe strikes us with all the inspiration of prophecy, but they did not delight the companions to whom they were addressed. They hurried him away as best they could, assuring him soothingly that the people of Strasburg would be too busy to seek omens in the hangings of a wall. Yet the young Goethe was right, and an omen more portentous and more menacing is not recorded in the annals of the curious.

A little later Goethe saw the young Queen, and his description forms a parallel picture to Burke's immortal eloquence: 'I yet remember well the beauteous and lofty mien, as cheerful as it was imposing, of this youthful lady. Perfectly visible to us all in her glass carriage, she seemed to be jesting with her female attendants, in familiar conversation,

about the throng that poured forth to meet her train.' So, for the first time, the fair Marie Antoinette swims within the ken of great eyes, so, for the first time, she appears before us, limned in immortal language, with her foot upon the threshold of France. If she could only have known what the greatest man of that time, one of the greatest men of all time, was thinking of as he gazed upon that fair, gracious advent, perhaps the imperial Austrian heart might have been touched to some purpose, and the history of France written quite otherwise. For there was one circumstance in connection with this day which struck the vivid fancy of Goethe, and which is, as it were, the key to all that followed. A formal regulation had been issued that no deformed persons, no cripples, nor disgusting invalids should presume to show themselves upon the road of the royal progress. It is one of the most horrible characteristics of the dying century and the dying monarchy, this insane attempt to hide, to suppress, to avoid, and so to forget the stern facts of humanity. Goethe, though he calls it a 'very rational regulation,' appreciated the grim popular humour which joked about it, and he interpreted the humour in a little French poem which compared the Advent of Christ, who came into the world especially to seek the sick and the lame, with the coming of the Queen who scared the unfortunates away. Goethe's friends seem to have been pleased with this little satire; a French friend, however, fell foul mercilessly of the

language and the metre, and Goethe wrote no more French poems. But the fact that it was written, that it could be written, is the most significant preface to the story that ended in the Conciergerie and on the scaffold. The ghastly pretence that a royal road must be all smiles and roses and fair favour, which no touch of human sorrow and human shame or pain was to approach, could only end in an hour in which squalor and suffering and despair should force their way into the sham enchanted palace, and trample on the purple. The lesson is still significant.

The grim presages which Goethe drew from the Jason pictures were soon responded to. In that part of the pavilion reserved for the Austrian Court, Marie Antoinette had her first experience of the etiquette of her new country. A Dauphin of France, animated by the same principles which dictated the wedding conditions of John Antony Riqueti of Mirabeau, insisted that nothing should remain with his royal consort of a land which was no longer hers. So the young Austrian princess was solemnly undressed, even to her very chemise and stockings, and reclad from head to foot in the garments provided for her by France. Courtly etiquette always assumes, and perhaps wisely, that to change in appearance is to change in fact. But, unhappily, no changing of chemise and stockings could make poor Marie Antoinette other than the 'Austrian,' in the eyes of her Court enemies and, at last, in the eyes of France at large.

By slow and ceremonial stages the young Dauphiness proceeded from Strasburg to Saverne, from Saverne to Nancy, from Nancy to Bar, from Bar to Châlons, from Châlons to Soissons, from Soissons to Compiègne. The route was one long triumph—flowers, balls, Te Deums, public banquets. It was roses, roses, all the way, as Browning's luckless hero says in the poem. A little way beyond Compiègne, the Duke de Choiseul met the Dauphiness and her escort and guided her to a space in the forest by the Berne Bridge, where she found a royal party who had travelled from Versailles to meet her. The young Austrian fell at the King's feet. He lifted her up, embraced her and presented her to the Dauphin, who, in his turn, in what, we may imagine, was a somewhat perfunctory and awkward fashion, kissed his bride. At the château, the King presented to the stranger a number of princes and peers, the Duke de Chartres among the number—an ominous presentation. Here, too, for the first time, she met the Princess de Lamballe. From so far these two fair young women had met, and for what a parting!

More festivities, more journeyings by slow stages, more gifts, more banquets, more meetings with persons of importance, including Madame du Barry, who obtained the privilege of supping at the Dauphiness's table at La Muette. The Dauphiness was simple enough or skilful enough to find the Du Barry charming. The Du Barry did not take

long to find the young Dauphiness dangerous and to hate her with all her heart. At last, on a stormy Wednesday, May 16, 1770, in the chapel at Versailles, the Dauphin, in the eyes of all that was noblest and fairest in France, placed the ring of gold upon the girl's finger, gave her the thirteen traditional pieces of gold. More presentations, chiefly of foreign ambassadors, suppers, music, blessing of the nuptial bed by the Archbishop of Rheims; Marie Antoinette of Austria slept that night as Dauphiness of France. The great ambition of Maria Theresa was fulfilled. No dream slipped through the gates of horn to stand by mother or child and warn them of fate. But the superstitious shuddered over the savage storm which beat upon Versailles on the wedding day, and drew ominous prognostications from the thunder-strokes that beat upon the palace on the day when the Dauphiness first set foot therein. A more evil omen was yet to come: the fortnight of successive festivals in honour of the wedding ended on May 30; there was a great display of fireworks in the Place Louis XV.; the crowd was great—the precautions few—the police arrangements insufficient: two great waves of the crowd met in a narrow space—the crush became murderous. When, at last, it was ended and the crowd dissolved, the scene was like a field of battle: hundreds of the dead strewed the ground—poor luckless merrymakers who came to a fête and found a massacre. It was never deci-

sively known how many were killed on that terrible night. On the good old courtly principle of sparing at all hazards the feelings of the royal people, as little as possible was said about it, and ruined families mourned their losses in such stoical silence as they could muster lest the sound of their sorrow should vex the ears of the young princess. One hundred and thirty-two corpses were hurriedly interred in the cemetery of the Madeleine, there to wait awhile for more august companionship. Away in far Frankfort-on-the-Main, the news of the catastrophe caused aching hearts for a season in the house with the Lyre above its portal; in the house of Dr. Goethe the inmates trembled for the young Johann Wolfgang, then believed to be in Paris, whose silence led them to fear the worst. They were undeceived—the young Johann Wolfgang had been fooling them. Wanting a holiday from Strasburg for some whim of his own, he had pretended to go to Paris, and had even written a letter dated Paris, which he had got a friend to post. Fate had not ordained that the young Goethe's life was to be so untimely ended. But young Goethe, reflecting on the awful news, remembered again the Strasburg tapestries with their hideous tale of Jason's marriage and felt his odd melancholy forebodings deepen.

CHAPTER VIII

A QUEER WORLD

It was a queer world upon which the little Austrian archduchess now shone for the first time. The beautiful, imperious, wilful girl, who was scarcely more than a child, found herself suddenly in very different surroundings from those that had been familiar to her girlhood in Vienna and in Schönbrunn. The old King himself, the central sun of the celestial court system, was not an over-attractive figure. He was then sixty years old, worn with vices, cynical, weary, sensual, with a taste for turning, a taste for cooking and a stronger taste for mistresses, a great devotion to the reigning favourite and a great indifference to the government of the country. He was as immoral as an ape; he was about as useful to the country he was supposed to govern as an elderly ape would have been, if that creature of the greenwoods had been taught to wear the royal purple and the trappings of the Saint-Esprit. But he was King of France, and Maria Theresa appreciated the fact thoroughly, and her daughter, through her, appreciated it as thoroughly. Marie Antoinette knew well that it was part of her

business to captivate the old King, and she set to work very steadily to win whatever feelings of kindlier affection might be left in his wicked, withered, old heart. It is scarcely surprising to find that she succeeded. With all his baseness, Louis was still in the curious courtly sense of the word a gentleman, and could hardly fail to be touched by the youth, the beauty, and the pretty ways of his gracious Austrian grandchild. But there was a figure at the Court even more important than the King's. We have seen how at La Muette the Dauphiness noted the bold, beautiful face of Madame du Barry at her table and asked, perhaps in childish ignorance and all simplicity, what part Madame du Barry played in the great pageant of the courtly life. We are told that the perplexed and vague answer given by the person she asked was to the effect that Madame du Barry's business at the Court was to amuse the King. 'Then let her beware,' is said to have been Marie Antoinette's jesting answer, 'for I warn her that she will find a serious rival in me.'

Madame du Barry was hardly likely to welcome the rising of the Austrian star. She was the real sovereign of the Court, the real sovereign of France, the living cynical proof of the degradation of the monarchy and the monarch. The reign of the Du Barry made decent men regret the reign of the Pompadour. At least the Pompadour was a woman of education, of ability, who, if not of gentle blood,

bore herself like a lady of gentle blood, and was always exquisitely careful never to allow her influence to be ostentatiously or offensively obtruded. But Madame du Barry was a very different sort of woman from Madame de Pompadour, and her triumph over the King was the most eloquent possible proof of the royal declension in ignominy. The De Goncourts, in their life of Madame du Barry, quote from the 'Journal' of Hardy preserved in the National Library of Paris a curious episode which forms a most appropriate preface to a record of a strange and shameful career. A certain ecclesiastic strange to Paris and its ways was dining at a house where after dinner a Parisian priest bade his brethren present drink to 'The Presentation.' The ingenuous stranger asked if it was the ceremony of the Presentation of our Lord to the Temple which was to take place the next day, whereupon the priest who had proposed the toast answered that he was thinking of the presentation of the new Esther who was to dethrone Haman. The new Esther was Madame du Barry: the new Haman was the minister Choiseul.

In the year 1743, in the month of August, the natural child of Anne Bèqus was born at Vaucouleurs, was baptized and named Jeanne. A protector and patron of the mother, a wealthy financier named Dumonceau, caused the little girl to be taught to read and write and began her amazing education by placing her with her mother in the house of his mistress, a Mdlle. Frédérique, famous in the courtesanship of

the day for her red hair and her extreme looseness of morals. This excellent beginning was presently modified by Mdlle. Frédérique herself, who began to grow jealous of the growing charms of little Jeanne. Little Jeanne was packed off to the Convent of Saint-Aure, a gloomy institution where poor girls were kept respectable under a regimen of appalling austerity. Little Jeanne revolted against the regimen, was sent back to Mdlle. Frédérique, who would have none of her and who succeeded in inducing Dumonceau to turn Jeanne and her mother into the streets. Jeanne was then fifteen. She drifted about the streets for a while hawking cheap jewellery and plying a sordid prostitution. Then a mysterious uncle, a Father Picpus, turned up and got her a place as companion at Cour-Neuve, in the environs of Paris, where old Madame Lagarde cheered her declining years with theatrical entertainments. But Madame Lagarde had sons who could appreciate the beauty of Jeanne, and Jeanne was soon sent about her business.

Then she got a place in a modiste's shop and began the life of little gallantry which led her from lover to lover into the arms of the rascally Count du Barry, and opened the way to the higher gallantry which was to niche her for a season on the steps of a throne. Count du Barry was a swaggering, profligate rogue, who claimed descent from the English Barrymores, and who sustained in Paris a kind of commerce of beautiful women whom it was

his business and profit to discover, and train for the benefit of wealthy patrons. Every man has an ideal, even a man in so despicable a business as this of Count du Barry's. Du Barry's ambition was to be the purveyor of a mistress to the King himself. He had already tried and failed when he found in Jeanne, the adventuress whom he had formed into an accomplished and brilliant courtesan, the woman he wanted. Louis XV. saw Jeanne, how and when historians differ, and was completely conquered, to the great grief of Lebel, his valet, who seems to have died of something like grief at discovering that what he had regarded as a passing fancy was likely to prove a permanence in the royal affections. But as Madame du Barry was neither noble nor wedded, it was decided by the King that she must be the one and the other. Count du Barry could not marry her himself, as he had already a wife living. But there was his brother, Guillaume, needy officer of Marines at Toulouse—the very man! A sort of sham husband being thus found, a sort of sham father was found in a certain almoner of the King, Gomard de Vaubernier, who consented to regard himself as the parent of the fair Jeanne and so spare Guillaume du Barry the pain of wedding and King Louis the pain of loving a young lady who was only a natural child! The ludicrous farce was played out and the new Madame du Barry found herself comfortably quartered at Versailles as the mistress in chief of the King.

From that moment the name of Madame du Barry was carried by the winds of rumour to all the corners of the earth. Quite unconsciously she played a mighty part in the great game of politics. Everyone who hated Choiseul, all the discontented courtiers, all the allies of the Jesuits against whom he had waged so merciless a war, found in the new favourite a weapon to their hand. Choiseul had laughed at favourites before; had he not overthrown Madame d'Esparbès simply by taking her by the chin in public and asking her, 'Well, little one, how are your affairs getting on?' But the Du Barry was a more serious foe. She had an able prompter always in the background in rascally, clever Count John; she had a watchful adviser and confidante always by her in rascally, clever Count John's rascally, clever, slightly humpbacked sister, the famous Chon. The world that began to talk of Madame du Barry began to recognise in her a rival and a serious rival to Choiseul, and around her flowing petticoats gathered all the opponents of the powerful minister. Madame du Barry, in her dainty nest at Versailles, with her black page and her parrot, and her ape and her poodle, and her dainty flowing simplicity of attire, her unpowdered hair and unpainted face, her lisping voice that always blundered s into z, was preparing the way for the fall of the great Choiseul.

Madame du Barry had a certain rough and ready way of revenging herself upon those who

were unlucky enough to offend her. There is one story told in this connection which is curiously characteristic of the woman and her ways, and her innate vulgarity. Her friend the Countess de Rosen in a rash moment quarrelled with the favourite, and sought in more ways than one to cause her annoyance. The favourite complained to the King. Louis shrugged his shoulders. 'Madame de Rosen is only a schoolgirl, and should be treated like a schoolgirl.' Madame du Barry took the royal suggestion perfectly seriously. She invited Madame de Rosen to come and see her. Madame de Rosen came. Once inside the Du Barry's rooms, she was seized upon by a sufficiency of stout serving-girls, and in the Du Barry's laughing presence was soundly birched in the most schoolgirl fashion. Poor Madame de Rosen, hurt and hysterical, complained to the King. Louis, who had forgotten his suggestion, mildly reproved the favourite, who immediately reminded the monarch that she was only obeying his own advice. The King laughed, and succeeded in pacifying Madame de Rosen, who afterwards became very good friends again with her chastiser.

In spite of the Du Barry, however, and all her wiles, the most important figure in the Court still was the figure—in the eyes of young Louis, the sinister figure—of the Duke de Choiseul. At this time he was just fifty-one years of age, and, though he knew it not, his great career lay already behind him. Behind him lay all those great achievements,

all those greater plans, his military youth, the envoyship to Rome, secret treaties with Maria Theresa, long alliance with the Pompadour, mad schemes for invasion of England, blunderings in America, blunderings in the West Indies, blunderings in India, blunderings in Poland, 'Family Compact,' triumph and failure, anti-Jesuit failure and triumph. So many showy successes, so many scarcely less showy failures, were crowded into that restless, busy, brilliant half-century of life.

One very fateful meeting led the young Dauphiness to a very fateful friendship. Perhaps no figure in all the courtly world is more attractive, more perplexing than that of Marie Thérèse Louise de Savoie-Carignan, Princesse de Lamballe, whose beautiful face looks out upon us and upon all time with such an air of exquisite candour in Hickel's portrait as engraved by Fleischmann. That fair unfortunate creature, whose marriage was so desperately miserable and pitiable, who came so near to marrying Louis XV. in his old age, has had many assailants, chief among them the acridly unvirtuous Madame de Genlis, and many impassioned champions, of whom M. de Lescure and M. Georges Bertin are the latest and the most impassioned. Perhaps Carlyle rather overshoots his mark when he says of Madame de Lamballe that 'she was beautiful, she was good, she had known no happiness.' The beautiful friend of Marie Antoinette must have known some happy hours in that bright Court which

danced so daintily over the volcanic earth, in spite of her ghastly marriage, in spite of all that was to be. Even Madame de Genlis, who declares that her hands were 'terribly ugly,' has little to say against her nature; even the profligate and pitiful Lauzun has to admit that she was 'as good as she was pretty.'

Madame de Lamballe's beauty still seems to live far across the generations. Hickel's portrait, with its air of childish grace, can thrill us across the wilderness of years with its delicate haunting loveliness. That hair of fair Italian gold which has been likened to the tresses which crown, nimbus-like, the heads of Raphael's Madonnas, those sweetly smiling lips, those frank, kindly, loyal eyes can still captivate, can still inspire. 'She is a model of all the virtues,' said the Baroness d'Oberkirch, and the praise does not seem to have been exaggerated. If it was her misfortune to be married to the unlucky Lamballe, it was her good fortune to have in her father-in-law, the Duke de Penthièvre, the brightest and best example of the old nobility of France. The recently published memoirs of Dom Courdemanche, edited by M. Étienne Allaire, add one more to the many delightful pictures we possess of the good old peer. If France could have boasted more nobles like the Duke de Penthièvre and less like the Duke de Lauzun towards the close of the last century, the story of the French Revolution might have been very different.

There were certain other ladies at that Court, ladies very unlike the Du Barry on the one hand, or Madame de Lamballe on the other, three soured and faded ladies who had the misfortune to be the daughters of the King. They were known to the Court, they are known to the world, by the endearing nicknames bestowed upon them by their royal father, Loque, Coche, Graille—nicknames that Carlyle allots inaccurately. These were Madame Adélaïde, Madame Victoire, and Madame Sophie. Another sister, Madame Louise, known to the paternal slang as Chiffe, had left the Court for the seclusion of a convent before the arrival of Marie Antoinette. The three were all old maids, and very old-maidish old maids, much given to piety, to scandal, and the like. Two of them were exceedingly plain—Madame Adélaïde and Madame Sophie—which did not serve to increase the little affection that lingered in the heart of Louis. Poor desolate ladies, they seemed very insignificant all through their lives, and yet two of them had their mischievous importance and did more harm than a legion of old maids could set right again. M. Édouard de Barthélemy has devoted a biggish book entirely to Mesdames de France, in which the curious will find a vast amount of interesting particulars concerning these old ladies and their varying fortunes. M. de Barthélemy has worked hard with all the available material. The neglected, melancholy old ladies live again in his pages, curious shadows flitting across that sinful Court, curious

shadows flitting before the terrors of the new order of things which knocked a less sinful Court into fragments.

With their early lives we have nothing to do; their interest only begins for us with the advent of Marie Antoinette. Madame Victoire, the sad sister who had once been something of a beauty, played but a small part in the grim game that ended for her in exile and Trieste. Madame Adélaïde and Madame Sophie were more important. It was permitted to them to have a share, and no inconsiderable share, in accelerating the progress of the inevitable Revolution. They seem to have hated Marie Antoinette almost from the first. Ill-favoured themselves, they resented the beauty of the new Dauphiness. Slighted by their father, they resented the attentions which Louis XV. offered to Marie Antoinette and the admiration with which he spoke of her. Formal, precise, old-fashioned and austere, they were shocked and scandalized by the lightness of Marie Antoinette's nature. Their rigid respect for etiquette and strict decorum was daily, hourly outraged by the free and easy fashions which Marie Antoinette brought with her from the virtuous but free and easy Court of Vienna. Marie Antoinette was not to be long in France without calling into existence an anti-Dauphiness party, in which party the two Mesdames Adélaïde and Sophie were leaders. The anti-Dauphiness party was yet to grow into an anti-Queen party, fostering all the acrid, malignant, envenomed support that

Madame Adélaïde and Madame Sophie could lend to it. Let us take note as we pass on that Mesdames de France have been the precious patronesses of an obscure watchmaker who desires many things, especially riches and fame. We shall meet with him again. His name is Beaumarchais.

If Cervantes smiled Spain's chivalry away, so certainly Beaumarchais helped to smile away the old nobility of France. In late January of 1732 a reputable Parisian watchmaker named Caron begot a son whom he named Pierre Augustin and brought up in the good old Egyptian way to his own trade. The young Caron had a soul above clock-cobbling. He was smart, good-looking, ambitious, esurient of success and the things success brings with it—popular applause, pretty women, the favour of the great, money in poke, fine clothes, and all the fun of the world's fair. But he owed his first rise in life to his watches. He invented a new escapement; some rogue pirated; Caron, who was always pugnacious and litigious, rushed into print to claim his own, and the Academy of Sciences, to which the watch feud was referred, decided in his favour. This brought him into Court notice: he was graciously permitted to try his skill upon Madame de Pompadour's watch, graciously permitted to call himself watchmaker to the King. Once in touch of the Court, Caron resolved to keep so. Luck favoured him. A well-to-do woman fell in love with the handsome pushing young watchmaker; the

woman was married ; she cajoled her husband, Controller Francquet, into making over his post to Caron. When Francquet died his widow straightway married Caron, who henceforward assumed the title of De Beaumarchais, which he was yet to make famous. Later on, the judicious purchase of a secretaryship to the King flattered his vanity by bringing with it a title of nobility.

The daughters of the King, Loque, Coche, Graille, and Chiffe, took him up, patronized him, allowed him to teach them the harp, and gave him a recognised place in the society of the Court. Not that the Court always liked him ; but the cool impudence of Beaumarchais enabled him always to meet, and meet successfully, the insolence of any contemptuous courtier. The story is well known of the young nobleman who on one occasion asked Beaumarchais to look at his, the young nobleman's, watch, as he feared there was something wrong with it. Beaumarchais calmly observed that he was so long out of practice that he feared he would be scarcely equal to the task ; then taking the watch from the courtier's hand he let it fall from his own carefully careless fingers to the floor, where it was dashed to pieces. With a grave smile Beaumarchais said, 'You see, I am out of practice,' and so walked leisurely away, leaving the courtier gazing sufficiently ruefully at his shattered treasure.

If Beaumarchais was never afraid of making enemies, he had the art also of making serviceable

friends. Pâris-Duverney, the great banker, was one of these; Pâris-Duverney, who helped Beaumarchais to make his fortune. After Pâris-Duverney's death a document was found in which the banker acknowledged himself Beaumarchais' debtor for 16,000 francs. The Count la Blache, who hated Beaumarchais, contested the validity of the document, and thereupon arose one of the most fiercely fought lawsuits, or rather succession of lawsuits, whereof the world holds witness. Beaumarchais gained, lost on appeal, got into trouble through an attempt to gain by a money payment to Goëzman's wife the favourable vote of Goëzman the Parliamentarian, on whose report the vote of the Parliament depended. Goëzman brought his action against Beaumarchais for attempted corruption of a judge. Beaumarchais defended himself in the most brilliant, the bitterest mémoires, and, though he lost his case for the time, his attacks upon the detested Parliament made him as popular with the people as he had been unpopular. In the common phrase, Beaumarchais was bad to beat. His defeat by Goëzman cost him his civil rights, as his defeat by La Blache had cost him his little fortune; but in his indefatigable way he declined to be defeated, and in the end not only got his civil rights restored to him, but actually defeated La Blache himself.

Beaumarchais had a kind of genius for getting into queer affairs. It is not over-agreeable to find a man of genius drifting about Europe in the hunt

after pamphlets lampooning Madame du Barry, even with the purpose of buying them up and destroying them for the King; still less so if we could believe, as has been hinted, that the pamphlets in question only existed in Beaumarchais' ingenious mind. The enthusiasm with which he flung himself into the cause of American independence was an enthusiasm of that kind which knows how to make a good thing out of its sympathies. But we can forget and forgive all the shifts and dodges, all the seamy side of Beaumarchais' life, when we come to his two immortal plays. Commerce and the Clavijo affair had taken him to Spain in his younger days, in 1764, and from Spain he drew the inspiration and the atmosphere of exquisite intrigue of his two great comedies.

Those comedies; those comedies! They made Beaumarchais immortal. They set him up by the side of Molière. They helped to laugh the Old Order out of existence. Caron had always a certain fierce eagerness for dramatic success; had written and produced in his salad days two plays, which had been uncompromisingly condemned. Uncompromisingly condemned the 'Barber of Seville' was very near being too. Beaumarchais had his head full of his law affair, thought all Paris had its head full of it also, and crowded his text with the most tedious allusions to his litigation. The result was a dead, dismal failure on the first night. But if Beaumarchais loved his law, he loved his play more. With a ruthless hand he carved out all the tedious personal

stuff, wrote and rewrote, and on the second night the play was a great success. But there was a greater success to come. It was the 'Mariage de Figaro,' which was destined to be the 'Don Quixote' of the Old Order. Louis XVI., with some glimmerings of intelligence suddenly aroused in him, saw what the piece meant—saw even dimly what it might mean, and refused his sanction to its performance. The 'Barber of Seville' saw the footlights in 1775; it was not until 1784 that the 'Marriage of Figaro' was brought out, and aroused the laughter which helped to upset the Bastille, and with it the monarchy five years later. The success was astonishing, well-nigh unprecedented. Aristophanes deriding democracy to an Athenian audience did not win half the enthusiasm that came to Beaumarchais when, masked as Figaro, he laughed at everything which a Parisian audience was supposed to regard as sacrosanct. It is fatally easy to overrate the influence of a particular book, a particular speech, a particular play upon a popular movement. But if ever a movement was helped to its triumph by the two hours' traffic of the stage, the French Revolution was helped by the bitter buffoonery of Gil Blas Beaumarchais in the 'Mariage de Figaro.'

It was not given to Louis XV. to escape the lot common to all those princes and monarchs for whom François Villon inquires in his famous ballades. There came an end to his caperings, to his neat

cynical sayings, to his merry-makings with his mistresses—Pompadour yesterday and Du Barry to-day—to Parc aux Cerfs pleasures, if Parc aux Cerfs ever existed, which is by no means certain ; to all the infamies and fooleries which make his name a bye-word and his reign a sham. The years during which he reigned were fertile of good to France ; they produced great thinkers, great teachers, Encyclopædists, economists, wits, statesmen ; but, as far as Louis XV. was concerned, he did nothing to make his reign other than a plague spot. 'After me the deluge,' indeed. The waters were rising, rising all through the weak, worthless, wicked reign : now small-pox has seized upon the sin-weakened body. Louis XV. lies as dead and despicable as a poisoned rat ; his last maîtresse en titre has vanished into obscurity, to emerge again, unhappily, later on, under terrible conditions. Louis XVI. is King of France, and the history of the French Revolution may be said to seriously begin. There are a new king and queen on the throne of France : they are both young : they are said to have prayed Heaven to guide them in the difficulties of their new life. Never were such prayers more needed, could they but have known it. Poor King, poor Queen : let us look at them a little closely and try to understand them, children about to be visited by the punishment for the sins of their parents.

For fifteen years Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette reigned over France with no thought of the

fate that was in store for them. There had been kings of France for hundreds of years past; there seemed no reason to doubt that there would be kings of France for hundreds of years to come. These fifteen years were full and eventful years. Certain events especially stand out, events of very different kinds, but all tending in their effect to the same result. The comedies of Beaumarchais, the American Revolution, the Diamond Necklace, and the Assembly of Notables are the cardinal points by which to steer through the stormy course of that fifteen years. A queer, perplexing fifteen years they were, with their light-hearted Trianonism, their desperate financial flounderings, their Turgots and Neckers and Calonnes and Loménie Briennes, each trying after his own wise or wild way to accomplish the impossible. Fifteen years for the King of much hunting and lock-making; fifteen years for the Queen of Trianon light life, of growing disfavour, unpopularity, enmities; fifteen years for the people of growing discontent, increasing poverty and pain; fifteen years of freer speech, of conflicting ambitions, of fervid dreams, of desperate hopes. The momentum of the monarchy on its roll down hill to destruction has increased beyond the power of man's hand to hold, increased probably beyond the power of any man's hand to retard.

A sufficiently eventful fifteen years they were. Poor, scheming, malignant, strenuous d'Aguillon was puffed out of favour by the same breath that blew

the Du Barry down the wind into seclusion. Septuagenarian de Maurepas found the old Pompadour disfavour which had kept him in the cold for a quarter of a century no longer a barrier ; he was called to the post of principal minister, and was thenceforward to play a pretty active part for his time of life in helping to ruin France. He was not a very estimable old man, he was not a very intelligent old man ; he had been in his queer way a large-handed patron of learnings he could not well appreciate ; he had helped to send Maupertuis to Lapland, that Maupertuis whose wild ideas Voltaire made so merry over ; he had helped to send Jussieu to South America, that Jussieu who was not the most eminent of the 'Botanical Dynasty.' He was to play his part now in helping on the French Revolution.

CHAPTER IX

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Marie Antoinette is one of the most perplexing, fascinating, tragic figures in history. Her empire and her influence, like the influence and empire of Mary Stuart, have not ceased with her existence, but extended almost unaltered and unimpaired to the present day. The admiration which Montaigne, which Brantôme, which Ronsard express for Mary Stuart is rivalled in its warmth by the language of her adherents to-day; the praise of Burke, of Goethe, of Mirabeau, and of Arthur Young finds echo in the passionate homage which is still paid to the name of Marie Antoinette. Historians fight over her as fiercely as the factions wrangled in the days of the Diamond Necklace, in the days of the Versailles Banquet, in the days of the Conciergerie. Though she belongs, as it were, to the day before yesterday, though the very traditions of her time still linger in certain ancient stately Parisian circles, though many live and look upon the earth whose grandsires and grandams were familiar with the Court of which she was the most unhappy head, it is most difficult to form anything like a precise

judgment upon her character, her nature, and her acts.

Two schools of what can hardly be called criticism chiefly assert themselves. To the one school Marie Antoinette is only an uncanonized saint and martyr, noblest, purest, highest of women, more than human in her beauty and her goodness—a kind of angel whose very virtues left her the more easily the prey to the enmities of an evil world. The disciples of the other school hold her up to all execration as a mere she-fiend. They paint her proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at her back than they have thoughts to put them in. They endow her with monstrous vices stolen from the stews of imperial Rome; they accuse her of nameless, shameless sins; they conjure up an image of a depravity utter and complete, sickening even to think upon, and they assure us that such is her true likeness. They load her life with innumerable love affairs; they treat her as the furious creature of illimitable and abominable passions; they see in her nearest and most natural friendships the degradation of Baudelaire's 'Femmes Damnées;' they drink in with a greedy ear and a base credulity the loathsome charges of the tribunal which condemned her. Her wanton blood, her unnatural appetites, her tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide, they make responsible for all the miseries of France, and they exult over the day of her death as over the day which liberated a groaning world from some monster.

Accusations which we might hesitate to believe of Messalina, cruelty which would seem exaggerated if attributed to Nero, they accept and repeat and circulate as the current coin of history. The obscenities of revolutionary caricature, the depravities of De Sade, the corrupt imaginings of a corrupt age, all these are to them as revelation, and they fish in the literature of the cesspool for every possible and impossible horror wherewith to smirch her name. Only the imaginings of a madhouse could compete with some of the pictures of Marie Antoinette presented to us as serious history.

It may be simply and safely assumed that neither of these pictures is the real woman or at all like the real woman. Probably no woman since the world began was quite so angelic as the devotees of the Old Order, the historians of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, would have us believe Marie Antoinette was. No woman, it is to be hoped for the sake of humanity, was ever quite so bad as the kind of female Satan which the ragings of a blood-red school of writers offer as the true Marie Antoinette. The courtly idolatry of the one is more pleasant, more chivalrous reading than the other; but the gutter ravings and the rhapsodies are equally foreign to the serious seeker after truth. He would be but a sorry student of human nature who gauged the civilization of mankind only by the preciosity of a Euphuist or the foul word scrawled on a wall. The raptures for and the ragings against Marie Antoinette

are of as little service in aiding us to obtain any true appreciation of her character and of her reign. It must be admitted, moreover, that more impartial historians are sometimes scarcely more satisfactory. Everyone who has studied the history of the Revolution knows the sketch which Mr. John Morley gives of Marie Antoinette in his essay on Robespierre. Its frigid judicial ferocity is scarcely more serviceable than the eulogies and the lampoons. Mr. Morley criticises the child queen of the corruptest Court and the corruptest capital in Europe as he might criticise a Girton girl crammed with Comtism and the newest theory of historical evolution placed in the same exalted position.

In endeavouring to understand Marie Antoinette it is impossible not to feel a profound regret that the collection of letters attributed to her by the Count Paul Vogt d'Hunolstein should be of no avail. Unfortunately, to put the case mildly, their authenticity seems more than dubious. It would be as reasonable to base a case in favour of Marie Antoinette upon an elaborate study of Dumas' 'Chevalier de Maisonrouge' as upon the letters of the d'Hunolstein collection. The one is fiction pure and simple, the other is fiction of a graver kind masquerading in the guise of history. Who that has read these letters would not like to be able to make use of them! For it may be admitted that they are exceedingly attractive, exceeding ingeniously linked together. They have all that charm of

fiction which is sometimes the property of veritable fact, but they seem to have no value save their charm. The curious in literary puzzles may add these letters to the letters of Phalaris, to the pseudo-Petronius, to the book of Dionysius the Areopagite and the like. The student of history will read them, if he reads them at all, with a sigh as he follows the unfolding picture of this imaginary Marie Antoinette. In the first letter she daintily addresses the future husband as 'Monsieur le Dauphin et Cher Frère.' She confides fears to her mother of her inexperience 'in that new country which has adopted me in your name.' She describes herself as 'La Jeune Françoise.' She makes quaint allusions to Robinson Crusoe and to Lilliput. She jests about 'la Dauphine en Biscuit de Pâte Tendre.' She depicts her new life as a perpetual performance where one has never the time to hear oneself live. She makes affectionate allusions to Metastasio. She pictures the Count d'Artois as 'flippant as a page and heedless of grammar.' She gives accounts of her 'petits bals.' She requests her sister to assure Maria Theresa that she has become 'as French as she told me it was my duty to become.' She makes solemn announcement of the little lady's wisdom teeth. She is enthusiastic about Gluck's 'Iphigenia.' She hits at d'Aguillon as the 'Âme Damnée de la Comtesse du Barry.' She is alarmed at her new royalty: 'Mon Dieu, moy Reine si jeune, j'en suis tout effrayée.' She is surprised to find 'the determination of certain

folk to picture me as a stranger, always preoccupied with her own country and only French against the grain.' She is annoyed at the report that she had rebaptized her Petit Trianon 'mon petit Vienne.' She is grieved at her childlessness : 'Je suis dans la main de Dieu et je m'étourdis le plus que je peux ; j'en ai besoin, car ce n'est pas être reine de France que de ne pas avoir les honneurs d'un Dauphin.' She declares, 'I feel myself French to the finger-tips,' 'jusqu'aux ongles.' She feels mingled joy and disappointment over the birth of 'la pauvre petite' instead of the expected Dauphin. She naturally thinks 'the cruel custom of filling the bedroom of the Queen at such a moment should be abolished.' She has the pretty conviction that her daughter is 'la plus belle enfant du royaume.' She gossips about the Freemasons, and the reception of the Princess de Lamballe as grand mistress of a lodge. She is indignant at the audacity of the Cardinal de Rohan in making love to her : 'You know my aversion for him.' She is in despair at the progress of the 'affreuse affaire,' the 'abominable affaire,' as she calls the case of the Diamond Necklace. She blends maternal solicitude for the cold of 'mon gros Normandie,' with allusions to 'ce charlatan de Cagliostro,' and to Dame la Motte. 'Je n'ai jamais vu cette femme de Lamotte.' She is angered at the light punishment inflicted upon Rohan, who dared 'to lend himself to that mad and infamous scene of the bosquet, and to believe that he had an appoint-

ment with the Queen of France.' She is scornful of the clumsy forgeries which were absurdly signed 'Marie Antoinette de France.' She is alarmed at the assembling of the Notables. The gloom of the letters grows as events succeed swiftly. We witness the conversion of the graceful Queen and mother into an eager politician, fighting for her throne, and even for her life, and the lives of those dear to her. We have allusions to Lafayette, to Orleans, to Mirabeau; despairing appeals for help to the Emperor. We have a significant commentary on the changed state of public feeling: 'A la mort de mon pauvre cher Dauphin, la nation n'a pas seulement eu l'air de s'en apercevoir.' We have the touching request to the Count de Mercy to keep the letter she writes to him, as she would be 'bien aise de la ravoir un jour;' the earnest request to the Princess de Lamballe not to come back to danger; the melancholy plaint towards the end, 'Je souffre nuit et jour, je change à vue d'œil; mes beaux jours sont passés, et, sans mes pauvres enfants, je voudrais être en paix dans ma tombe. Ils me tueront, ma chère Christine. Après ma mort, défendez-moi de tout votre cœur.' How gladly would we accept all these as genuine, not so much for any fresh light they afford, but for the additional touches they give to a great historical picture. Yet the Hunolstein letters deserve some recognition. The very fact that such documents do exist is, in itself, portion and parcel of the history; and if they are not genuine, their unknown con-

structor deserves at least the credit of a skilful and well-ordered composition. There is, at least in the excerpts here strung together, nothing that Marie Antoinette might not have written, much that she must have said and written in such words or words akin to them. Even if it were absolutely certain that the Hunolstein collection were not genuine, the letters would still not be absolutely valueless to the student, not merely of the life of Marie Antoinette, but of the strange cult of Marie Antoinette that has been steadily growing since her death. A brilliant historical novel may sometimes afford a side light to the student of history, and in at least a kindred sense something may be gleaned from an acquaintance with the Hunolstein collection.

It is hardly fair to say, as has been said, that Marie Antoinette was only an Austrian spy in a high position. She was far too self-willed, too human, too intensely feminine to have any real capability for the part of conscious or unconscious spy. It is the old mistake of regarding all the actors in the French Revolution as being incarnations of logical purposes. They were all, first and foremost, men and women, like other men and women—puppets, even as ourselves. Never since the world began was any woman more characteristically womanly than Marie Antoinette. Her womanhood is as characteristic as her beauty. The beauty of Marie Antoinette shines like a star through all that age. English Burke, English

Arthur Young shall pay their tribute of enthusiasm: chroniclers have left descriptions of her at all ages. Bachaumont makes her live for us as she was when she arrived in France, a Dauphiness of scarce fifteen, with the slight unfinished girlish figure, her fair hair that promises to become light chestnut, her fine forehead, her oval, almost too oval, face, her eyebrows 'as thick as a blonde's can ever be,' her blue eyes, her aquiline nose, her small mouth and full lips, the lower the famous Austrian lip, her astonishingly white skin and natural beauty of complexion which might well neglect the use of rouge. Nine years later Madame Vigée le Brun, whose portraits of the Queen are among the most precious legacies of the eighteenth century, painted her portrait also in words, telling of the well-developed form, the noble arms, the little hands, the charming feet, and the brilliant, matchless complexion of the sovereign she adored. A Tilly and a Ségur vie in their praises. If in Madame Campan's raptures over 'all that enchanting being' we fear to find the rhapsodies of the waiting-woman, we can remember Burke and Arthur Young and feel reassured. It is difficult in reading all these impassioned praises to think of a certain sketch, which a certain painter named David, now a young man, shall yet make—a sketch of a haggard, prematurely old, almost witch-like figure of a woman with a cap of liberty on her head, going to her dismal death. But that sketch is yet unmade, those fingers are only training for it

in Paris and Rome,' with little thought in their owner's mind of what they yet shall trace. Let us not draw that curtain.

It is harder to judge of the character of the Queen than of her appearance. Perhaps some words of de Tilly's may help. 'A like or a dislike,' he says, 'was disclosed in her regard more curiously than I have ever seen elsewhere.' Impetuous, frivolous, self-willed, affectionate, imperious, obstinate, she was very femininely at the mercy of feminine moods. A little less capacity for uncompromising dislike might have saved the monarchy for a while through Mirabeau; a little less imperious self-consciousness of royal state might have saved at least the monarchs at the Varennes flight. But this is of the future; we shall be able to judge better of the Queen's character as we trace her tragic story step by step.

Those who love the intimacies of great names, the domestic minutiæ of great dramas, the little familiar details which bring home past times and the lords and ladies of old time so much more vividly than the most pompous panegyric or the most chiselled slander, will feel grateful to the Count de Reiset for his two rare, curious, sumptuous and instructive volumes, 'Modes et Usages au Temps de Marie Antoinette.' Count de Reiset republishes an account-book of a certain Court dressmaker, in which the dresses of the Queen and many Court-ladies for several years are recorded. This odd

document Count de Reiset has raised almost to the dignity of a state-paper by the magnificent series of illustrations with which he has embellished it and by his valuable and exhaustive annotations and elucidations. The Count de Reiset adores his Queen, and the book is so far one-sided and prejudiced; but there is no book in existence which gives a better idea of what the Old Order was like in France, in its habit as it lived, just before the Revolution. Luckily indeed for those who love the revolutionary period, there is no lack of precious documents. The engravings of the time stand of course in the first place. Then, more readily accessible, come the many and magnificent publications of more recent years; the precious and minute series of illustrations which the Count de Viel-Castel devoted to the Revolution and Empire; the set of contemporary revolutionary costume plates from 1790 to 1793 which has been edited by M. Jules Claretie from the collection of M. Victorien Sardou; the sumptuous illustrated editions of the De Goncourts' books, which cover the whole period from the Pompadour to the Terror; the labours of the Bibliophile Jacob. These are the most important among many important works which help the curious student of the time to see its men and women, its heroes and its martyrs, its saints and sinners, in their habit as they lived.

CHAPTER X

TRIANON

THERE are certain words which have the power to move all hearers with a profound degree of emotion, and to call up very vivid pictures in the minds of the imaginative. Perhaps of all such spell-words, no one is better to conjure with than the word 'Trianon.' For the sight or the hearing of that word at once sets fancy working; the mental stage is at once cleared for the daintiest, most pathetic set scene imaginable. That fairy palace, those gracious gardens, the chosen toy, the dearest trinket of the most beautiful and the most ill-starred of queens, arises more or less vaguely, like the shadow-palace of a dream, before the mental vision of the historically sentimental. A little world of rococo decorations, of clipped avenues, of loveliness all ranged and patched and powdered, of noble gentlemen, a little dissolute but very devoted, of piquant abbés and desperately wicked cardinals and brave Besenvals, and criminal Queen-resembling adventuresses, and the centre of all this the enchanting Queen herself—such is the phantasmagoric image which the word Trianon calls up to the large proportion of persons to whom history

is always half romance. Trianon itself was actually the fruit of a queer whim for domesticity which at one period seized upon that weariest of weary kings, Louis XV. Madame de Pompadour, ever at her wit's end to keep the monarch amused, hit upon the device of pleasing her royal lover with bourgeois pleasures and the pursuits of little folk. Louis had always, even as a little child, loved Trianon; he loved it more than ever when the fancy of Madame de Pompadour converted it into a kind of model farm, all pigeons, and cows, and chickens, and kitchen-garden. Here the King and his mistress, with a picked court of gentlemen and pretty women, played a kind of ghostly pastoral; here Louis posed grotesquely enough as a sort of demi-god gentleman farmer, an eighteenth-century Admetus. It is given to no one now to behold the entire Trianon of Louis XV. Time has buffeted it as mercilessly as it has buffeted Antioch, and much of it has vanished irremediably from the face of creation. But 'though much is taken, much remains;' the curious can still please their eyes with the dainty pavilion, with its fanciful farmyard decorations of cocks and hens, and its central absurdity of the eagle, supposed to be allegorical of the august Jovism of Louis XV.

At first the title 'Little Trianon' was not used. The new pleasure-place was called by many names, but not that name. 'New Menagerie of Trianon,' 'Garden of the Menagerie,' 'New King's Garden'—even 'Hermitage,' were among its titles. It was not,

according to M. Gustave Desjardins, until 1759 that the term 'Little Trianon' was habitually used. Louis XV. might very well have called it the garden of experiments. He had an inclination for botany, which he gratified at Trianon by attempting the acclimatization of all manner of exotics. In this he was aided by the most wonderful gardener of the age, Claude Richard, son of an Irishman, and as devoted to horticulture as ever Palissy was to pottery. Claude Richard, who took his orders only from the royal mouth, who took his wages only from the royal hand, became the joy of Louis' heart. Under him the gardens throve and extended; under him the strawberries which the King loved best of all fruits flourished; and through him it came to pass that Bernard de Jussieu set up his staff at Trianon, and made the botanic garden there the admiration of all Europe.

With the advent of Madame du Barry came the execution of the château which had been planned for and by Madame de Pompadour; the château, with all its wealth of gracious pagan pictures, with its wonderful Lariot flying-tables, which enabled a king and his company to feast in discreet isolation—flying-tables at whose mechanism a certain locksmith named Gamain laboured. A chapel too—for was not Louis the 'most Christian King'?—lifted its bell-tower and Mansard roof among the trees. It was at Trianon, within sound of this chapel bell, within sight of this pretty paganism, that Louis XV. was

struck by the sudden illness that was to prove mortal. Scandal was flagrantly busy as to the cause of the malady. Enough the fact that on the Tuesday, April 26, 1774, the King came to Little Trianon, that on the following day he complained of illness, that he was removed to Versailles, and died there on May 10, 1774. When the history of Louis the Well-beloved had come to its grisly end, the history of Little Trianon was just about to begin.

Louis XV. was not long dead when Louis XVI. made a formal present of Little Trianon to Marie Antoinette. Courtly chroniclers of the event put into Louis' mouth varying extravagant phrases of the petit-maître type which we may well believe he did not utter. The gift, with or without phrases, was exceedingly welcome to Marie Antoinette. She accepted it, but accepted it on one odd condition. The condition was that the King, her husband, was never to come to Little Trianon except upon her express invitation. Little Trianon was to be her own, her very own, as the children say, and no one, not even her husband, was to set foot therein save with her gracious permission. Louis might be King of France; she was determined to be Queen in her little dominion. Louis accepted the terms, and Little Trianon became Marie Antoinette's kingdom in little. The condition was perhaps not a very unnatural one for a frivolous young queen to make. She was anxious above all things to be amused: she

wished to make Little Trianon a very palace of amusement, and Louis, as an inevitable figure, was certainly not likely to be amusing.

The Queen, it would seem, had no notion of allowing Little Trianon to remain a place for learned experiments. In the insipid allegory of the hour, Minerva was to give place to Venus and the Graces. Poor Bernard de Jussieu's Botanical Garden, which had been the joy of the wise, was hardly entreated. The Queen wanted to have a garden in that manner which has been called the English manner, which has been called the Chinese manner, and which sought to substitute for Dutch formality French frigidity and a tepid and tedious sham classicism; the picturesque freedom of an English park or a Chinese pleasure-ground. Nature, as championed by Horace Walpole and Rousseau, was to triumph over trim alleys of quincunxes ended by the walls painted with landscapes which delighted last-century France as much as it had delighted Pliny and Pompeii. So Bernard de Jussieu's Botanical Garden was abolished—'culbutée,' Mercier says—turned upside down, and its treasures were rescued from destruction by pious hands, and carted off to not inglorious exile in the Jardin des Plantes.

Luckless Queen! Trianon was destined to prove fatal to her fortunes. In almost every point where its history and hers coincide, it was destined to be of evil influence upon her. Through her love for the place arose the rumour—the unfounded rumour

—that she had baptized it anew as the 'petit Vienne,' or the 'petit Schönbrunn,' in order to recall to her mind the beloved homes of her girlhood. Nothing could be better qualified to make the Queen of evil repute to sensitive French patriotism than the impression that her heart and her sympathies were still all Austrian. The term 'Little Vienna' was certainly in the air for a while, even if the Queen did not herself directly sanction it, for it even figures, according to M. Desjardins, in financial accounts for the year 1776. But if the imprudence of Marie Antoinette had been confined merely to giving rise to an unfortunate nickname for her pleasure-place, there would not have been much harm done. Unfortunately thus bad begins, but worse remains behind. Marie Antoinette's mania for an Anglo-Chinese garden was the opening note in the long gamut of reckless extravagance through which she ran during the early Trianon days. She was soon at odds with Turgot on the question of expense, and it is hard to say how much of Turgot's fall was due to his judicious hostility to the absurd and costly Anglo-Chinese plaything.

The indifference, the frivolity of Marie Antoinette would seem recklessly culpable if we did not duly recollect extenuating circumstances. The air of personal authority she cast over Trianon was of itself calculated to irritate the irritable public opinion of Parisian society. At Trianon only the red and silver liveries of the Queen were to be seen: the

red, white, and blue of the King's servants were nowhere visible. At Trianon too, as afterwards, and yet more unwisely at St. Cloud, Marie Antoinette issued orders and notices signed 'de par la Reine'—'by the Queen's command'—instead of the habitual and authoritative 'de par le Roi.' An act of this kind in a country where the Salic law was so scrupulously observed and so jealously regarded was light-hearted to a culpable degree. No less foolish was her petulant, if very natural, dislike to the restrictions of courtly custom and convention which led her to practically banish from her little Court the solemn and formal Madame de Noailles, whom the Queen nicknamed 'Madame l'Etiquette,' whom the palace-ladies called 'Madame Honesta,' and to establish in her stead the Princess de Chimay. Nor did the Queen do much to win the good opinion of the world at large, and the circle of friends in whom she most delighted, by the way in which she allowed herself to be seen rushing from pleasure to pleasure, unaccompanied by the King, and escorted only by a young, heedless company, amongst whom the King's brothers, D'Artois and Monsieur, made themselves needlessly conspicuous. In those early Trianon years, Marie Antoinette seemed to think that the life of a great Queen had no other, no higher duties than gambling, dancing, extravagant dressing, festals of all kinds, and high-flown, too gallant friendships, which at the best were dangerous flirtations, and which scandal, ever eyeing for the worst, persisted

in regarding as culpable intrigues. Maria Theresa, Mercy, Joseph II., regarded Marie Antoinette's recklessness with the gravest alarm. Joseph visited his sister in the May of 1777, and no doubt reasoned and reasoned in vain with the sister to whom he was so devoted that it was with the utmost reluctance that he left Trianon to return to his empire. Mercy declared that the only object of the young Queen's life was pleasure. Maria Theresa wrote in 1775 that her daughter was rushing to her ruin, and would be fortunate if she succeeded in preserving the virtues of her rank.

The maddest of all the mad deeds of her Trianon reign was done when, in 1779, she fell ill of the measles. Here, for the first time, she took up her abode at Trianon. It was judged best that she should separate herself from the King during the course of the malady, lest Louis, who had never had the measles, should, by taking it, be prevented from attending to affairs of state. The Queen, accordingly, left Versailles and settled down at Trianon. What happened then would seem well-nigh impossible to believe if we did not have it on the grave and reluctant testimony of Mercy. It is certain that, when the Queen went to Trianon, she chose for the attendants on her sick chamber not, as might be expected, four Court ladies, but four gentlemen, and these four gentlemen perhaps the very last that, given such astonishing conditions at all, the Queen should have chosen. These four strange

attendants were the Duke de Coigny, the Duke de Guines, Count Esterhazy, and Baron de Besenval.

The Duke de Coigny was a soldier, forty years of age, neither strikingly good-looking nor conspicuously witty, popular with most persons on account of his good manners and his good-nature; disliked by Mercy on account of the undue influence he seemed to exercise over the Queen; detested by Madame de Polignac for the same reason, and for the efforts he made to overthrow her influence.

The Duke de Guines owed his duchy to the Queen, who manifested for him the most violent partisanship. He chiefly deserves recollection of an ignoble kind as having been the principal cause of Turgot's overthrow. He had been Ambassador in London, where he had earned the epithet of 'magnificent.' He had a dubious distinction for coarse conversation, accompanied by a perfect gravity of countenance. He was fat with a rapidly increasing corpulence, and struggled against this by wearing garments so tight that he had to get on a chair and drop into them while they were held out to him by his servant. This, however, was only on days when he had decided to martyrize himself by standing all day; on days when he condescended to sit down he wore attire of sufficiently loose construction to permit of the process. He was fond of playing on the flute, and had fluted his way into the favour of Frederick the Great and now of Marie Antoinette.

Valentin Esterhazy was a young Hungarian gentleman and soldier high in the favour of the Queen, to Maria Theresa's annoyance and regret. He seems to have been a comparatively harmless, commonplace, well-meaning, feather-headed young man, but the Queen delighted to honour him, to correspond with him, to pay his debts. His was perhaps the least amazing, where all were amazing, of the four presences. Undoubtedly the most amazing, where all were amazing, was the Baron de Besenval. Swiss and soldier of nearly sixty years of age, white-haired, courtly, with a bitter wit, cynical, cheaply sentimental, gallant with a kind of full-flavoured barrack-room gallantry, a writer of light tales, a singer of ranz des vaches, he had gained a great influence over the Queen, and was said to employ it in the perversion of her mind. Mercy found him pushing, foolish, flippant. In 1775, presuming on his friendship for Marie Antoinette, he went so far as to make her a violent declaration of love, which cost him for some time her favour and intimacy. That she, however, still regarded him as her very close friend, she showed now by choosing him for one of the four astounding guardians of her sick-chamber.

Pierre Victor, Baron of Besenval, is one of the most curious figures of the age. His race sprang from Swiss Savoy: his name was sometimes spelt Beuzenwald and sometimes Besenwald; and we know on the authority of an inscription written in a

copy of his memoirs belonging to M. Octave Uzanne that his name was rightly pronounced Bessval. 'A la cour et dans l'ancien monde, nous prononcions Bessval.' His mother was a Polish Countess Belinska, of kin with the Leszczynski house; his father was the diplomatist to whom, and not to Goertz or Alberoni, the honour of the idea which pleased Charles XII. of dethroning the King of England was due. Our de Besenval began early in the career of arms: distinguished himself for his gallantry as a soldier, distinguished himself for his gallantry as a lover. Born in 1722, he was campaigning with the Swiss Guards when he was thirteen years old, and he flashes later on through the Seven Years' War, brilliant, foolhardy, a figure as captivating as one of Dumas' musketeers. In the piping times of peace he ruffled it with the wild spirits who surrounded the Duke of Orleans. He ruffled it most especially with that young German Count de Frise, the fine flower of the gallantry of the age, whose famous letter to his friend, half prose and half verse like the old *chantefable* of Aucassin and Nicolete, is one of the daintiest productions of that age of literary daintiness. The nephew of the Marshal de Saxe died young; de Besenval lived on, growing more popular, more witty, more audacious as time whitened his locks. Fair, insolent, and loveable, the Prince de Ligne calls him in his delightful memoirs, which contain no more delightful pages than those which paint the portrait of Besenval. De Ligne pictures

him the hero of a kind of eternal summer, shining at sixty years of age like a young man on the threshold of his career, conspicuous alike in the brilliant circle of the Queen's adorers and among the intrepid hunters whose society pleased the King. He liked to be mixed up in many things: he gained certain courtly privileges by winning certain patents of nobility 'of which he had no need, having so much nobility in his soul,' and, as for the hunting, surely 'a grizzled Swiss lieutenant-general who was present at the death of the Duke of Berwick might very well dispense with being present at the death of the stag forty years later.' But that was the character of the man—well-preserved, eupeptic, enjoying himself much and in many ways, carrying into courtly places something of the coarse salt humours of the barrack-room and the camp. A graceful amateur in the arts of painting and the arts of letters, a lover of graceful gardens, of graceful women, above all of one most graceful woman, he stands out in vigorous relief from the rest of the courtly rout. He could be faithful to his friends, he had early devoted himself to de Choiseul, and he followed de Choiseul in his disgrace to Chanteloup; he had in him the makings of an excellent administrative soldier, as the reforms he effected in his Swiss forces show; that he could write with a dexterous grace his memoirs and the little pieces that he wrote at Drevenich during the campaign of 1757 prove. He was a man of too many tastes to

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do anything really great, but he succeeded at least in being remarkable.

There is nothing in the whole history of the Old Order more strange than this story of the royal illness. The young Queen acted like the girl in the Poitou folk-song, who audaciously rejoices in the fact that she has her three lovers to wait upon her: one to brush her clothes, and one to dress her hair, and one to make her bed. She chose to be attended in her bedchamber by four gentlemen, all alike renowned chiefly for their profligacy, all alike regarded by public scandal as the lovers of Marie Antoinette, all alike able to boast of very special proofs of her favour. Guines could say that for him she had overthrown Turgot; Esterhazy that she had paid his debts and written him innumerable letters; Coigny that he owed her many honours; Besenval that he had addressed her in the words of love and still retained her friendship. What can we think of the queen who was nursed by these four libertines and dandies; still more, what can we think of the king who knew of this and yet permitted it? Fantastic gallantry never aped more madly since the world began. The four courtiers actually proposed to pass all the night and every night in Marie Antoinette's bedroom. This outrage at least Mercy managed to prevent. With infinite difficulty he succeeded in arranging that the gentlemen should leave the Queen's bedside at eleven at night and return again at seven in the morning.

If the Queen's name suffered through her men friends, it suffered also through the women she was devoted to. Her friendship for Madame de Lamballe might have passed; but there was another and even more famous friend of Marie Antoinette, the mention of whose name even now has the power of goading the opponents of the Queen to fury. Gabrielle-Yolande-Claude-Martine de Polastron, born in 1749—the same year as the Princess de Lamballe—married in 1767 the Count Jules de Polignac. She was not wealthy, neither was her husband; she lived generally away from Court, until she chanced to win the affections of Marie Antoinette and to become one of the brightest of the fixed stars in the Versailles firmament. The name of Madame de Polignac is a name to conjure up hatred with. The animosity which assails the Queen deepens in acridity when it is addressed to her dearest friend. So intemperate is some of the language that has been used about her, that it would almost seem as if in the eyes of certain writers Madame de Polignac, and Madame de Polignac alone, was responsible for all the evils of the Old Order and all the sorrows of the Revolution. On the other hand, certain other writers have made the inevitable attempt to rehabilitate her character, and, stealing the pigments of the courtly limners of the Queen, have painted us a Duchess de Polignac of the most angelic type, modest, retiring, unambitious—a sort of eighteenth-century Una. We may very readily

decline to accept either picture. The Duchess de Polignac, as she afterwards became, was a rarely beautiful woman, a rarely charming woman. We can judge in some degree of her beauty still, from her portraits; her charm we must take on trust from the unanimous enthusiasms of a Lévis, a Ségur, a Tilly, a Besenval, a de la Marck, a Madame Campan, who all agree in their tributes to the singular grace of her character and bearing.

Her beauty and her charm completely conquered Marie Antoinette. Her royal friendship for the Princess de Lamballe waned and paled before the hot enthusiasm of her regard for the beautiful wife of Jules de Polignac. Madame de Polignac became one of the most important figures at the Court. Whether she was ambitious herself or no, she naturally became the knot of a little group of ambitious people who hoped to play upon the stops of Madame de Polignac's popularity, to govern the Queen through the favourite and the King through the Queen. Undoubtedly the influence of Madame de Polignac was not a fortunate influence upon the Queen. However innocent Madame de Polignac may have been of any deliberate schemes, she became the centre of a set of schemers: she belonged by tradition, by interest, by affection, to that worst kind of Court party which sees the salvation of a nation only in the comfort of the Court, and considers those institutions only possible which mean the maintenance of that Court in all possible luxury and

all possible authority. The gang who thronged the Polignac salon, who clung around the Polignac skirts, and who hoped to guide the course of the Queen's action through the Polignac fingers, were not a gang who were likely to be good advisers for a young and feather-headed queen. A Duke de Guines, who was to help to overthrow Turgot; a Duke de Coigny, who was to come nigh to striking his King; a Prince de Ligne, writer of incomparable memoirs, but saturated with the ideas of the Old Order; a Baron de Besenval; a Count Valentin Esterhazy; a Count d'Adhemar; a light Madame de Châlons; a plain, pleasing, ambitious Diane de Polignac, sister of Jules—such were the members of the Polignac cénacle; such were the advisers, the influencers of the Queen.

But in condemning the fatal frivolities of Marie Antoinette's early days let us not be blind to the many excuses that can be made for her. She was young, she was beautiful; she belonged to an age which believed in the divine right of kings and kindred superstitions; she was flung at an age that had scarcely passed out of childhood into the corruptest Court in Europe; she was surrounded by dangerous enemies and more dangerous friends; she was in daily contact with men whose one idea was to become the favoured lover of the Queen in the most practical sense, and who were sure to be converted into foes by any rebuff; worst of all, she was married to Louis XVI. Even under ordinary conditions

Louis XVI. would have been a trying, unattractive husband for a woman like Marie Antoinette. The monarch who would come to greet his beautiful and dainty consort with hands all grimy from his stithy well deserved to be called 'My god Vulcan' by the Venus of Versailles. But there were graver reasons why Louis XVI. was an unfortunate husband for Marie Antoinette. It seems perfectly certain that Louis XVI., for certain physical reasons, was not the man to make a good husband of; it seems perfectly certain that for a very long time after the formal marriage Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette were husband and wife only in name. The subject is a delicate one; it is treated of again and again most indelicately in the gossip, the lampoons, the verses of the day; it suggests itself often in the early letters of Marie Antoinette to her mother. An operation upon the King's person was essential; it was long postponed; it was at last performed and proved successful. The Queen of France became a mother. We need pay no heed to the slanders of Orleans, who, lusting for the crown himself, declared that 'the son of Coigny shall never be my king.' We need pay no heed to the sneers of the Count of Provence. There is not the slightest reason to assume for a moment that the children of Marie Antoinette were not the children of Louis XVI. as well. But in judging the character of Marie Antoinette, in deploring the frivolity, the flightiness which characterised so much of her early

Court life, we must bear in mind the curious physical conditions which accompanied her married life, and, remembering how much the happiness of all men and all women depends upon such physical conditions, we must be prepared to make much allowance for the beautiful, wayward, unhappy Queen of France.

A great number of names have been from time to time brought forward in good faith and in bad faith as the names of Marie Antoinette's lovers. That she had many lovers in the sense that many men were in love with her, it would be impossible, as it would be absurd, to deny. A young and beautiful woman, a young and beautiful queen, was sure to have any number of adorers. But it is alleged again and again that many of these adorers were lovers in the completest sense of the term. It is impossible to say for certain that Marie Antoinette was as pure as admirers of the type of Burke would fain have her to be. But really the evidence against her is of the weakest kind. Perhaps the gravest is to be found in the memoirs of Lauzun, and we shall see that there is, after all, but little gravity in them.

Lauzun was a brilliant blackguard, an incarnation of all the graceful and disgraceful vices of his age. He is the ornament and rose of a foul state, the typical courtier and soldier of a decadent epoch. Educated, as he says, well nigh upon the lap of Madame de Pompadour, he soon approved himself a worthy pupil of her philosophy. He lived the life

of his time and of his class to the extreme, reeled like a vulgar Faustus from desire to satiety, and from satiety to desire. Life to him was one long round of women, cards, horse-racing, tempered only by occasional facile diplomacy and by a perfect willingness to play a soldier's part whenever called upon. His intrigues have made him famous or infamous in an age of intrigue; his name has become a proverb among the profligate; he rivals, but he does not surpass, Richelieu. There could hardly be a more perfect proof of the inevitable Revolution than the life of such a man, and yet the life is interesting and eminently picturesque. In the evil panorama of his memoirs there is one pretty picture to be gleaned—when the lad Lauzun, as yet a child, and standing eagerly upon the threshold of experience, falls in love with the girl actress of the theatre. We are reminded of the Daphnis and Chloe of Longus, in their stolen meeting, with its innocent, ignorant caresses, a meeting suddenly interrupted by the apparition of a large spider, which neither of them was courageous enough to kill, and which frightened the babyish lovers away, as the spider in our nursery legend frightened away the memorable Miss Muffet.

In estimating the character of Marie Antoinette, some importance has been attached by her enemies to the statements of Lauzun. In Lauzun's memoirs he distinctly states that the Queen was in love with him, that she practically flung herself at his head, that it was her delight to display her passion for

him in the most pronounced manner before the whole Court, and that if her attachment for him was not actually guilty, it was only because of his superior prudence and reserve. I do not think it is in the least necessary to question the genuineness of the memoirs of Lauzun. Talleyrand did indeed vehemently deny, in 1818, their genuineness. But the word of Talleyrand in such a matter need not count for much. A man of Talleyrand's diplomatic mind and unscrupulous spirit would very well be willing to clear the memory of his friend by denying the authenticity of his memoirs. To my mind, they are perfectly genuine; to my mind, they prove nothing whatever against the Queen. On Lauzun's own showing the Queen was never his mistress. He affirms, indeed, that she was tortured by a guilty passion for him; but Lauzun was one of those men who are vexed by a semi-feminine belief in their own unfailing powers of attraction. The fine flower of a corrupt Court and a corrupt age, he had made so many conquests, enjoyed so many intrigues, played at love with so many pretty women of all kinds, actresses and aristocrats, that he had come to believe himself irresistible. The victim of a semi-sentimentalized erotomania, he saw everywhere the victims of his charms, and it is not surprising that he imagined the Queen herself to be his slave. That he was a despicable rascal, a disgrace to the name of gentleman, an unchivalrous rogue, his memoirs make sufficiently clear. With his morality, with the mo-

rality of the women who loved him or lusted after him, we have nothing to do. It is the baseness of heart which led him to set his love-secrets down on paper, to betray with incredible meanness the long succession of his mistresses, which makes him loathsome in all eyes. It is indeed a striking tribute to the virtue of Marie Antoinette that this slanderous cur did not dare to describe her as his mistress. It is hard to know what held his unscrupulous hand, and we can only conceive that some glimmering tradition of truthfulness, while allowing him to warp a few signs of royal favour into the declarations of a guilty passion, did not permit him directly to state in defiance of the facts that he had been, actually and physically, the Queen's lover. The very interview which he describes with the Queen, in which he pictures Marie Antoinette as falling into his arms and well-nigh soliciting his embraces, is to be very differently understood when interpreted by the light of Madame Campan's statements. She mentions the interview, declares that the door of the Queen's room was opened, that Marie Antoinette indignantly ordered Lauzun to leave her, that Lauzun departed in silence, and that the Queen, turning to Madame Campan, said, 'That man shall never come near me again.'

Lauzun's later actions are much more characteristic of the impertinent lover, repulsed and revengeful, than of the triumphant favourite of the Queen. He became one of her bitterest enemies, and went

his unworthy way to his doom. It is fortunate for history that this ungentle gentleman was not as unprincipled a liar as he was a profligate. While we shudder over the treachery with which he revenged his mortified vanity by writing down his calumny of the Queen, we cannot but rejoice that he did no more. It would have been so easy for him just then to lie harder, to pull a longer bow. As it is, his memoirs are not much of a weapon against the character of Marie Antoinette. There is, of course, nothing inherently impossible in the suggestion that Marie Antoinette may have been attracted by such a handsome Court butterfly as Lauzun. We must remember the conditions of the courtly life; we must remember the profound corruption of manners, of morality, of literature, of the time; we must remember the extraordinary blending of scepticism and sentimentality which characterized the refined depravity of the century, in estimating the character of the Queen and of any other woman of that age. The Court of France was not an atmosphere in which virtue flourished. The conditions of Marie Antoinette's life were exceptionally unfavourable to virtue. Married in her early youth to a passionless man of sluggish blood, denied the wifely rights for long enough, troubled in body and soul by such physical indifference, surrounded by homage, compliment, adoration: what an ordeal for such a woman in such an age!

Unhappily Louis XVI. was not the kind of

monarch to mellow with time; he was not, in the words of Dumas' Planchet, a 'bonne pâte d'homme,' and time only intensified his defects. If he was weak and foolish when he came to the throne, he was weak and foolish still after many years of reign. Physically he solidified, mentally he stultified into a monarch more and more ridiculous, more and more unsuited to the critical conditions of the time. It is a little ironical that his very virtues were in some respects his greatest failings. We may wonder when we find a Count de Tilly declaring that 'a king steeped in vices and immoralities might possibly have saved us, but we were fated to perish through a king whose weakness neutralized all his virtues.' Yet it is just possible that a king like Henri Quatre, if such a king could have sprung from the weakened Bourbon blood, a king like Louis Quatorze, might have for the time being saved 'us'—saved, that is, the nobility that did not in the least deserve saving. But Louis XVI. was not the man to save anything except his pocket money. His bourgeois virtues looked ridiculous to a Court that lusted after the recollections of the late reign and the traditions of the Regency, and outside the circle of the Court they either were not believed in or failed to make the least impression. The poor man who might have been happy enough as a small shopkeeper, or better still as a small gamekeeper, was ludicrously out of place in his unwelcome trade of king. To the world at large, Louis XVI. in 1789 was a feeble, vacillat-

ing, comic individual, at once shy and brutal, with a weakness for mean economies, and a weakness for too much wine, the degraded and unlovely Gambrinus of a comic opera. A king may be many things and hold his crown fast; but there is one thing he must never be, and that is, comic. Good-bye to the king who is the laughing-stock of his people. It is all very well to be the King of Yvetôt of a broad ballad, but the nightcap of Béranger's monarch contrasts too oddly with the imperial purple of the throne. It is by no means clear that the accusations made against Louis of an over-fondness for the flagon were based on very substantial facts. He is defended against the accusation, not too skilfully, by the Count d'Hezecques. But it was enough for him to be regarded by the people at large as the 'drunkard king,' and, were he as abstemious as Pythagoras, it would be of no avail. Caricaturing Paris stuck a bottle into the pocket of the monarch it derided; Louis had the same unhappy sort of reputation which in after days fell upon that Prussian king who was so unjustly baptized as 'King Clicquot.' If Louis did drink, we may be sure it was with no such poetic pleasure in red wine as that which animates the Persian of Hafiz, the Greek of the pseudo-Anacreon, or the Vaux de Vire of Olivier Basselin. His drinking must have been a stolid sort of business. The picture we have of him coming back from the chase at Rambouillet, half asleep, heavy, dazzled by the lights, helped upstairs by obsequious, sneering

valets, who assume their weary King to be dead drunk, is not a kingly picture. Louis always had a kind of gross interest in his food, which we shall find yet coming out, comically and yet pathetically crude, at a time when other thoughts than thoughts of wine and chicken would better have become him.

If he was derided by the public, Louis was little loved in the circles of the Court. He was shy, and his shyness made him hate new faces; he was rough and rude, and his rudeness made him incessant enemies, whom he could ill afford to have as enemies. His only serious passion and preoccupation was the chase, and his famous diary is one of the most dismal monuments of human folly that fantastic chance has preserved to us. His queer habit of putting down the word 'rien,' 'nothing,' on every day when he did not hunt something has caused some of the most ironic juxtapositions in this journal. As, for example, where we find such entries as these: 'To-day, nothing; remonstrances of the Parliament.' 'Nothing; death of M. de Maurepas.' 'Nothing; retirement of M. Necker.' Other entries yet more significant will be made in that diary before the poor King is done with it. He was only happy when he was hunting, killing all manner of game, from the wild boar and the stag to the simple swallow; he was unhappy when a cold in his head or some absurd matter in connection with the government of the country interfered with his pastime. It was a great privilege to be permitted to join in the royal

hunting parties, and yet by no means always a pleasant privilege. Tremendous proofs of nobility going back to the fifteenth century had to be furnished, and when they were furnished the bearer of some illustrious or ancient name often found the glory of sharing in the royal pleasure sorely discounted by the ignominy of having to endure the running fire of the somewhat brutal royal pleasantries at the expense of the bearer of an unfamiliar face.

The ordinary enjoyments of the Court were detestable to Louis. He hated late hours; he hated comedies and parties; he hated all play save loto and whist for small stakes; he hated, indeed, everything courtly except the solemnities of courtly ceremonial which allowed him to mask his native timidity under the frigid mask of etiquette. His native timidity needed some such mask. The King's bearing was not kingly; the royal face was not royal. From the loyal portraits of the time that flatter the lineaments of a failing race, from the savage caricatures that accentuate malignly all its defects, from servility and from satire alike, we can gather a fairly clear impression of that weak, commonplace face, with its high slanting forehead, its full nose, its protruding lips, weak chin, swollen flabby jowl and thick neck. It was a foolish face, with its whimsical vacant expression of rustic good-humour spreading over its heavy cheeks and prominent lack-lustre eyes, its heavy drooping eyelids and thick eyebrows. Madame Campan, who would no doubt willingly

flatter, tries to infuse a tinge of melancholy into the vapid beatitude of the face, but has to admit what everyone else from de Besenval to d'Allonville admits, that Louis lacked all nobility of carriage. The less courtly criticism of Barère depicts the unwholesomely pale face, the expressionless bluish eyes, the loud laugh that had something imbecile in its mirth, the ignoble massiveness of the bulk, the hopeless awkwardness of the bearing. That he was slovenly to a degree, even Campan admits, and her waiting-maid mind despairs over his ill-adjusted clothes and the persistent untidiness of his hair. There never was a king less calculated to dominate a brilliant, audacious, and corrupt Court, to impress a sceptical and critical people, and to captivate a beautiful and ambitious wife. Destiny did the House of Capet the worst turn in the world when it adorned its line with a prince endowed with many virtues, and no capacity for using those virtues for the benefit of his people, his party, or himself.

But if the King was bad from the kingly standpoint, perhaps his two royal brothers of Provence and Artois were worse. If Louis XVI. was a stupid king, Provence and Artois would not have done any better in his place; the time was yet to come when they did for a season sit on the royal throne, each in his turn, and not distinguish themselves. That is far ahead. When Marie Antoinette first saw them they were still very young, with the graces and the possibilities of youth. In 1789 they had given their

measure, and very bad measure too. But they were very different from the King, and very different from each other. It was said of them that they only resembled each other in one thing—their marriages. They had married two sisters, princesses of the House of Piedmont, princesses whom nobody much liked, and who were conspicuous for no great merits or defects. In all other things Provence and Artois were wide as the poles asunder. Provence was plethoric, pompous, priggish, a huge eater and drinker, with unwieldy body swollen by over-feeding and lack of exercise. On his ungainly existence an affectation of literature and learning sat most ungracefully. It pleased him to pose as a man of taste, to linger long hours in his library, to write little mean paragraphs for the press, and little mean pamphlets, to ape a philosophic calm. When the expected birth of a Dauphin dispelled his immediate and fondly cherished hopes for a swift succession—hopes that were flattered and fostered by a little army of adulators—he wrote about his disappointment with a pedantic assumption of serenity which seems sufficiently ridiculous to us, and seemed, let us hope, sufficiently ridiculous to the King of Sweden, to whom it was addressed. He liked to get about him men of letters, wits, and scholars, to quote verses with an assumption of intelligence, and to parade fragments of Latin. In appearance he was like the King his brother, but with a difference. The forehead was lower, the nose smaller, the chin less feeble, the throat less full, the

general expression less benign. There was something irritable, something sourly aggressive, something rat-like about his countenance which was curiously disagreeable.

Artois was strikingly unlike his royal brother or his brother Provence in character. He seems to have started in life with the determination to be, like Young Marlow, an Agreeable Rattle, and to have succeeded in making himself a Disagreeable Rattle. In his youth he strove to play that kind of page part which was not then typified and immortalized by Beaumarchais' Chérubin, and he continued to play the same part long after it had ceased in the least degree to become him. He was as frivolous and empty-headed as a man well could be, and seemed to take a kind of pitiable pride in his frivolity and his empty head. He loved to gamble, to revel in a kind of skittish, skipping, grotesquely boyish kind of way, which had in it nothing so dignified as the doggedness of the vices of Orleans nor so unconscious and innate as the vices of Lauzun. Where his brother Provence played at pedant, he played at profligate; the Queen liked him as much as she disliked Provence; he did his best gravely to compromise the Queen by the intolerable license of his manners and speech to her—manners and speech which aroused time and again the indignation and the protests of Mercy. He was better looking than Provence, brisker in expression, of a fairer favour, alerter in his bearing, a sufficiently dashing, soldierly

prince. He it is of whom Mercier tells the tale of his skin-tight breeches into which he had to be dropped by four tall lackeys, the most interesting tale about him.

Such were the prominent persons in the great Court drama, such the meddlers and muddlers who were finally to land France in full revolution and send the fine flower of the French nobility skipping basely over the frontier. The courtly party had their chance time and again; salvation lay in their way more than once, and they daffed it lightly aside. Salvation was never nearer to them than now, when a Minister of Marine was called to the controllership of the Finances, and what looked like a fair field lay open to Turgot.

CHAPTER XI

TURGOT

If the God Thor, oblivious for the moment of his hammer and his goats and the tests of Utgarda Loke, could have looked down from his cloudy Scandinavian heaven upon France in the middle of the eighteenth century, he might have seen a sight in which he might naturally be expected to take an interest. A youthful abbé in his clerical cassock playing at battledore and shuttlecock with an exceedingly pretty young lady whom he called Minette —such was the idyllic sight which might be supposed to deserve the attention of the war-god of the North. For that alert young abbé, with the wise, boyish face, who seemed so devoted to the dainty Minette, was actually the war-god's namesake, and his ancestors, it would seem, claimed to be sprung from the war-god's loins. The young abbé's name was Turgot, and Turgot means Thor God, and it might have surprised and perplexed the Thor God of the hammer to know that the Thor God of the battledore was going to accomplish things more amazing than any recorded of his illustrious ancestor, and was to help to shake the foundations of the established world.

The great Turgot was born in Paris on May 10, 1727. He came of an excellent Normandy breed, rich in successful names. Somewhere in the sixteenth century the family branched into two, the Turgots of Tourailles and the Turgots of Saint-Clair. Our Turgot came of the Saint-Clairs. It is curious to find that in the early seventeenth century a Turgot of Tourailles knocked on the head in a scuffle by an inn a certain Protestant soldier of fortune named Montchrétien. This Montchrétien had written some tragedies of no importance and a prose work of very considerable importance, because it brought for the first time a very famous term into literature. Montchrétien's book was called 'Traité d'Économie Politique.' It is a curious example of the 'supreme ironic procession' part of existence that the inventor of the term 'political economy' should meet his death at the hands of a namesake of one of the most famous teachers of political economy who ever lived.

Our Turgot was the youngest son of Michel Etienne Turgot, an excellent prévôt des marchands in Paris and builder of a drain as famous as that of Tarquinius Priscus. Michel Etienne had one daughter, who married the Duke de Saint-Aignan, and three sons, of whom the eldest became a sufficiently eminent magistrate and the second a sufficiently eminent soldier. The third son was a curious blend of precocity and timidity. All his life he was awkward, bashful, nervous; all his life, too, he pre-

served the extraordinary capacity for study, the extraordinary power of work, which characterized his early youth. He was educated at that Collège Louis-le-Grand upon whose roll such strange names were yet to be inscribed; while he was only sixteen years old he attended the theological lectures at the Sorbonne, and, after obtaining special permission, on account of his youth, to be examined, passed his examination with conspicuous success. The young Abbé de Laulne—he bore this name from a paternal estate—rose from success to success, passed examination after examination brilliantly, was elected a prior of the Sorbonne, made some admirable Latin speeches in fulfilment of the duties of the office, and wrote his first work on political economy in attack upon Law's system. His friends were enthusiastic, pressed him to enter the Church, predicted speedy bishoprics; but to their surprise and disappointment Turgot announced his intention of giving up the Church, and in the December of 1750 he definitely left the Sorbonne, and turned his thoughts to other things.

Even in that age of astonishing young men Turgot was astonishing. He was only twenty-three years old when he left the Sorbonne, but he was already an accomplished economist, a profound thinker, a theoretic statesman. Léon Say says of him that while he was yet at the Sorbonne he had already in his mind everything which came out of it afterwards, and that the work of the last thirty years

of his life was merely the production in broad daylight of the mental stores acquired in the Sorbonne. From the moment of his leaving the Sorbonne to the moment in which the controller-generalship came into his hands, life was for Turgot a series of repeated triumphs. His final fall was, could he but have known it, but his greatest triumph. Deputy Solicitor-General, Councillor in the Parliament, Maître des Requêtes, Limoges Intendant, these are the stepping-stones of his progress from 1752 to 1761. During all that period he moved and shone in the most cultured Parisian society. He was a friend of Madame Geoffrin, of Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse, of Madame de Graffigny, of Condorcet, of Helvétius, of d'Alembert and the brilliant Encyclopædic stars, of the excellent Morellet, of Quesnay and Quesnay's devoted servant, old Mirabeau the 'friend of man,' of Gournay. He was the correspondent of Adam Smith, whom he met later at Quesnay's house; he was the friend and correspondent of Voltaire—though correspondence came near once to severing the friendship. He was for a little while the acquaintance of Madame du Deffand and of her great friend the Duke de Choiseul, but the acquaintance soon faded out of existence and merged on the part of Madame du Deffand and de Choiseul into active dislike. He was the friend and something more than the friend of the beautiful Mademoiselle de Ligneville, whom her aunt Madame de Graffigny always called Minette. It is one of the minor mys-

teries of history why Turgot did not marry Minette. They seem to have been tenderly attached : excellent Morellet is in despair because the attachment did not end in marriage. Some solve the problem by suggesting, without decisively proving, that Turgot was actually in holy orders at the time. Others consider that he was too busy, too practical a man to hamper his career with the cares of a wife and a possible family. Others, again, suggest that Turgot, threatened with hereditary gout and convinced that it was the destiny of his race to be short-lived, was unwilling to link a woman's fate with his. Whatever the reasons, the certain fact remains that Turgot did not marry Minette or anyone else, that Minette married the wise Helvétius, and that Turgot and Madame Helvétius remained friends all their lives.

In 1751 the first volume of the famous 'Encyclopædia' made its appearance. Turgot was soon drawn into the magic circle of its contributors, and wrote five articles for it, on Etymology, Existence, Expansibility, Fairs and Markets, and Endowments. The article on 'Existence' made its mark upon thinkers then, has made its mark upon thinkers since. But though Turgot's connection with the 'Encyclopædia' was brilliant, it was not of long duration. An imbecile Government suppressed the 'Encyclopædia,' and Turgot, as an official servant of that Government, did not think it becoming or compatible with his duties to leave his name upon the Encyclopædic list. It is to be regretted that the fine genius of

Turgot could not continue to be associated to the end with the monumental work of the 'Encyclopædia,' more indeed for the sake of the 'Encyclopædia' than for the sake of Turgot. His own written works are not voluminous, but they are abundant, inasmuch as they set forth sufficiently the economic doctrines of his life, that life which was in itself the best and the most convincing of all his works.

On August 8, 1761, Turgot was appointed to the intendance of Limoges, and for thirteen years, until 1774, he devoted himself to his task and tempered his theoretic soul in the practical work of statesmanship. The duties of an intendant were many and varied, the power of an intendant very considerable. At that time France was divided into forty military divisions called Provinces, under the command of a governor, and thirty-five administrative circumscriptions called 'généralités,' under the direction of an intendant. Like most of the other administrative arrangements of the Old Order, these divisions were very muddled and confusing. The provinces and generalities were not uniform in extent or identical in limit. They overlapped each other so much that there were generally several intendants for one governor and several governors for one intendant. The functions of governor and intendant were entirely independent. The intendants looked after the police, the militia, and public charities; they had the power of deciding on litigious cases connected with taxes; they were maîtres des requêtes, and had the

right to sit with the other maîtres des requêtes when in Paris; they were in the first place financial agents. Turgot now entered upon all these various and complex duties and proceeded to amaze his peers. Never before, unhappily for the Old Order, had such an intendant been known. Unhappily, too, for most of the adherents of the Old Order, they never wanted to see such an intendant again. Still more unhappily for them, they did not got the chance.

Turgot found himself in the midst of a network of corrupt and degrading traditions, which he proceeded to break through with the ease and the determination of the strong man. He found the people suffering grievously under the oppressions and exactions of the greater and the lesser nobility, and he set to work with uncompromising courage to reform it altogether. Naturally enough, he won the affection of the peasantry, not much given as a rule to entertaining affectionate feelings towards their intendants. Naturally, too, he won the detestation of the astounded and indignant nobility and gentry. That an intendant, one of a class that had always thought with them and acted with them, should take it upon himself to interfere with their privileges and to write and talk preposterously about ameliorating the lot of the peasantry, was an innovation of a kind not to be endured. For thirteen years they had to endure it, however, while Turgot toiled at improvement of taxation, at making a survey of the province, and strove with Angoulême crisis, with dearth of

cereals, with opposition to free circulation of corn, with an impossible Abbé Terray. The irritated and offended nobility held Turgot up to execration as a 'man of system.' 'The name of a man of system,' Turgot himself has written, 'has become a kind of weapon on the lips of all persons either prejudiced or interested in retaining certain abuses; and it is levelled against all those who propose changes in any order of ideas whatever.'

Never did Turgot give greater proof of the extraordinary vitality and varied powers of his mind than during this period of his Limoges intendance. While he was grappling so heroically with the difficulties in the way of a reforming intendant, while he was travelling all over his province in the wildest winter seasons heedless of the gout and rheumatism that racked him, while he was pouring out those letters and pamphlets which are so many precious state-papers of political economy, he still found time to keep up a large correspondence with many familiar friends—Caillard, Hume, Condorcet and others—and to practise some of those graceful literary exercises which are usually the decorous occupation of a learned leisure. He seemed certainly to justify the saying that the great things are only done by those who have no time to do them in.

Among Turgot's literary enterprises about this time was an ambitious attempt to revive the laws which govern the prosody of the ancient Greeks

and Romans for the benefit of French versification. The dream of happily adapting the hexameter to the tongues of modern Europe has been dreamed by more than one scholar in every scholastic generation. Turgot followed the dream so far as to render into French hexameters the fourth book of Virgil's Æneid. The result is not exhilarating to students of French verse. If the exquisitely melodious genius of Ronsard and his brilliant stars suffered slightly from a too enthusiastic classicism, such metrical talents as Turgot possessed suffered heavily in the majestic Olympian measure. But unluckily, Turgot was as proud of his verses as Richelieu had been of his tragedy, as most men of genius are of some enterprise curiously out of the scope of their genius. He admired his hexameters immensely, but he was not content with his own admiration. He wanted the admiration of Voltaire himself, the aged autocrat of belles-lettres, and to win that admiration unbiassed he caused Caillard to send them to Voltaire as the production of an unknown Abbé de Laage. Alas for Turgot's ambition! Voltaire at first gave no opinion; at last, and upon pressure, he wrote a pathetic little letter, in which he pleaded old age and waning sight as his excuse for delay in expressing his satisfaction at what he considered to be a very excellent translation—in prose. That 'in prose' was a bitter sting to Turgot's vanity. Voltaire was doubtless innocent of the slightest sarcasm, but the very innocence of the criticism only made the matter

worse, and Turgot said some very bitter things about Voltaire's lack of reasoning faculty.

Nobody now, we should imagine, pastures his classic instincts upon Turgot's travesty, more gravely intended than Scarron's, of the Æneid. But one effort of his has made its mark upon what Turgot's English contemporaries would have called polite literature, the line he wrote under a portrait of Benjamin Franklin—

> Eripuit cælo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis—

a line which might well have prophetically referred to other sceptres and other tyrants than those Turgot had in his mind. Happily, however, it is not upon his neatly turned Latin epigrams any more than upon his laborious Græco-Gallic hexameters that Turgot's claim to the admiration of the world depends. The world will remember the 'Lettres sur la Liberté du Commerce des Grains,' and the 'Réflexions sur la Formation et la Distribution des Richesses,' when it has forgotten that the great economist was also expert in latinity and ambitious of a translator's fame.

When Turgot had been thirteen years intendant at Limoges he had made his mark pretty plainly upon such public opinion as then existed; he was recognised by a large party in France as the champion of reform: the one thing needful for the due carrying out of his plans was that he should become a cabinet minister. The same fair fortune that had served him hitherto at every step of his career stood

him in good stead now. He became a cabinet minister.

A new order of things had come about. Louis XV., Louis the Well-beloved, had been hurried to his dishonoured grave. Louis XVI. was King of France, and the grim question, 'How Berry would pull through with it?' was about to be answered in all earnest. Berry had begun, as we have seen, by making de Maurepas his prime minister, by sending d'Aiguillon to the right-about, and by making it pretty plain to the two other sides of that ingenious political triangle, Maupeou and Terray, that they were not likely to adorn their own offices much longer. Who was to take Terray's place? Who was to be the new Controller-General? The Abbé de Very, Turgot's intimate friend and the intimate friend of Maurepas, said emphatically, Turgot. The enthusiastic and intelligent Duchess d'Enville, of the antique La Rochefoucauld line, with which Maurepas was so proud to be linked, said emphatically, Turgot. The Countess de Maurepas also said, Turgot. Under these conditions Maurepas was very willing, and thus it came to pass that Turgot was brought into the Cabinet, appointed first of all to the Navy, and then one month later, in August 1774, to the coveted Controller-Generalship.

It seemed at first that Turgot would have to encounter no very great difficulties in his new office. It seemed so at least to the indifferent lookers-on, who do not always see most of the game. Turgot

himself appreciated more keenly the dangers in his way. The young, beautiful, imperious Queen, with her love for entertainment, for all that makes life amusing and that costs a great deal of money, was not likely to be much of an aid to a reforming minister bent specially on inculcating economy upon an exceptionally weak king. Marie Antoinette did indeed write to her mother that Turgot enjoyed 'the reputation of being a very honest man,' using, in so doing, almost exactly the words employed by Mercy in his letter to Maria Theresa upon Turgot. But when Marie Antoinette wrote those words she had not yet found the 'very honest man' running counter to any of her wishes. As for the King, he appeared to be as pleased with his new Controller-General as if he were a new and ingenious lock. The meeting between them at Compiègne, when Turgot came to thank him for the appointment, seems to have been most royal, most effective. Turgot was all gratitude, but he was also all determination; Louis was every inch a king of the nobly benevolent type. With an excess of generous enthusiasm which was doubtless genuine enough at the time, he pledged himself to Turgot beforehand by his word of honour 'to share all your views, and always support you in the courageous steps you will have to take.' Poor Louis! If Turgot had known him better he would have known how little those high-sounding words represented the real workings of that well-meaning, most un-

stable mind. But Turgot was not unnaturally hopeful. He entered upon office in the character of a reforming minister, and he proceeded at once to play his part. The programme he presented to the King had the merits of brevity and simplicity. It was expressed in three terse points—'no bankruptcy, no increase in the loans, no taxation.' This was the negative policy; the positive policy, the policy that was to make all this possible, was simpler and shorter still. It was summed up in one phrase—'Reduce the expenditure.' Only reduce the expenditure and all will be well. It was simple enough, but under the conditions, as Turgot had yet to find, it had the sovereign defect of being impossible.

It would be perhaps too rash to say—although the statement might be defended—that if Turgot had been able to carry out thoroughly his programme, with all that it involved, the Revolution would never have taken place. But it is certain that if Turgot had been allowed a free hand the Revolution would have been very different from what it was. Suppose that Turgot had been able to realize all his hopes; suppose that he had reorganized the financial condition of France, had crushed the old evil privileges out of existence, had lopped away the bulk of the abuses, had established the freedom of industry and of commerce, then the majority of the causes which created the Revolution of 1789 would have ceased to exist. But unhappily for Turgot, and still more unhappily for his enemies, Turgot

was not given a free hand. He was not a revolutionist at all in any sane sense of the word, but he was regarded by his adversaries as if he had been the wildest of revolutionary fanatics. The Farmers-General were terribly fluttered in their dovecots, the Terrays and their kind were hot against him; privilege was up in arms everywhere.

Turgot soon began to show that he was in earnest in his notions of reform. He began by dismissing Brochet de Saint-Prest, the director of the Corn Agency, the âme damnée of Terray in the famous or infamous 'Pacte de Famine.' Terray's scheme was to establish a monopoly in the corn trade, a monopoly to be in his hands and those of his creatures. In 1770 Terray suppressed the liberal clauses of the declaration of 1763 and the edict of 1764, by which the Controller-General Bertin had allowed the free circulation of corn. Terray's act had led to the writing of Turgot's letters defending the free circulation of corn; but Terray played off the Abbé Galiani and his anti-free-trade dialogues against Turgot's letters and coolly went on with his scheme. A very pretty little plan was on foot. Laverdy, the then Controller-General, sanctioned a treaty got up by a certain number of individuals, of whom a retired Paris baker named Malisset was one, 'for the care, the providing, and the preservation of the King's cereals.' A lawyer, Leprévost de Beaumont, heard of this agreement, saw in it a compact for the starvation of the people, and was about to denounce it,

when he was arrested and flung into the Bastille. But, if de Beaumont was thus silenced, his threatened opposition had helped to kill the plan. The treaty was set aside, and in its place the 'Régie intéressée' was devised. A commission, according to the memoirs on Terray, had been formed to inquire into the corn business. It had under its authority two directors or agents-general for the purchases and transmissions, Sorin de Bonne and Doumerc; so that all abuses in this branch of the public service ought to have been immediately suppressed. But the Councillors of State complained that they were not consulted, that nothing was communicated to them, and, indeed, that the Abbé Terray had always brought to them the work half done. This conduct became still more suspected because Brochet de Saint-Prest, who was Terray's sworn ally, was a thorough beggar when he entered the Council, but displayed since he formed part of it an extraordinary amount of opulence and luxury. Hence the supposition arose that Terray and Brochet, far from checking the monopoly, favoured it and carried it on by their underlings, who, too, were extremely rich.

Turgot was not going to stop at the dismissal of Brochet de Saint-Prest. A little later Sorin and Doumerc were arrested and their papers seized, but nothing was found to criminate them, and they were set at liberty. It was made clear, however, that Brochet de Saint-Prest had swindled, and it seemed more than likely that Terray had kept his eyes

closed in very friendly fashion to a good deal of what was going on. The private speculators it was impossible to get at. But they were disgusted and dismayed, and there was more disgust in store for them. Turgot at once proceeded to repeal the evil prohibitory enactments of Terray and to restore the corn trade to the freedom, limited indeed, but still precious, which had been accorded to it by Bertin in 1763 and 1764. But he was not allowed to proceed without protest, even from his own friends. Bertin himself urged caution and progress by slow degrees; he would have liked Turgot 'to conceal your views and your opinions from the child whom you have to govern and to restore to health.' There was another person who took upon himself to exhort Turgot upon the corn question with signal ill-success for the exhorter. This was Necker, fresh from his triumph with the Colbert eulogium, and already largely convinced of the vast importance to the world in general, and to France in particular, of his existence. Necker interviewed Turgot, who received him with the affability of an icicle and converted him into a civil but decided enemy. Turgot was always a shy man, and, like many shy men, concealed his timidity under an assumption of hauteur; he was never at any time very tolerant of the opinions of those whom he conceived to be less well-informed than himself; he was cold and rather rude to Necker, both when he received him and afterwards in writing to him. Necker immediately published his 'Législation sur

le Commerce des Grains,' which at once brought him prominently into public view as a serious rival to Turgot.

Neither the prudence of Bertin nor the protests of Necker could at all hinder Turgot in the course he had resolved upon. He determined to restore corn to its former freedom, and he determined also to effect that restoration under conditions of signal significance. It might be possible for an ingenious speculator to trace back to Turgot's action in this instance one of the most potent factors in the great revolutionary problem. Up to this time edicts had come upon the people of France as part of 'the good pleasure' of the King. The King, advised by his ministers, decided that such and such a law was to take effect, and there was no more to be said about it. The idea of in any way explaining to the people whom these laws were to govern why these laws were made never entered into the head of the sovereign or of his advisers. Now for the first time Turgot took the audacious step of acting in a precisely contrary manner. He set forth in an elaborate preamble to the edict the reasons for the change which it introduced. The public found, to its astonishment and delight, that they had to do with a minister who, when laws were made, condescended to take them in some degree into his confidence, and to explain to them as to reasonable human beings why the legislative measures which bound them were enacted. Well might Voltaire

exclaim in unconscious prophecy after reading the preamble to Turgot's edict, 'It seems as if new heavens and a new earth had made their appearance!' So in a measure they had appeared, or were about to appear, far-seeing Voltaire. That same preamble must have had a powerful effect in accelerating the onward sweep of the Revolution. When a subordinated people once find that their governors think it worth while to explain to them why they are governed, they will very soon begin to think that the time has come for them to take a share in their own government. When Turgot penned that edict he was unconsciously countersigning the death-warrant of the Old Order, and of the old monarchy of France.

Unluckily for Turgot and for the country, his reforms fell upon evil times. The price of corn rose persistently; the harvest of 1774 was poor; it threatened to be bad indeed in 1775. Mysterious discontent smouldered. On April 18, 1775, a little flame of queer insurrection burst out in Dijon. A band of peasants poured into the town, sacking mills and private houses, seeking for corn and clamouring for the life of the governor, who had said, or was reported to have said, that if the people lacked corn they might eat grass. A plucky bishop's eloquence finally induced the marauders to leave the town; they disappeared as suddenly as they came. The earth has bubbles as the water has, and these seemed to be of them. While people were still

speculating as to the meaning of the odd affair, while some saw in it a genuine popular rising and others only the mechanical performance of a prepared and well-financed plot got up to injure Turgot, the rising was repeated under much more ominous conditions, and much nearer to the seat of government. What is known in history as the 'Guerre des farines' suddenly blazed out with startling activity in the very neighbourhood of Paris. If the Dijon disturbance had been lightning in a clear sky, it was mere summer lightning compared with the forked flashes that split the sky at Pontoise, at Versailles, and at Paris itself.

There was something mysteriously menacing about these rioters. They appeared suddenly in bands: it was hard to find out whence they come; they were marshalled by fantastic Callotesque figures of bandit-like aspect, who seemed to have gold coins in sufficient abundance and some smack of military skill. Pontoise was plundered, startled, turned upside down by the adventurous rabble. Next they appeared in Versailles itself, hard by the very throne of royalty. They had the hardihood to push their way into the courtyard of the royal palace and clamour for bread there. Louis came out upon his balcony to address the mob, but the mob would not listen to him. Poor Louis, looking down upon that sea of squalid faces, his ears dizzy with that turbulent bawling for bread, had no prophetic vision of another like invasion of his stately palace, like and yet far more terrible, which

the fates had in store for him some fourteen years later. It would almost seem as if the preliminary steps of the Revolution were being carefully rehearsed. The mob had found its way to Versailles. Hungry proletaires are trying their 'prentice hands at the battlements of kings—'regumque turres.'

It is touching, it is pathetic to read the letters which Louis wrote to Turgot in this time of excitement. In one he says, 'You may rely on my firmness'—poor King, who never was sincerely or wisely firm in his life; in another he says, 'The greatest precautions must be taken to prevent the rioters from coming to lay down their conditions.' He was writing of the public markets; he little thought that the time was at hand when rioters far more serious were coming to lay down their conditions and when no precautions would prevent them.

From Versailles the riot spread to Paris, which took fire like tinder in some places. Such police as there were crumpled up before the rioters, who had everything their own way for a time, sacking the bakers' shops and carrying off the bread. But if the rioters were determined, so was Turgot. However much his influence fostered the Revolution, he had as little sympathy with revolutionaries as the staunchest supporter of the Old Order. The Parliament and Turgot were at odds just then, and between the Parliament and the riots Turgot had his hands full. But he was from his point of view equal to the situation. He posted Paris with placards proclaim-

ing all gatherings under pain of death. He caused Lenoir, the lieutenant of police who had let the riots drift on, to be dismissed. Two armies were raised in readiness to swoop upon Paris at a moment's notice. In the face of these vigorous preparations the riot collapsed, evaporated. There were a few fights in the country districts, there was a scuffle on the Versailles Road in which about a score, it was said, of peasants were killed, but for the time being riot was exorcised. Timid Parisians peeping out of their houses to peer at the riot found that it had vanished. Two of the rioters who had been captured were hanged. They went to the gallows declaring that they were dying for the people, an ominous declaration which was to awaken ominous echoes later on. Those two gaunt poor devils can scarcely have been in anybody's pay. Those dying words were serious to them, a veritable confession of faith. It was the confession of a political creed too: those two poor devils, nameless here for evermore, were the protomartyrs of the French Revolution. To them it was no question of a plot stirred up by Sartine or by Conti, by this enemy of Turgot or that enemy of Turgot. They were hungry, and their fellows were hungry, and so they died, as they said, for the people.

The immediate result of the riots was to greatly strengthen Turgot's favour with the King. But the end was drawing near. In the Parliament of Paris, Turgot found a formidable adversary. He had

strongly opposed the proposal to obliterate the effects of the Maupeou coup d'état and restore the suppressed parliaments to their old position. But Maurepas was in favour of the proposal, Maurepas planned and plotted, and Maurepas carried his point, to the despair of Condorcet, who saw in the return to the old form of parliaments the revival of one of the worst systems of the Old Order. On November 29, 1774, Louis solemnly reinstated the Paris Parliament, and Turgot found himself confronted by a body solidly and stolidly opposed to most measures of reform.

Turgot had enemies enough as it was. The clergy were against him because he was a philosophe, the Court was against him, the Paris bourgeoisie was against him, the Choiseul faction was against him and with that faction must be ranged the Queen. Marie Antoinette was against Turgot because he had interfered with her use of the bills payable at sight, which, while they were the delight of her friends, were a terrible, uncontrollable drain upon the treasury. Marie Antoinette won de Maurepas away from Turgot; Turgot was almost alone. He had the King with him still, and he was able to induce the King to accept his famous six edicts, and force them upon a furious Parliament in a bed of justice on March 12, 1776. These six edicts suppressed corvées, suppressed the offices concerning the wharves, markets, and ports of Paris, suppressed the maîtrises and jurandes, suppressed the Poissy

caisse, and, finally, modified the duty on tallow. They embodied several of the most needed reforms, but they were not destined to do France much service. They were all repealed after Turgot's fall, and when the great waves of revolution came washing against the throne they carried on their crests changes compared to which the reforms of Turgot seem well-nigh insignificant.

It would take too long and serve no purpose to go minutely into all the causes that led to Turgot's downfall. His enemies were many and powerful: Marie Antoinette was actually eager to have him sent to the Bastille; the favour of the King was daily weakening. Louis was wearied of a reforming minister who was always making his King do things which neither the King's Queen nor the King's Court liked. Turgot felt that his hold was failing. He wrote to the King some blunt, vigorous letters, setting forth his position, the King's position, and the position of the country. In one of these letters he wrote words of startling prescience. 'Do not forget, Sire, that it was weakness which placed the head of Charles I. on the block.' It is curious how again and again the fate of Charles I. of England is brought warningly, prophetically against Louis XVI. of France. Louis, we may well imagine, did not like the warning: perhaps his weak nature was annoyed at being told of its weakness; perhaps to his obstinate mood Turgot seemed a kind of ambitious mayor of the Palace. He did not answer

Turgot's letters, and on May 12 Turgot was formally dismissed from his office. There was a shout of joy from all the enemies, there was a wail of despair from all the friends of reform. 'I see nothing but death before me,' Voltaire wrote to La Harpe, 'since M. Turgot is no longer in office. I cannot understand how the King can have dismissed him. It is a thunderbolt which has struck both my brain and heart.'

Turgot met his fall with dignity. He passed his five last years of life in Paris devoted to literature, to poetry, and to science. He saw much of Franklin in 1776; in 1778, when Voltaire came to Paris for the triumph that killed him, he insisted upon seeing Turgot, and, seeing him, Voltaire caught Turgot's hands and said, almost weeping, 'Allow me to kiss the hand which has signed the salvation of the people!' These touching and noble words might well atone for the criticism Voltaire had passed unwittingly upon Turgot's Æneid translation. On March 18, 1781, he died in Paris, and was buried, first in the Church of the Incurables, in the Rue de Sèvres, and afterwards in the cemetery of Bons, in Normandy. His grave was opened, it is said, in 1793, in the search for lead for ammunition, when his body was found to be in perfect preservation. He was hurriedly re-interred, but the spot is not now known.

CHAPTER XII

THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

Here let us for a moment draw breath and bridle to deal with an episode which, though in actual date it belongs to a slightly later time, is in itself a complete episode, and may best be treated of by itself and disposed of. A complete episode indeed, a little dramatic episode of the strangest, most foolish, most fantastic kind, a very burlesque, yet fraught with the most momentous issues to all concerned. Of all the events that gave a direct helping hand to the progress of the Revolution, none was more potent than the queer crime or collection of crimes which mankind knows by the name of the affair of the Diamond Necklace. At the very moment when Beaumarchais was smiling France's aristocracy away, came this grim business and dealt its murderous strokes at the Church, the nobility, and the very throne and crown.

There are some historical problems which appear destined always to remain mysteries. Who was the Man in the Iron Mask? Who was Homer? Who wrote, collected, or compiled the Arabian Nights? Who was the author of 'Junius'? These, and a

score of similar perplexities that leap at once to the mind will probably never be absolutely, uncompromisingly, definitely answered. We may feel morally certain that Sir Philip Francis wrote 'Junius,' that the Man in the Iron Mask was the Italian Envoy; that the Arabian Nights are but the reproduction of a lost Persian original; and that the Iliad and Odyssey are not the disjointed fragments of a Wolfian fanaticism. But we cannot substitute in any of these instances an absolute for a moral certainty. The doubt still may linger, must linger, can never be finally swept off and away. The story of the Diamond Necklace is of the same kindred. It is practically impossible that we shall ever know the actual rights and wrongs of that immortal episode. All the facts, such as they are, lie before us; but the interpretation of the evidence is of the most varying kind. On the self-same set of facts one student will build up one theory, establish to his own satisfaction and the satisfaction of his school one case; only to be demolished by another student, who on no other or newer evidence builds up a wholly different theory and establishes a wholly different case.

It is, it must be confessed, but dreary work toiling through all the voluminous evidence in this case of the Diamond Necklace. Whole mountains of printed paper have been piled upon it, and the truth, whatever it may be, struggles fitfully beneath the mass evident only in Enceladus convulsions, but for ever invisible to human eye. To read through

the de la Motte papers alone, with their conflicting chaos of improbabilities and impossibilities, is to come out from the ordeal with a whirling brain, and a sensation as having revolved in a whirlpool. There is other evidence of a kind which suggests rather the cesspool than the whirlpool, stagnant filth of a sort in which the age abounded. All the obscene birds of literature and art, all the lampooners, ballad-mongers, and caricaturists of the baser sort swooped down upon the Diamond Necklace. Like the eagles in the story of Sinbad, they dived from on high after diamonds; like Sinbad's birds, too, they were lured not by the diamonds but by the flesh the diamonds clung to. The luckless student who has to glance at these things holds his nose as he goes by and gasps for the free air. All honour to the true caricaturists, all honour to Pasquin and his people and their flying shafts of satire. The caricature and the lampoon have done humanity simple service time and again. But these horrors have no more to do with satire than the poisoned dagger of the assassin has to do with the art of war.

That strain of Orientalism which animates so much of the last century, begotten of 'Mille et une Nuits,' 'Mille et un Jours,' 'Mille et un Quarts d'Heure,' and kindred fanciful fictions, troubled the blood and brain of Louis XV. In the frenzy of his adoration of Madame du Barry, he expressed the Aladdin-like wish that he could offer her a palace entirely built of gold and jewels. But even the most

reckless of monarchs must sometimes cure his whims. There was no Chancellor to raise sums for such a purpose, no Farmer-General to open a Fortunatus' purse at his prince's feet for such a freak; there was a limit to possible taxation even with the desire to build an Aladdin's Palace spurring the desire to tax. So Madame du Barry had to do without her palace of gold and jewels. But if the King was baulked in one piece of generosity, he was resolved to make up for it in another. He determined that the white du Barry neck should be adorned with the most magnificent diamond necklace in the world. Accordingly, Boehmer and Bassenge, crown jewellers, then or later were consulted, were commissioned to fashion a diamond necklace worthy of such a king and such a mistress. But if Louis had Aladdin's opulence of imagination, he lacked Aladdin's Lamp, he lacked Aladdin's Ring. When the widow's son of Canton desired a thing, it was but to wish and have; Louis XV. might wish, but he had to wait long before he could have, had to wait and not have after all.

Boehmer and Bassenge had no such store of jewels by them as could compose the commissioned necklace. No jeweller in Europe could boast of such a store of the shining stones. To get the needful number together was a matter of time, patience, perseverance, and, above all, money. So Boehmer and Bassenge, flushed with the princely patronage, sent messengers to all parts of the world,

east and west and south and north, with the one word of command, 'diamonds.' All the money they could beg or borrow, they scraped together and spent in the prudent purchase of diamonds. There was excitement in the Judengasse of every capital in Europe. Diamonds came to the light of day in all sorts of queer unexpected places, in dim back shops where bearded Jews lived in squalor upon the ransoms of empires; the New World was not left unransacked; from all the points of the compass diamonds gravitated, shining drops into the glittering ocean of stones which Boehmer and Bassenge were to work up into the matchless necklace. It was worth their while to take pains and to spend borrowed money, to drain their resources and pledge their credit to the hilt, for the reward offered was as princely as the spirit which prompted the commission. Two millions of livres—eighty thousand pounds sterling—was the sum agreed upon between the King and his jewellers. That the King was mortal, that there was any risk whatever in the transaction, never seems to have crossed the minds of the jewellers. They collected their diamonds, plundering the earth, and set to work to piece them together with a will.

The Diamond Necklace has done its ominous work and vanished for ever. No monarch, no American millionaire could hope to bring together again those stones which Boehmer and Bassenge for the first and last time brought together. But it is perfectly possible for the curious to get some idea of

what the Diamond Necklace was to be like. The original drawing made for Boehmer and Bassenge has been reproduced, and may awaken in the imaginative mind some notion of how the necklace would have glowed. Anyone may see pictured the neck circle of seventeen stones with its triple pendants, and its triple festoons and their pendants, its two broad bands of diamonds to meet upon the bosom in a kind of central sun, and diverge again into two tassels, and its other bands, one on each side, also tasselled. But it does not make a very brave show in black and white; we must 'make believe very hard' in order to imagine the gleam and glitter and splendour of that historic cascade. Yet even in its pictured insignificance there is something ominous. That Diamond Necklace is as terrible as the woven web of the Fates. If Boehmer and Bassenge, living in an age of occultism, had been touched with any tincture of prophecy, they must have trembled at their task. For into every festoon, and string, and band of that magnificent toy the Revolution was woven. There was not a stone of it from the first to the last which was not the symbol of some fair or noble life untimely ended. The stones seem red with blood. If ever a mere human trinket helped to make a bloody revolution, that Diamond Necklace was the toy.

Suddenly, in the midst of all the travail, while the cunning craftsmen were linking stone with stone

into all imaginable splendour, the unexpected came to pass. The King died. Madame du Barry vanished from the Court where she had reigned and revelled. There was no purchaser for the necklace; it would never find its way to the du Barry neck. And, in the meantime, here were Boehmer and Bassenge plunged up to their ears and over them in debt, with every penny they could muster sunk in a gorgeous trinket which few could dream of buying, while angry creditors were clamouring for their due. The Diamond Necklace, conceived in obedience to a kind of fairy-tale whim, was proving as troublesome to its luckless possessors as many a fairy gift. There is something curiously tantalizing in the picture of a brace of jewellers with two millions worth of diamonds on their hands, and with nothing in the till to meet their debts. In this sore extremity it occurred to Boehmer that possibly the new Queen of France might, in the first flood-tide of her royalty, like to buy the necklace. Boehmer waited upon Marie Antoinette, displayed the splendid necklace, pleaded speciously, and failed hopelessly. Marie Antoinette admired the necklace, but she refused to buy it. Boehmer and Bassenge were at their wits' ends again. They consulted together and adopted a plan. Bassenge was to travel over Europe tempting royal and aristocratic eyes with pictures of the necklace, wooing royal and aristocratic ears with its praises. Never was so splendid a necklace touted for before. Boehmer was

to remain at home and to do his best to tempt the Queen.

Then a new figure came into the business, and with him the imbroglio began. If Lauzun is the type of all that was worst in the nobility, the Cardinal Prince de Rohan is the type of all that was worst in the clergy. To find a parallel for him in English history we must look to that mad Bishop of Derry, Lord Harvey's brother, Lord Bristol's son, whose insane career of ostentatious profligacy is one of the most curious episodes in the English ecclesiastical history of the last century. The Cardinal Prince de Rohan was everything that a servant of the Church ought not to be, and nothing that a servant of the Church should be. Profoundly depraved, even for an age of profound depravity, cynical to excess in an age of cynicism, lustful, luxurious, devoted to display, to splendour, to amours of all kinds, he would have been more at home in the Court of Nero or at the table of Trimalcio than in the service of the Church of Christ. Such characters are not agreeable to study. They are surrounded by miasmatic vapours, pestilential, deadly, in which it is hard to breathe. There are vices which are in a measure redeemed by some strain of the valiant; there are men of immoral life who yet are heroic and do not repel, do not at least sicken. But there is no trace of the hero in the composition of the Cardinal de Rohan. He is not indeed quite the worst, most abominable figure swimming in the cesspool maëlstrom of

decaying France. Nature, fertile in resource for evil as for good, can trump her own trick, can eclipse an abominable de Rohan with a more abominable de Sade. But for the moment De Rohan was the King of Fools.

Louis René Edouard de Rohan was born in 1734. In 1770, when, as coadjutor, he received Marie Antoinette at Strasburg during the illness of his uncle, the Prince Bishop of Strasburg, he was in his thirty-sixth year. Marie Antoinette seems never to have liked him. She found in him 'more of the soldier than the coadjutor.' Her mother, Maria Theresa, cordially disliked him when, in 1771, he came to Vienna as Ambassador from France. In Vienna he lived a mad, tempestuous, foolish life, riotous, squandering, aimless, desperately dissipated. He amused the Emperor, he won the hearts of any number of women; he was an unfailing irritation to the shrewd eyes of Maria Theresa. But for her unwillingness to offend the French King and to make her daughter's position at the French Court unpleasant, she would have insisted upon his recall. After two years of orgies the Rohan embassy came to an end. He was understood to be in disgrace when Louis XVI. mounted the throne, but his high station and the influence of his relatives got him the office of Grand Almoner in 1777, and in 1779, by the death of his uncle, he became Prince Bishop of Strasburg. Through Stanislas Poniatowski King of Poland he got the Red Hat and the great revenues of the

Abbey of Saint Vaast to replenish his drained exchequer. The Academy, which had steadfastly shut its doors against Diderot, welcomed him among the Immortals; the Sorbonne chose him for its master. Seldom was more worthless flesh more loaded with honours.

The Cardinal de Rohan was now nearly fifty, with high bald forehead, complexion of a red favour, white hair, a tall, stately, ample presence. Wine and women had sapped his strength and inflamed his temper, which, though suave enough when the Cardinal was uncrossed, could rise to a pitch of fury at a thwarted whim. Perhaps under happy conditions this scion of the great house of De Rohan might have made a decent, honourable man, and lived a decent, comely life; but the fates were against him; he was indeed a vessel appointed unto dishonour, the deepest dishonour. The waning beauty of his ravaged body only makes him by contrast the more detestable and more pitiable. An evil spirit in an evil shell, a Quilp, an Olivier le Daim, we can understand and accept as things with a kind of natural fitness. But there is a peculiar horror, not without a twist of hateful humour, in an evil soul lurking behind a fair and seemly outside. This descendant of a chivalrous house, this member of an order supposed to represent all the old high chivalrous feelings, this Prince of a great Church which taught the creed of Christ, who yet was merely an abject voluptuary, stained with the meanest sins capable

only of the meanest actions and the meanest desires, is a more revolting study than some abject ignorant murderer. It was ripe time for a revolution when the two great estates, the nobility and the Church, could jointly bear such rotten fruit as this.

This imbecile profligate committed the most imbecile act of his life in desiring to commit the most profligate. He seems to have lost the horror he called a heart to Marie Antoinette, and to have mingled up in his muddled mind a desire for the beautiful woman with a crazy ambition to play the dominant part of Mazarin to her Anne of Austria. The desire and the ambition were both rendered difficult by the fact that the Queen entertained a very hearty, reasonable, and just dislike of the crapulous Cardinal. When the new King and Queen mounted the throne, Rohan came post-haste from Vienna to pay his respects, and was terribly snubbed for his pains by King and Queen. And in this slighted, snubbed position, the Cardinal shivered for nigh on to ten years, arid, abject, imbecile.

In his imbecility the Cardinal got mixed up with the queerest of queer people. He had a kind of genius for attracting to his silly state the most astonishing adventurers, and he now linked to his grotesque fortunes two of the most audacious impostors that ever issued from the world's Court of Miracles. One was a woman who claimed to be a Valois, the other was a man who pretended to be a prophet and almost a god. Madame de la Motte

professed to be descended in direct line through the Counts of Saint Rémy from one of the illegitimate amours of Henri II. For this august claim the State allowed her some thirty pounds a year. She had been many things, had made many uses of her attractive person. She was married to a Count de la Motte, who had served in the Gendarmerie, and was a pretty rascal of his hands. In her youth and poverty she had been patronized by the Marchioness de Boulainvilliers. She now professed to be in the confidence of Marie Antoinette. On the strength of this pretence she was able to sound what stops she pleased on the vicious vanity of Rohan. Madame de la Motte was such an astonishing liar that no statement of hers is now in the least believable, and it is much more than probable that, as Marie Antoinette herself said, the Queen and the courtesan never met at all. But de Rohan swallowed anything. Madame de la Motte made him believe that Marie Antoinette was eager for a reconciliation; she professed to be close in the Queen's counsel; she brought him dainty little letters, full of the friendliest import, purporting to come from the Queen's own royal hand. The letters really came from the ruffian hand of a scoundrel named Reteaux de Villette; but in the mood in which he then was, a mood of a crazy passion and crazy ambition, the Cardinal would have swallowed any imposition, however gross. It must be admitted that Madame de la Motte handled her big fish with considerable dexterity. She pre-

tended to take back the Cardinal's letters to the Queen, those letters which Beugnot afterwards helped Madame de la Motte to destroy, when arrest was in the air, and of which he said that he could imagine no man, not indeed writing them, but beginning to read them and then going on with the task. She invented a little comedy of the difficulty the Queen had to encounter in bringing the Cardinal back into the full sunlight of Court favour; she pretended that the Queen insisted upon patience until all was well. And the poor Cardinal was patient, a more patient gull never lent himself to the rookers. If he were not such a despicable old rogue one could almost have the heart to pity him, he was so ludicrously bubbled. How stupidly eager he was to be deceived! He allowed himself to believe that the Queen actually wrote to him to borrow money, and he paid the money over of course to the faithful Dame la Motte, who lived in luxury upon it with her two scoundrels, her husband and Reteaux de Villette. He allowed himself to believe that a gesture of the head made by the Queen one day at Versailles as he stood by and watched with Dame la Motte was a special gesture of recognition and assurance to him, although it was a familiar daily gesture of the Queen's. He allowed himself to be juggled by the buffoon scene of the bosquet in which Madame de la Motte played off a Demoiselle Oliva upon the amorous Cardinal as the Queen of France, and then broke up the interview before it could be prolonged

too far, leaving the Cardinal with a rose in his hand and insane hopes in his heart. She juggled him into the belief that he was to be permitted to buy the necklace for the Queen. But if he was thus pitiably the dupe of Madame de la Motte, he was also the dupe of a man rogue who played upon the Cardinal's superstitions as Madame de la Motte played upon his passions.

CHAPTER XIII

COUNT CAGLIOSTRO

It is curious to think that a man of the world like the Cardinal de Rohan should have been so lightly, so easily bamboozled by a female rogue like Madame de la Motte, and by the most audacious male rogue then strutting his way through Christendom. It points at the least the excellent lesson that a man may be very vicious indeed and at the same time very silly; that the profoundest depravity has no armour in it to protect from the assaults of ingenious knavery; that the mind of the most cynical old sinner is as easily played upon as that of the freshest pigeon yet fluttering to be plucked. That the Cardinal was taken in by Madame de la Motte was perhaps not so surprising. The Cardinal was in love, or what he called in love, and a man in love will believe anything. But before ever Madame de la Motte had fluttered a single one of her forgeries before his foolish eyes the Cardinal de Rohan had fallen into the snares of an adventurer who claimed for himself, with an unconquerable coolness in addressing a

prince of the Church, attributes that were no less than divine.

The passion for the occult is always with us. The pupils of the occult try to peep under the veil, as the Persian poets call it, just as idle, curious children at the fair try to peep under the canvas of the players' tent to catch some furtive glimpse of the ardently desired performance. Occultism can never wholly fade from human fancy; nay more, it would even appear to increase rather than to dwindle with civilization or with certain phases of civilization. The more sceptical an age is, the more proud of its far-reaching philosophies and its derring-do of thought, the more men turn from the chill glitter of science to the warm half-tints of occultism. The hanky-panky of the gipsy on the green, the tricks of fortune-telling cards, the crystal ball, the lines on the hand, and the look of the face, and the solemn prophecies of the stars, all find higher votaries than clowns and bumpkins when Philosophy is clamouring her loudest that she, and she alone, has the touchstone of truth. It was part of the inevitable, unalterable law of human action and reaction, that the age and the society which had been attracted by Rousseau and d'Holbach, Grimm and Diderot, and d'Alembert should also have been attracted by a semi-quack like Mesmer and a whole-hearted rogue and adventurer like Cagliostro.

Mesmer, whose name, like that of Guillotin, is like to outlast Cæsar's, was born in 1734 in

Germany, according to some at Vienna, according to others at Weiler, according to others still at Merseburg. In 1766 he was received as medical doctor by the Faculty of Vienna. The subject of his thesis was 'The Influence of the Planets upon the Human Body.' From the fact that the planets acted one upon another and that the sun and moon acted upon our atmosphere and our seas, he concluded that these great bodies acted also upon animated bodies, and especially upon the nervous system, by means of a subtle all-penetrating fluid. And even as under this influence there existed in the sea an ebb and flow, so also in animated bodies he believed that he discerned a tension and relaxation—veritable tides, as it were. This subtle fluid, the general agent of all these changes, much resembled the loadstone in its properties. He called it in consequence Animal Magnetism.

From Jesuit astronomical professor Hell, with his cures by magnetized iron, from strange Swiss cleric Gassner, with his mysterious exorcisms of Satan as cure for diabolical maladies, Mesmer gained a greater belief than ever in his animal magnetism, and began to try the working of cures on his own account in Vienna. But it was the old business of the prophet and his own country. Mesmer's cures were doubted, derided, got him into serious trouble with angry fathers menacing the magnetic master with drawn swords. At last the Empress bade Mesmer 'cease his fooleries.' Mesmer took the

hint. Anticipating Rabagas, he decided that there was a world elsewhere, and that world France. France of course meant Paris, and to Paris Mesmer came in the February of 1778, and set in his staff.

In Paris, Mesmer soon became the hero of the hour. The cynical, sceptical Encyclopædic world was amazingly attracted by the occult. Was not Illuminatism spreading in all directions? Were not the subtle forces of Freemasonry, if they combated the authority of the Church, opposed to rationalism and atheism as well? Were not people wild in their worship of Lavater, who read man's mission in his face? Did not they even accord a kind of sneering credulity to the assertions of the Count de Saint-Germain, whom Choiseul affected to patronize? Did they not believe in the Philosopher's Stone, in the Elixir of Life, in Heaven knows what else beside, from the Squaring of the Circle to Perpetual Motion? The good old Greek alchemists, Zosimus, Agathodemon, Agatharchides and their kind, would have found plenty of fellowship, plenty of followers in the obscurer streets of Paris in the days immediately succeeding the rationalistic and scientific triumphs of the Encyclopædia.

It is not surprising that the age which gave such a welcome to Mesmer should have given a kindred welcome to a far more audacious impostor. The name of Cagliostro is writ large upon the records of rascaldom for all time. Lucian's fantastic Peregrinus was a joke to him If the hour brings the

man, then Cagliostro was the very man for that particular hour. The hour of quickening science and quickening superstitions, of Freemasonry and Illuminati, of Weishaupt and of Cazotte, of the Montgolfiers and of Saint-Martin, of Babeuf and of Mesmer, of the Puységurs and of Lavater, was the very hour for a Cagliostro to shine in, who blended in his own person pretensions to science, to occultism, to illuminatism. The soil of Paris was fat just then for such a rank weed to flourish in.

In the autumn of the year 1781, Cagliostro was astonishing the good people of Strasburg as much by his singular conduct as by the extraordinary cures he was represented to have performed. According to the Abbé Georgel, Rohan's old friend and jackal, the Cardinal, curious to behold so remarkable a personage, went to Strasburg, but found it necessary to use interest to get admitted into the presence of the illustrious charlatan. 'If Monseigneur the Cardinal is sick,' said he, 'let him come to me and I will cure him. If he is well, he has no business with me nor I with him.' This reply, far from offending the Cardinal's vanity, seems only to have increased his desire to become acquainted with the great medicine man. When the Cardinal gained admission to the sanctuary, he fancied, or Georgel thinks he fancied, that he saw impressed on the countenance of this mysterious individual a dignity which impressed him with an almost religious awe, and the very first words he uttered were in-

spired by reverence. The brief interview excited more strongly than ever in the mind of the Cardinal the desire for a more intimate acquaintance. This gradually came about, the crafty Cagliostro timing his conduct and his advances so skilfully, that without seeming to desire it he gained de Rohan's entire confidence, and won the ascendency of the strong mind over the weak.

During the next two years or so, Cagliostro seems to have lived largely at de Rohan's palace at Saverne, juggling the Cardinal, when he happened to be there, with experiments in his laboratory, and making, as the credulous Cardinal maintained, not only gold, but diamonds, under his very eyes. In the Cardinal's absence the Count would indulge in carousals, prolonged far into the night, with the Baron de Planta, the Cardinal's equerry, for companion, and pour into Planta's ears the astonishing romance which he called his life. Mr. Vizetelly, in his interesting account of the famous swindle, sets forth at length Cagliostro's romantic record of himself. He professed ignorance of the place of his birth, but told a cock-and-bull story of his childhood in Medina, where he went by the name of Acharat, and lived attended by servants in a style of great splendour in apartments in the palace of the Mufti Salahayn, the chief of the Mussulmans. From Medina he said that he was taken when quite a youth to Mecca, where he was adopted by the

Scherif. Three years later he was carried to Egypt, visited the chief cities of Africa and Asia, and eventually found himself in Malta, where a legend of a grand-master and of a princess of Trebizond was evolved, and where he assumed the name of Cagliostro and the title of count. From Malta he journeyed to Sicily and Naples, thence to Rome, where he made the acquaintance of several cardinals, and was admitted to frequent audiences of the Pope. He professed to have next visited Spain, Portugal, Holland, Russia, and Poland, and gave a list of the nobles of those countries with whom he had become acquainted. At length, in September 1780, he appeared in Strasburg, where his fame as a physician had already preceded him. There, as he asserted with perfect truth, he tended the poor generally, and particularly sick soldiers and prisoners, without fee or reward. Strasburg was quickly crowded with strangers, who came either to see him or to consult him. He soon made the acquaintance of the Cardinal de Rohan, whom he accompanied to Paris to prescribe for the Prince de Soubise, suffering at the time from an accident to his leg. After a short stay in the capital he returned to Strasburg, where he seems to have complained of persecution. It seems certain that letters were written to the authorities in his behalf by the Count de Vergennes, minister for foreign affairs, the Marquis de Miroménil, keeper of the seals, and the Marquis de Ségur, minister of war, desiring that

every protection should be afforded to the friend of Abraham.

It is almost needless to say that Cagliostro's story about his residence in Medina and Mecca, and Egypt, Rhodes and Malta, was a tissue of impudent lies. We know that his real name was Giuseppe Balsamo, that he was the son of a small tradesman of Palermo in Sicily, where he was born in 1743. The family were of Jewish origin. Goethe will visit them in later years. In his early youth Giuseppe belonged to the religious order of Benfratelli. As he grew older he became remarkable for his esurience, his cunning, his zeal for medicine, his audacity. When the Benfratelli would have no more to do with him he took with a light heart and a light hand to swindling. When one of his frauds was discovered he fled to Catalonia. There he married a young and pretty girl, Lorenza Feliciani, with whom he drifted to Rome. After conferring on himself the title of Prince Pellegrini, he had the audacity to return to Palermo under his assumed name. There a genuine Prince became infatuated with Donna Lorenza and took her husband under his powerful protection. The false Pellegrini, however, was soon recognised as the escaped swindler and arrested. But on the day appointed for his examination, his friend the true Prince forced the doors of the tribunal, assaulted the counsel for the prosecution, and overwhelmed the president with reproaches. In consequence

the terrified court set the prisoner at liberty. Cagliostro, leaving his wife in the care of the Prince, again started on his travels, in the course of which he visited many of the chief cities of the Continent. He was picked up, it is commonly asserted, while still a young man—being little over thirty years of age—by the sect of Illuminati. They thought, and correctly thought, that they had discovered in him a willing and able instrument for the dissemination of their doctrines. Who that loves romance does not remember that wonderful scene in a cave some little distance from imperial Worms, where the Cagliostro of Dumas learns the objects of the society of which he was now a member. The Illuminati were to overturn the thrones of Europe. The first blow was to be struck in France. After the fall of the French monarchy it was proposed to attack Rome. The society was said to have countless followers. It was said to possess enormous funds, the proceeds of the annual subscriptions of its members, dispersed among the banks of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Basle, Lyons, London, Venice, and Genoa. It was said that a considerable sum of money was placed at Cagliostro's disposal, to enable him to propagate the doctrines of the sect in France. This was the origin of his first visit to Strasburg in the autumn of the year 1780, when he adopted for his device the letters L. P. D., signifying 'Lilia pedibus destrue'—Trample the lilies underfoot.

Was there ever such a magnificently audacious sham and scoundrel in the world before as this Sicilian rapscallion, who pretended to have been present at the wedding of Cana and to have learned the secret which slaves wish to Oriental princes, of living for ever? But if he laid claim to many gifts, he had some acquirements. He had studied medicine, if he preferred alchemy. He knew something of what may be called natural magic. His juggleries were so cleverly contrived that many visitors of the highest rank and the utmost intellectual attainments considered them to be marvellous. The general public exalted his every act until it touched the supernatural. He asked no price for his public exhibitions. He pretended to consider himself insulted by anyone who offered him gold. His hand was constantly open to the poor. He visited them in their homes. He gave them medicine; he gave them alms. It was only natural that this ingenious system of self-advertisement proved successful. People began to talk of the mysterious stranger, the wise and generous physician who passed his time with the lowly of the earth and seemed indifferent to its great ones. The great ones whom Cagliostro affected to disregard were piqued by indifference into curiosity. Soon many of them became enthusiastic disciples and admirers of the physician-philosopher. Among these, none believed in him so implicitly as the Cardinal Prince de Rohan, who, spite of the Count's 'perfect quack

face,' seems to have worshipped him as a being something more than human. We are told that in one of the salons of the Palais-Cardinal there was a marble bust of Cagliostro, with a Latin inscription on the pedestal hailing him as God of the Earth.

According to the Abbé Georgel, Rohan consulted Cagliostro about the necklace business before concluding the negotiations. The abbé describes how the Python mounted his tripod. He tells how the Egyptian invocations were made at night in the Cardinal's own salon, illuminated by an immense number of wax tapers. The oracle spoke under the inspiration of its dæmon. The negotiation was worthy of the Prince. It would be crowned with success. It would raise the goodness of the Queen to its height. It would bring to light that happy day which would unfold the rare talents of the Cardinal for the benefit of France and of the human race. After this it is scarcely surprising to hear that the Countess de la Motte, who had formerly met Cagliostro at Strasburg, had renewed her acquaintance with him in the salons of the Palais-Cardinal. The de la Mottes and Cagliostro were close neighbours. He lived at the Hôtel de Chavigny, in the Rue Saint-Claude, quite near at hand. The house which he occupied, according to Louis Blanc, the house which was afterwards the residence of Barras, was one of the most sumptuous in Paris. It was decorated with Oriental luxury. Its

rooms were always brilliant with the gleam of subtle lights. Within them Cagliostro professed the pursuits of the philosopher and planned the juggleries of the quack. The bust of Hippocrates was a conspicuous ornament. So was a black frame which enshrined in letters of gold a literal translation of Pope's Universal Prayer.

Many very different persons have placed on record their opinions of Cagliostro or of his performances. The words of three of them are especially interesting. One was a woman, the Baroness d'Oberkirche. One was Jacques Claude de Beugnot, then a young man of a little over twenty with no thought of the kingdom of Westphalia in his head. One was Abraham Joseph Bénard-Fleury, the popular actor. The testimony of each may well be cited anew against our king of quacks. The Baroness d'Oberkirche describes Cagliostro in her Memoirs as anything but handsome. Still she admits that she had never seen a more remarkable physiognomy, and that he had a penetrating look which seemed almost supernatural. She tries to describe the expression of his eyes, that expression at once fire and ice, which attracted and repelled at the same time, which made people afraid and yet inspired them with an irrepressible curiosity. One might, she says, draw two different portraits of him, both resembling him, and yet totally dissimilar. Woman-like, she was much impressed with the diamonds which he wore on his shirt-front, on his

watch-chain, and on his fingers. They were diamonds of large size, and apparently of the purest water—diamonds which, if they were not paste, were worth a king's ransom, diamonds which he pretended that he had made himself.

The Baroness met Cagliostro at a dinner at de Rohan's. Though there were several guests at dinner, the Cardinal occupied himself almost exclusively with the Baroness, using all his eloquence to bring her over to his way of thinking with regard to Cagliostro, much to the good Baroness's amazement. The Baroness declares that had she not heard him with her own ears, she could never have believed that a prince of the Church, a Rohan, an intelligent and honourable man in so many respects, could have allowed himself to be brought to the point of abjuring both his dignity and his free will at the bidding of a scheming adventurer.

There is hardly a more curious scene in history than this scene between the infatuated Prince and the shrewd observant woman of the world, whose keen eyes study with astonishment that poor deluded spirit in that poor degraded body. It is one of the most valuable of side-lights, for it shows at once the extraordinary weakness of the Cardinal and the extraordinary power of Cagliostro. De Rohan seems to have been pathetically anxious to convince the Baroness of the gifts of his wizard. The Baroness seems to have been tranquilly sceptical. The Cardinal showed her a large diamond which

he had on his little finger, a ring worth a little fortune. With a kind of infantile enthusiasm he declared that Cagliostro had made it, had created it out of nothing. He declared that he was present, with his eyes fixed upon the crucible, and had assisted at the deed. De Rohan having lauded the Cagliostro who made diamonds, went on to praise the Cagliostro who made gold. He declared that Cagliostro had made in his presence, in his crucibles, five or six thousand francs' worth of the precious metal, and had promised to make de Rohan the richest prince in Europe. These were not dreams to de Rohan, these were certainties. He raved about prophecies fulfilled. He raved about miraculous cures performed. He vowed that Cagliostro was not only an extraordinary but a sublime man. His goodness had never been equalled. The charities he bestowed, and the benefits he conferred, passed all imagination.

The astonished Baroness asked the Cardinal if he had given Cagliostro nothing for all this—had not made him the smallest advance, had made him no promise, given him no written document which might compromise de Rohan? The absurd, unhappy Prince assured her that Cagliostro had asked nothing, had received nothing from him. Then the Baroness, losing patience, became prophetic. In a fine Sibyllic vein she warned de Rohan that Cagliostro must reckon on obtaining from the Cardinal many dangerous sacrifices, since he bought

his unbounded confidence so dearly. She urged him to be extremely cautious, lest one of these days Cagliostro should lead him too far. The Cardinal only answered by an incredulous smile. But the Sibyl felt certain that later, at the time of the Necklace affair, when Cagliostro and the Countess de la Motte had cast de Rohan to the bottom of the abyss, he recalled her words and was scarcely comforted.

Young Beugnot met Cagliostro at one of Madame de la Motte's little suppers. It was a remarkable supper party. It included Father Loth, minime of the Place Royale, who reconciled his sacred functions with the place of second secretary to Madame de la Motte. He used to say mass for her on Sundays, and charged himself during the rest of the week with commissions at the Palais-Cardinal which the first secretary thought beneath his dignity. It included also the Chevalier de Montbreul. He was a veteran of the green-rooms. He was still a good conversationalist. He was prepared to affirm almost any mortal thing. He was found, as if by chance, wherever Cagliostro appeared, ready to bear witness to the marvels he had performed. He offered himself as a positive example miraculously cured of any number of diseases, of which the names alone were amazing and alarming.

Curious young Beugnot made the most of his opportunity. He sat facing Cagliostro. He made a point of examining by stealth. He confesses

that he did not know what to think of him. The face, the style of dressing the hair, the whole of the man, impressed him in spite of himself. He was of medium height, and rather stout. He had a very short neck, a round face ornamented with two large eyes sunken in his head, and a broad turn-up nose. His complexion was of an olive tinge. His mode of wearing his hair seemed new in France. It was divided into several little tresses, which, uniting at the back of the head, were tied up in the form known as the "club." He wore a French-cut coat of iron grey embroidered with gold lace, with his sword stuck in the skirts, a scarlet vest trimmed with lace, red breeches, and a hat edged with a white feather. This last article of dress was still dear to the mountebanks and queer medical adventurers who haunted fairs and sold their drugs out of doors. Cagliostro's splendour was heightened by lace ruffles, several costly rings, and shoe-buckles that were quite brilliant enough to pass for very fine diamonds.

Cagliostro seems to have spoken a kind of jargon, half Italian, half French, plentifully interlarded with quotations in an unknown tongue, which passed with the unlearned for Arabic. He had all the talking to himself, and found time to go over at least twenty different subjects in the course of the evening, simply because he gave to them merely that extent of development which seemed good to him. Every moment he was in-

quiring if he was understood, whereupon everybody bowed in turn to assure him that he was. When starting a subject he seemed like one transported, raised his voice to the highest pitch and indulged in the most extravagant gesticulations. The subjects of his discourse were the heavens, the stars, the grand arcanum, Memphis, transcendental chemistry, giants, and the extinct monsters of the animal kingdom. He spoke, moreover, of a city in the interior of Africa ten times as large as Paris, where he pretended that he had correspondents. What a 'supper of the gods' that must have been!

The actor Fleury, in his memoirs, gives an account of another curious meeting when the Grand Kophta professed to call up the spirit of d'Alembert. It is too fantastically characteristic not to be worth re-living for the moment. The spectators or, as Cagliostro preferred to call them, guests sat in armchairs along the wall on the east side of the room. Before these chairs an iron chain was stretched, lest some foolish person should be impelled by curiosity to rush upon destruction. On the other side was placed the chair intended for the reception of the spirit. The Grand Kophta—the name assumed by Cagliostro on such occasions—chose the unusual hour of 3 A.M. for his evocations. Shortly before that time a voice was heard to order the removal from the scene of cats, dogs, horses, birds, and all reptiles, should any be near. Then came a command that none but free men should

remain in the apartment. The servants were accordingly dismissed. A deep silence followed, and the lights were suddenly extinguished. The same voice, now assuming a louder and more authoritative tone, requested the guests to shake the iron chain. They obeyed. An indescribable thrill ran through their frames. The clock at length struck three—slowly, and with a prolonged vibration of the bell. At each stroke a flash, as sudden and transitory as lightning, illumined the apartment, and the words 'Philosophy,' 'Nature,' and 'Truth,' successively appeared in legible characters above the empty armchair. The last word was more brilliant than the others. The lights were suddenly rekindled, how, no one could tell. Stifled cries were heard like those of a man whose mouth was gagged or a man struggling to break loose from persons restraining him. Then Cagliostro appeared.

The Grand Kophta wore a costume which seems to have been a blend of the Moslem and the mountebank. Flowing drapery set off his figure to advantage, and the glow of enthusiasm in his face made him look really handsome. He delivered a short address, commenting on the words just seen over the chair. Then, turning to the four cardinal points, he uttered some cabalistic words, which returned as if from a distant echo. The lights being again extinguished, he commanded the guests again to shake the chain, and as they did so the strange feeling was renewed. The outline of the arm-chair

now became gradually perceptible in the darkness, as though the lines had been traced on a black ground with phosphorus. The next moment, and as if by the same process, a winding-sheet could be seen, with two fleshless hands resting upon the arm of the chair. The winding-sheet, slowly opening, discovered an emaciated form. A short breathing was heard, and two brilliant piercing eyes were fixed upon the spectators. This buffoonery was supposed to show that the illustrious philosopher, the author of the Preface to the Encyclopædia, had been called from the dead. He would answer questions put to him, but Cagliostro alone was privileged to hear him speak. The spirit was asked if it had seen the other world. The simulacrum of d'Alembert answering through the lips of rogue Cagliostro said, 'There is no other world.' A witty commentator upon this answer, declared that the questioner should have said, 'Illustrious d'Alembert, if there is no other world, where may you happen to come from now?'

If Cagliostro permitted himself fooleries of this kind, his purposes were not all foolery. Freemasonry had grown and thriven since the Derwentwater days, and Cagliostro had not been slow to avail himself of the influence it could lend to his professions. Whether he was initiated in an obscure lodge in London chiefly given over to hairdressers and pastrycooks or no, matters little. He was initiated somehow, somewhere, and drifted

about the Continent founding mysterious Egyptian lodges, and calling himself the Grand Kophta. Adam Weishaupt, professor of canonic law at the University of Ingoldstadt, had conceived the idea of making the range and aim of Freemasonry much wider, of forming a vast occult association which should strike down all tyranny, all superstition, all injustice. Such was Illuminism, with its areopagites, its preparations, its mysteries, as it issued from the brain of the German schemer of eight and twenty, in the year 1776. Illuminism spread rapidly. To further its aims Adam Weishaupt, who remained its secret head, was ready to use all means and all instruments. Cagliostro and he came together at Frankfort on-the-Main, the deputies of Illuminism, and it was decided that Cagliostro should be initiated. Weishaupt had always professed contempt for the Alchemists and the Rosicrucians of whom Cagliostro was so remarkable a representative. But Cagliostro was thought to be a useful man to enrol in the ranks of Illuminism, and enrolled he accordingly was, as we have seen. We have seen that he was given money, and sent to spread the light at Strasburg. We have seen how he came upon the Cardinal de Rohan and soon immeshed him in the toils of his fantastic occultism. How far in thus enslaving Rohan, in helping to spin the conspiracy-web of the Diamond Necklace, he was obeying the orders of a superior tribunal and playing a planned part in a scheme of revolution, it is

impossible even to guess. If we have given so much space to so poor a rogue, it is because he filled in his time a great space in the public mind. It is not the best men who are the most admired, the wisest who are the most honoured, and Cagliostro, quack, knave, scoundrel though he was, occupies a place in the picture of his day, and demands in the picture of the historian an attention quite out of proportion to his merits, but not out of proportion to his fantastic influence. In the long records of rascaldom, from Peregrinus to Bamfylde Moore Carew, from the master-thief who robbed Rhampsinitus to Jonathan Wild, no single rascal stands forward with such magnificent effrontery, such majestic impudence, such astonishing success as Cagliostro. His is the very garland of roguery, and his memory thrusts itself upon the attention of the chronicler as unblushingly as the living swindler thrust himself upon the age in which he lived. The epoch of Cagliostro preceded the epoch of Dr. Guillotin.

CHAPTER XIV

KNAVES AND FOOLS

Madame de la Motte was resolved to have the necklace. It certainly showed magnificent audacity in the woman to dream of carrying off this glory of jewellery, which had been designed for the mistress of a king, and which had been offered in vain in all the Courts of Europe. She made the Cardinal believe that Marie Antoinette would accept the Cardinal's services in the purchase of the necklace: Cagliostro, consulted by the Cardinal, advised him to go on. He said that good would come of it. The Cardinal went on. The jewellers were deceived by a forged autograph of the Queen, agreeing to their terms and signed, absurdly, 'Marie Antoinette de France,' an inaccuracy which in the excitement of the moment impressed neither the amorous Cardinal nor the impatient Boehmer. The Cardinal, concealed at Madame de la Motte's house, saw the casket containing the jewels given over to, as he imagined, an emissary for the Queen, who was really only Reteaux de Villette again in disguise. For a while all went well. The Cardinal was supremely happy. Madame de la Motte rolled in money and lived

sumptuously, while her husband and Villette, having pulled the necklace to pieces, carried the shining stars abroad to sell them at London and at Amsterdam. Suddenly the crash came. Boehmer learnt by chance from Madame Campan, the Queen's woman, that the Queen never had the necklace. Before the story could get abroad, Louis XVI. precipitated matters by summoning the Cardinal to Versailles and having him arrested. De Rohan had just time to send a servant off to ride post-haste to the Palais-Cardinal, leap off his foundering horse, rush to faithful jackal Georgel, and have all the letters professing to come from the Queen destroyed before the emissaries of the law could arrive to seize the Cardinal's papers. Madame de la Motte was equally fortunate in being able to destroy the Cardinal's letters before they could be seized. Madame de la Motte was at Clairvaux dining with the Abbot, Dom Rocourt, one of the handsomest and the stupidest men in France, and a very great admirer of Madame de la Motte. Beugnot was there, and we owe to him a most dramatic scene. Supper was kept waiting for the arrival from Paris of the Abbé Maury, afterwards destined to be famous enough. We shall meet with him again. He was late, but at last he arrived, and was at once asked if there was any news in Paris.

The Abbé Maury first professed surprise at their ignorance. Then came his astounding piece of news, the news which had astonished and bewildered

all Paris. The Cardinal de Rohan, Grand Almoner of France, had been arrested on August 15, the festival of the Assumption, in his Cardinal's attire, as he was leaving the King's cabinet. People, it seemed, talked of a diamond necklace which he was to have bought for the Queen, but which he did not buy at all. Was it not inconceivable, Maury asked plaintively of his amazed listeners, that for such a trifle as this a Grand Almoner of France should have been arrested in his ecclesiastical vestments and on quitting the royal presence?

Here was news with a vengeance. Beugnot glanced at Madame de la Motte, whose self-possession seemed to have deserted her. Her napkin had fallen from her hand, and her pale and rigid face seemed as if it were immovably fixed above her plate. After the first shock was over she made an effort and rushed out of the room. In the course of a few minutes Beugnot left the table and joined her, and they at once drove to Paris. On the road Beugnot frequently urged Madame de la Motte to fly. He was a close friend of hers, as he was of many strange folk in his time, and he could give good counsel. But she refused to fly, declaring that she had nothing to do with any necklace affair, and that it must all be some trick devised by Cagliostro.

It must have been a queer drive. As they entered Paris Beugnot again entreated her to at least burn any papers which might compromise her

or the Cardinal. This at least was a measure dictated by honour on the one side, and by prudence on the other. She consented; Beugnot offered to assist her, and, as she did not refuse, the much devoted but still more curious Beugnot accompanied her to her room. Her husband, who had left home early in the morning to join a hunting party, had not yet returned. The pair opened a large chest of sandal-wood filled with papers of all colours and dimensions. Being naturally anxious to make quick work of the matter, Beugnot inquired if there were amongst them any bills of exchange, bonds, bank-notes, or drafts, and on receiving an answer in the negative, he proposed to throw the entire heap into the fire. But Madame de la Motte insisted on at least a cursory examination being made of them. The examination proceeded very slowly on her part, very precipitately on his. Beugnot declares that he saw hundreds of letters from the Cardinal de Rohan. He noted with pity the ravages which the delirium of love, aided by that of ambition, had wrought in the mind of this unhappy man. It is fortunate for the Cardinal's memory that these letters were destroyed, but it is a loss for the history of human passions. Probably the whole wide literature of amatory epistles, from those attributed to Menander to those written by Keats, from the letters of Camilla Pisana to the letters of Miss J., can boast no stranger collection of documents than those which the infatuated Cardinal de Rohan wrote,

which Madame de la Motte had garnered, and which Beugnot helped to burn.

Among these motley papers there were invoices, offers of estates for sale, prospectuses and advertisements of new inventions. Some of the letters were from Boehmer and Bassenge, and made mention of the necklace, spoke of terms expired, acknowledged the receipt of certain sums, and asked for larger ones. Beugnot asked Madame de la Motte what should be done with them. Finding her hesitate, he took the shortest course, and threw them all into the fire. The affair occupied a considerable time. When it was over Beugnot took his leave of Madame de la Motte, urging her more strongly than ever to depart. She only answered by promising to go to bed immediately. He left her in an atmosphere poisoned by the odour arising from burning paper and wax, impregnated with twenty different perfumes, fit atmosphere for the incantations of such a witch as she. This was three o'clock in the morning. At four o'clock she was arrested, and at half-past four was on her way to the Bastille. She would have done better in taking Beugnot's advice.

The rest of the gang were soon arrested, Cagliostro, his wife the fair Feliciani, Reteaux de Villette, Courtesan Oliva. All Paris was wild with excitement. The air was dark with the showers of memorials issued by the different defendants. All the Rohan interest, all the high nobility and high clergy, were rabid at the imprisonment of a noble

and a prince of the Church. To make bad worse for himself, Louis gave the case into the hands of the Paris Parliament.

The whole business of the necklace is queer: no one will ever now get to the bottom of it. The Cardinal certainly negotiated for it. Marie Antoinette, who had refused it from Louis once and again, seems certainly to have, not unnaturally in her woman's way, coveted the glittering toy. De Rohan seems certainly to have believed that the Queen would be willing to have it, and not unwilling to have it from his hands. The hostile story—the story which Louis Blanc believed—is that the Queen longed for the diamonds, used the Cardinal and Madame de la Motte for her intermediaries, and bought, or wished to buy, the necklace by instalments. It would be useless to go through the terrible intricacies of the most astonishing scandal in the world. There was that wonderful sham interview between the Queen and de Rohan at night in the Versailles garden: there was that wonderful sham signature, 'Marie Antoinette de France.' About these points the curious thing is that the Queen's party asserted a sham in each case, and that Madame de la Motte admitted the sham, but insisted that the Queen was a party to the absurd imposition. The admirers of Marie Antoinette see, and will still see, in her a deeply injured victim. Her enemies see, and will see, a designing, avid, and unscrupulous woman. Everyone must choose between

the two alternatives. It is simply impossible to decide.

The bewildering, maddening nine months' trial, with its multiplicity of witnesses, its wealth of mendacity, its well-nigh incredible exposure of roguery and credulity, ended in the acquittal of the Cardinal and the acquittal of Cagliostro. But if the Parliament acquitted the Cardinal and Cagliostro, Louis did not acquit them. They were both ordered into exile. For the others the trial ended in the condemnation to the galleys for life of the man Villette, who confessed to forging the Queen's signature, the condemnation of Madame de la Motte, who was to be whipped, branded, and imprisoned for life. The Countess de Sabran, in one of those letters to the Chevalier de Boufflers which are among the most charming examples of last-century correspondence, gives a long account of the punishment of Madame de la Motte, which took place at six o'clock in the morning, in order to avoid too great a concourse of curious people. The unfortunate woman was sleeping profoundly when they came to tell her that her lawyer was waiting to talk with her about her affairs. They had adopted this course the more easily to effect their object. She got up, not fearing anything, put on a small petticoat and a cloak, and descended quickly to the room, where she beheld eight men and M. Le Breton, the registrar, who held her sentence in his hand. At this sight she was much agitated, and tried to fly; whereupon they threw

themselves upon her, and tied the little, delicate hands, which her admirers had called charming and which were certainly very dexterous. Madame de la Motte boldly asked why they took such precautions. 'I shall not escape you; if you were executioners, you could not treat me worse.' She believed that it was only a question of placing her in a convent for a few years. They told her to go down on her knees, and, as she was not inclined to do so, one of the executioners gave her a sharp blow which brought her to the ground. M. Le Breton then read her sentence. When she heard that she was going to be whipped and branded, she went into convulsions, and into a fearful fit of passion, biting everything that was near her, tearing her clothes, and pulling out her hair. In spite of this the executioners seized her and carried her to the place of punishment. There, they put the rope round her neck, and tried to undress her; but she defended herself like a lioness, with feet, hands, and teeth, and so obstinately that they were obliged to cut her clothes and even her chemise in order to make an end of the affair; 'which,' says Madame de Sabran demurely, 'was very indecent, as in spite of the unreasonable hour which had been chosen with the object of keeping people away, spectators were present in very great numbers.' The poor wretch uttered loud cries, always saying: 'Spare the blood of the Valois.' She hurled forth curses against the Parliament, the Cardinal, and the Queen she had

wronged. She struggled so violently that the executioner could not perform the operation of branding her as perfectly as he wished, and scored her all down the back. After the infliction of this stern punishment, they conveyed her in a hackney coach to the Salpêtrière. Soon after, however, in the most mysterious, incomprehensible manner, she escaped from the Salpêtrière and joined her husband, who had been condemned to the galleys in his absence in London.

One is anxious to get away from this affair of the collar. It is horrible, haunting, the truth is not in it. It is like a sick vision, fantastic as some picture dream by Callot, some fiction dream by Hoffmann, in which queens and cardinals, false prophets and prostitutes join in a mad devils' medley of the most unmeaning kind. It was not to be understood then: it is not to be understood now. The staunch partizans of Marie Antoinette may think her all innocent; her enemies may think her all guilty; there is evidence or lack of evidence either way. One thing is certain, the affair of the necklace struck a cruel blow at the tottering monarchy. The Queen never recovered from the scandal. Cagliostro, for whom St. Angelo waits, Cagliostro, with his buffoon babble of Medina and Acharat, and Althotas and all his machinery of burlesque prophet; Madame de la Motte, with her branded bosom and blistering tongue; forger Villette and fools Boehmer and Bassenge; amorous, infamous Cardinal, and light-

hearted light o' love Oliva, amongst them managed to leave a terrible stain upon the fair fame and fair name of Marie Antoinette. Whether Marie Antoinette were innocent or guilty is really, in this regard, of no moment to us now. What is of moment is that the scandal of the Diamond Necklace attached an association of shame to her name, and that the blunderings of de Rohan, and the plunderings of Madame de la Motte, if they failed in all else, succeeded in this—in shaking the monarchy. Let us accept that fact as self-evident, and get out again into the clear air.

But before we pass from the horror of the story, let us see what fate fell upon the principal actors in the queer business. Cagliostro, after beating about the world and living in all manner of places, Sloane Street, Knightsbridge, being one of them, at last was run to earth in Rome, imprisoned in the Castle of St. Angelo, and there for all his cunning the Grand Kophta died. Madame de la Motte ended her evil life in London, after publishing a vast amount of infamy, by leaping out from a window to escape some creditors whom she seemed to think were in reality determined to kidnap her. The Countess, according to the La Motte memoirs, had persuaded herself that a plot was on foot to carry her off to France, and there imprison her again. She seems to have been driven almost insane by this terror. When her creditors succeeded in breaking in her door, the wretched woman dropped out of her

window and fell with violence upon the pavement. It was her misfortune not to be killed on the spot: she was terribly injured, terribly mutilated. In this state she lived for several weeks, and at last died, at the age of thirty-four. Her whole life, the memoirs observe sententiously, was one long career of misery, but it might have ended happily had not the privilege of her birth, by over-exalting her imagination, developed beyond measure those sentiments of pride and ambition which conducted her to her fall.

It really would seem as if a relentless destiny were pursuing every one of the knaves and the fools, the dupers and the duped, who were mixed up in the mystery of the Diamond Necklace. They all came to a bad end, the big rogues and the little rogues, the big fools and the little fools. If the Diamond Necklace had contained some such stone as those we hear of in Oriental legend which entail a curse upon such as come into contact with them, it could not have been more ominous of disaster to all who had anything to do with it. Demoiselle d'Oliva married a scoundrel named Beausire, and is said to have died miserably in 1789. The scoundrel Beausire played his base part of spy and feeder of the guillotine till his turn came. Fouquier Tinville did not like him, it was said, and the guillotine had him and rid the world of him. Boehmer and Bassenge, luckless Court jewellers, became bankrupt.

As for the wicked, foolish Cardinal, his end of

life was better than the bulk of it had been. Soon after the great national ceremony in the Champ de Mars, de Rohan was ordered by the Assembly to resume his functions as deputy within fifteen days. Instead of obeying, he wrote saying that, as it was impossible for him to give his allegiance to the new civil constitution of the clergy, he put his seat at the disposal of the Assembly. The Cardinal was naturally looked upon with suspicion by the popular party. He retired to Ettenheim, a dependency of his Strasburg bishopric, lying beyond the French frontier, on the opposite bank of the Rhine. Here, in his capacity as prince of the Holy Roman Empire, he raised frequent levies of troops for the army of the Prince de Condé, whom he aided with a quite unexpected and amazing energy. Naturally, again, these proceedings infuriated the popular party. De Rohan was constantly being denounced in the National Assembly, and on one occasion a solemn proposal was made to indict him before the national high court. The Assembly, however, seeing that the Cardinal was out of its reach, paid no heed to the proposal, although it was renewed time and again, but quietly contented itself, after the Cardinal's flight, with ordering the municipality of Strasburg to lay violent hands upon all the property and the estates of the fugitive. It is a queer picture which history paints for us, of the evil old Cardinal who had been so base and who had done so much harm, deprived of his vast revenues and living a

modest and frugal life, intent only on securing the happiness of his diocese, now reduced to a small patch of territory on the right bank of the Rhine. He had been as profligate and as pitiable as Sardanapalus ; it is curious to find that in the last flicker of his old age he showed something of the strenuous spirit that animated the Assyrian prince. He died on February 16, 1803, in the sixty-ninth year of his ignominious life. 'His noble conduct,' says M. Imbert de Saint-Amand, 'his generous help to the Emigrants, the reforms operated in his morals in some measure expiated his past faults, and, finishing devoutly a life that had so long been scandalous, he died at Ettenheim in peace.'

The scoundrelly male de la Motte outlived every person connected with the affair of the collar. He drifted through all manner of perils and degradations and miseries, sinking lower and lower as the years went by. In 1825—it is Feuillet de Conches who tells the tale—a man bowed down by age and misery presented himself at M. de Lavan's bureau, and was received by the chief of his cabinet, a man of great merit and high character, M. Duplessis. It was Count de la Motte, who came to ask for bread. M. Duplessis talked with him about the Diamond Necklace, and suggested that he should write his memoirs, including his reminiscences of the mysterious episode. La Motte thereupon wrote what was suggested, and with every appearance of good faith. His notes only confirmed the details which were already known.

The Queen's memory had no need of being cleared by a poor broken-down wretch who, after having helped to cast a shadow upon her fame by contributing to the calumnies of his wife, now came forward, under the stress of misery, to deny them to a Royalist Government which might be willing to pay solidly for the denial. Still it was none the less precious to have an authentic denial written by one of the principal actors in this too famous drama. If de la Motte was an old man, worn down by misfortune, he still retained all his intelligence, understanding the character of his atonement, and making it, according to the opinion of M. Duplessis, in all good faith. Out of respect to hallowed memories; out of respect, above all, to the daughter of Louis XVI., to whom the resuscitation of the name of de la Motte would have been the cause of considerable grief, M. de Lavan thought it best to envelop in obscurity the few days this unfortunate being had still to live.

It seems that the pretensions of the scoundrelly male de la Motte were exceedingly modest. All he asked was an annuity of from three hundred to four hundred francs for life, and his admission into the Hospice de Chaillot. He had still some years of miserable life before him, and we are told that during the last years of his existence the Count, who was commonly known by the nickname of 'Valois-Collier,' took his daily stroll beneath the famous 'Galeries de Bois' of the Palais Royal, those galleries where

Balzac's Lucien de Rubempré wandered, and which have long since joined the Snows of Yester-Year. To the very last, therefore, the Count affected the neighbourhood of his old haunts, the gambling saloons of the Palais Royal. For some half a dozen years this strange figure, like some queer, withered, evil old ghost, haunted the Paris in which he had played so vile a part. His face may often have been looked upon by those brilliant young men who were yet to be known as 'Young France.' They may well have shuddered in the sunlight as they saw that ugly memento of an ugly past creep by them in the day. Overwhelmed by infirmity and misery, he died at last in the month of November 1831, having almost reached his eightieth year.

CHAPTER XV

SOWING THE WIND

WHEN Turgot was whistled down the wind a new man made his appearance upon the stage, and tried his hand at the desperate game of somehow pulling French finance together. An ingenious, obsequious M. Clugny de Nuis took the control of finance. This Clugny de Nuis is almost forgotten in history. Famous or infamous in his time, and among his townsfolk of Bordeaux for his debaucheries, he had been branded by an epigram which found in the letters of his name the words 'Indignus Luce.' Knowing that his immoralities would not commend him to the austere Louis XVI., he affected a passion for lock-making, and imported two locksmiths from Germany to perfect him in the art. But neither disfavour with the virtuous nor favour with a lock-smith monarch was to be of much moment to him. He had his controller-generalship, but, like Richard in the play, he did not keep it long. He died in October of 1776, in consequence, it was said, of some desperate indulgence in debauchery, and there stepped at once into his place the official who had taken what may be called the secretaryship to the

treasury, Necker, the Genevese banker. Necker was still quite a young man. Born in 1732, he was only forty-four years of age. Already he was beginning to show some signs of that corpulence which was in later years to set the Court smiling at his bulk ; already his chin was markedly doubling. On the whole he was a striking-looking man, with brown, vivacious, piercing eyes, with arched and bushy eyebrows, with closely drawn mouth, with feminine forehead. He held his head high, and yet, in spite of his stiff demeanour, he was awkward in carriage and embarrassed in manner. He was bulky of body and colourless of complexion, easily depressed, a great feeder, and yet always hungry. The sound of his voice was not agreeable to listen to, and his elocution was not easy. His efforts at wit were of the most ponderous kind, and he always exaggerated any social part he strove to play, being absurdly reverential where he might wish to assume a studied politeness, heavily complimentary where he wished to flatter. He was an excellent banker, no better in any of the great European houses, and if France could have been saved by a display of the qualities that enable a pushing young man to rise to eminence in a banker's counting-house, Necker would undoubtedly have saved France. But France unhappily wanted more than a fine head for figures ; it wanted statesmanship, and of statesmanship Necker had nothing at all. Nobody, it has been happily said, can be a great statesman without imagination, and

with imagination Necker was painfully unprovided. But he had a comprehensive, consuming belief in himself, which had counted for much in the past, and which his career hitherto had indeed amply justified. When he was fifteen years old, his father, a professor of public law in Geneva, had sent him to Paris to the great banking house of Vernet. Like the good boys in the stories, his abilities earned him the admiration of, and finally a partnership with, his master. The Thellusson brothers allowed him to share in their great enterprises; everything he touched seemed to bring him luck. While still a comparatively young man he found himself a millionaire among millionaires, wealthy in a world of wealth. On the roll of fame whereon the names of great bankers are traced, the name of Necker stood gratifyingly high. But the millionaire banker was not satisfied. He had other ambitions; he wished to make himself a reputation in the world of politics and in the world of letters. His arduous youth had not allowed him time to acquire any great degree of culture; he now strove to make up the deficiency. He set to work to accomplish these two great aims as he would have set to work to float some brilliant financial scheme. He determined to enrich his mind with the education he had missed, to create out of Necker the banker a Necker the man of letters. He read hard, he surrounded himself with men of letters; his strongest aid in his new purpose was his wife. In his marriage, as in everything else,

he was singularly lucky. Mademoiselle Suzanne Curchod came of a family that had been ruined and proscribed by the Edict of Nantes. She had been carefully educated ; she had turned her education to account in keeping a school at Geneva. She was neither beautiful nor graceful, but her face was striking and interesting, and she was, what was of great importance in that age, a very brilliant conversationalist. She was the very woman to make an ideal wife for an ambitious banker. She set up her salon in Paris, after the fashion of Madame Geoffrin and Madame du Deffand ; Marmontel and Thomas were put to work to create a society for her ; her Fridays soon became famous in a certain set, and scholars, poets, Encyclopædists, and great nobles with literary leanings, honoured her salon with their presence. Madame de Staël, passing a plain-featured, precocious infancy in such surroundings, has left her account of these gatherings, and the heart-burnings they used to cause from the difficulty of keeping all the irritable geniuses of literature and philosophy, of prose and verse, in that serene condition of flattered content which allowed them to be agreeable to others.

At the time when, in 1776, Necker assumed the controller-generalship, Madame Necker's comeliness had passed in great measure away. She had grown very thin ; she was suffering from the earliest attacks of a nervous malady which at last reduced her to such a condition that she could not keep in the same

position for more than a few minutes at a time, so that when she went to the theatre she was obliged to keep in the back of the box, and balance herself alternately first on one leg and then on the other. She was very charitable, and her charity aided the popularity of her husband. She founded a hospital in the Rue de Sèvres, to which the name of Necker clung; she was entirely absorbed in admiration for her husband's genius, and the ardent desire to urge and aid it as much as possible to its legitimate and lofty conclusion.

A certain flavour of romance lingers around the name and fame of Madame Necker. She was born in the Pays de Vaud, in the Presbytery of Crassier. She was the daughter of a respectable, sufficiently learned, and somewhat Richteresque Swiss pastor. We are told that the simple white house, with its green shutters, may still be seen, separated from the main road by a little garden planted with fruit-trees. How many of the amiable and amatory young ministers of Crassier who recognised the growing charms of Suzanne Curchod and cast glances between the fruit-trees as they walked by the Curchod garden, guessed at the restless ambition that sheltered itself behind the green shutters! Suzanne Curchod was an educated young woman. If she reminds one a little of Byron's heroine who knew 'Latin, that is, the Lord's Prayer, and Greek, the alphabet, I'm nearly sure,' if her plunges into science were scarcely so profound as those of

Madame du Châtelet, her accomplishments were quite enough to make her remarkable, and, when coupled with her youth and comeliness, to make her think more than well of herself. But she was not content with her neat looks and her learning; she burned as eagerly as Mirabeau himself with a desire for noble ancestry. She raked out from the obscurity of history some Curchods or Curchodis who battled in old time for Savoy, and tried hard with no encouragement from royal genealogists to persuade herself that these were her illustrious ancestors.

While she was still quite a young girl she was taken to Lausanne—Lausanne as yet blissfully indifferent to the sojourn of Gibbon, blissfully unconscious of the existence of Casanova. In Lausanne Mademoiselle Curchod made quite a sensation. She was allowed to found one of those dreary little academies of which Rome had set the fashion with its stucco Arcadia, an Académie de la Poudrière, over which she presided as Thémire. In Lausanne, too, she loved and was beloved by the great Gibbon. Gibbon cuts a somewhat ungraceful figure in the business. We all know how he sighed as a lover, obeyed as a son. Perhaps Gibbon was not a marrying man. He was, in obedience to destiny, to write the 'Decline and Fall,' and drink all those pipes of sweet wine which were so bad for him. She had a higher destiny before her than to be the wife of a corpulent historian. She thought she was broken-hearted; she allowed her faithful and quite hopeless

lover, Moulton, to get Rousseau to put pressure on the departed Gibbon in vain. When her parents died, she came to Paris as the companion of Madame de Vermenoux, a rich widow, and met at her house the partner in Thellusson's bank, M. Necker, a rejected, and, it was presumed, despairing suitor of Madame de Vermenoux. Necker fell, however, promptly in love with Suzanne Curchod, and the judicious diplomacy of the devoted and self-denying Moulton brought about the marriage in 1764, and launched a very ambitious woman upon a very remarkable career.

When Necker took office he could look back with satisfaction upon an eminently successful past. Thanks to himself, he had made money, won distinction, taken the front rank in the great financial fight. Thanks to his position as Minister for the Republic of Geneva, he had gained that entry to the Court of Versailles which had brought him into contact with the brilliant world of stars and titles and ancestral names. Thanks to his wife, he had a salon as well attended as any in all Paris; he could bid beneath his roof at any time the Grimms, the Diderots, the Marmontels, the Galianis, the d'Alemberts, the Buffons, the Raynals, all the crowd of wits and men of genius, without whom no salon could be said to exist. Famous women, too, which was even more important, thronged his halls. Madame Geoffrin, Madame du Deffand, Madame d'Houdentot, the sweet little Duchess de Lauzun, the charm-

ing wife of a picturesque, heartless rapscallion, for whom, alas! the Terror waits, the Maréchale de Luxembourg, that crown and glory of the Old Régime—all these were among his friends: some were his devoted friends. The Duchess de Lauzun was among the devoted friends; she carried her devotion so far as actually to slap the face of someone in the Tuileries Gardens who spoke slightingly of the great Necker. Thanks to his daughter, too, the witty, but certainly not beautiful Germaine, Necker's importance was increased. She had been sought in marriage by William Pitt, the rising star of English statesmanship; she had been sought in marriage by Prince George Augustus of Mecklenburg, brother of the reigning Duke. Had she not, in the very January of this marvellous year, 1776, been given in marriage to the Baron de Staël-Holstein, the Ambassador from Sweden and Gustavus III.? It may be admitted that Necker as he entered upon office had a very satisfactory past to look back upon. Wealthy, popular, influential, moving in the best society, adored by his wife, adored by his daughter, adored by a good and gracious duchess, and now Controller-General of Finance and triumphant over Turgot—what could a man born of a woman wish for more? And yet Necker did wish for more; in his solid, slightly stolid way he saw a magnificent destiny before him in which he was to play an unprecedented part, and be hailed by a reformed France as its true father. Men are given on very little pro-

vocation to imagine themselves saviours of society. It is clear that Necker had a good deal of provocation to believe that destiny had marked him out as a saviour of society. The author of the 'Éloge' of Colbert was now to be the author of the 'Compte Rendu'—that memorable 'Account Rendered.' That any man should attempt to throw some light upon the darknesses of French finance, that he should actually set down in simple figures, which all who ran might read, a statement of receipts and a statement of expenditure, seemed a sort of miracle. It roused up a whirlwind against him, but it won him friends, admirers, fanatics, all over France.

The period of Necker's administration was a fatal period for France. The American War of Independence broke out, and France was drawn into the struggle. The reasons which led France to take a share in the conflict were twofold: a desire for revenge upon England for her successes over the French arms in Canada and India, with the consequent diminution of French empire; and, secondly, a commercial desire for traffic with the American ports, which were sealed by the English supremacy to all but English ships. The war was a triumph for the federated States, a humiliation for England, a catastrophe for France. Brilliant, high-minded young officers like Lafayette; brilliant, base-minded young nobles like Lauzun might win glory; avid, unscrupulous, adventurous men of letters like Beaumarchais might see their way to the turning of a

dishonest penny out of the business. But France herself had not the means for supporting such a war. Necker could not increase the taxation ; he could not, to any appreciable extent, economise ; he had to borrow, and he did borrow with both hands. But, however fatal his borrowings were to the welfare of France, it was not they that brought about his own temporary downfall. It was his efforts after reform in the financial systems of the country which massed against him a legion of adversaries whom a stronger man than Necker could not have withstood. He had against him Turgot and the Turgotist economists, who did not forgive his succession to Turgot and his destruction of Turgot's plans. He had against him all the financial world, high and low, all the privileged in the administration and in the Court ; he had against him the parliaments ; he had against him the ministers ; he had against him de Maurepas ; he had practically against him the King, who certainly was not for him. There was nothing for a disappointed and indignant Necker to do but to resign, and resign he accordingly did on May 19, 1781, in a very cold letter to Louis, in which he expressed the hope that the King would cherish some memory of the years of hard but happy work and the boundless zeal which he had given to his service.

Necker thus knocked off his perch and sulking in dignified retirement at Saint Ouen, the question arose who was to carry on the fortunes of a bank-

rupt and floundering monarchy. Even if anyone had thought of Turgot, Turgot was out of the question, for Turgot had died shortly before the resignation of his rival Necker. Controller Joly de Fleury tried his hand at the muddle—tried his hand for a season, during which, on November 14, 1781, de Maurepas died, to the great grief of the King. De Maurepas had done all that lay in him to ruin France, and died no doubt serene in the conviction that he was a great statesman and had conferred incalculable benefits upon his country. Then Joly de Fleury dropped out of the great financial game or puzzle of how to make a bankrupt state seem to be thriving, and Controller d'Ormesson took his place and tried his hand for a while, till he, too, dropped out of the game, and his place was taken by a new, pushing, successful man who was called Calonne.

The overthrow of Necker was the signal for a series of demonstrations in his honour such as might well convince him that he was the idol and the destined saviour of France. France was flooded with engravings in his praise, now representing him struggling with the hideous figure of Envy wearing the mask of Hypocrisy, now representing his bust securely planted on Envy overthrown, now representing his medallion held on high by the adoring arms of a Minerva-like Virtue, now giving him as armorial bearing a single sleepless eye with the assurance that nothing past, present, or future,

escaped its vigilance; this last dedicated in all enthusiasm to his illustrious son-in-law of Staël-Holstein. Now, too, began that creation and distribution of busts of the popular fallen minister, busts which should yet play a significant and grim part in history. Seldom has a defeated minister been so bepictured, bestatued, bedaubed with praise. Saint Ouen—not, be it noted, the Saint Ouen that is later to be associated with Louis XVIII., but another place near by of like name—became the Mecca of a world of adoring visitors. There was, says Grimm, a well-nigh perpetual procession of carriages to the sacred seclusion. Was it surprising if Achilles Necker in his tent at Saint Ouen thought that the fate and the fortunes of France depended upon his single arm?

To outward appearance Necker's successor, Calonne, was not unpleasing. Those who looked upon him in the flesh, as we look upon him in contemporary portraiture, saw a sufficiently comely gentleman, brave in star and ribbon, with a fine oval face, expansive forehead, wide keen eyes and a firm mouth, a man with a look of courtly courage that was not unattractive. Courtly, indeed, he was. Was there ever a more courtly phrase uttered than that in which, in answer to some request of Marie Antoinette's, he replied: 'Madame, if it is possible, it is done; if it is impossible, it shall be done.' Yet we may well believe that as he bowed over the white royal hand, that as he uttered this insane

epigram, the bold eyes smiled at his own audacity, and that behind his brazen mask his tongue was in his cheek. He was certainly courageous ; only a man of courage could have taken such a post, and could in such a post have acted as Calonne acted. There are many interpretations of Calonne's character. He has been portrayed as a kind of desperate gentleman-adventurer, treating finance with the hardy audacity of a Grand Seigneur making love to a pretty woman who has only to be rallied a little brusquely to yield the heart's desire. He has been described by Louis Blanc as a cold and crafty calculator, whose light-hearted audacity was but one studied factor in the sum of his keen and daring schemes. He has even had his admirers, who are pleased to see in him a patriot sacrificed to the selfishness of others.

Whatever Calonne's schemes may have been, whatever his hidden purpose, whether mere reckless prodigality, the childish delight in making the money spin while he could, or the deep-laid, well-nigh medical purpose of humouring privilege to the top of its bent, and then when the money was all gone frightening it into acquiescence in infinitely needed reform—whatever Calonne's purpose, the facts are plain enough. Calonne raised borrowing to the level of a fine art, and he spent with splendid magnificence. Did anyone want money let him come to Calonne. Had the Queen any desire the realisation of which involved the spending of large

sums, was not Calonne her devoted servant, ready to do the impossible? He squandered money with Aladdin-like alacrity; had he been Fortunatus, Midas, and Monte Cristo all rolled into one, he could scarcely have made a braver show for the time. What magnificent palaces were bought for royal pleasure-taking—beautiful Rambouillet, where the swans float on enchanted waters; beautiful Saint Cloud, and many another place of beauty! Some money indeed went well and wisely for Cherbourg port; most of it went ill and foolishly, whether with plan or without. Calonne set himself to rebuilding the walls of Paris and increasing the efficacy of the gatherers of the hated taxes at the gates in the ugly little pavilions built by Ledoux, for which piece of work an anonymous pamphleteer, presumed to be Mirabeau, suggested that Calonne ought to be hanged. So the time slipped by, glittering with magnificence, and then Calonne began to find that he, too, had his enemies. It was said freely that Calonne had looked after himself—which was indeed true enough, for he had induced Louis XVI. to pay his debts on his assumption of office—he was accused vaguely of various malpractices; his attempt, sufficiently excellent in its way, to renew the gold coinage was made a most potent weapon of attack against him. Whether Calonne had now come to the ripe moment for his elaborate scheme, or whether, like some mere commonplace adventurer, he had only come to the end of his tether, in either case he saw that it was

time to make a new move. He made a new move, and an amazing move: out of existing chaos he evoked the Notables.

Upon the King, the Queen, the Court, the appearance of Calonne in his new character as the reformer was most astonishing. Here was the light-hearted, brisk, efficacious maker or raiser of money, the buyer of palaces, the doer of the impossible, actually demanding reforms like a mere Turgot or Necker. The man in the story who finds the creature whom he has looked upon as his faithful servant suddenly asserting himself as his deadliest enemy, typifies fairly enough the feelings of the Court at the astounding conversion, under their very eyes, of Calonne the courtier into Calonne the reformer. Instantly the privileged classes ranged themselves against him as they had ranged themselves against Turgot and against Necker, only with the more ferocity that they saw in Calonne not merely an enemy but a traitor. Well might the Notables alarm all those courtiers who were flinging money to the four winds, all those bourgeois nobles who hated and were hated by the men to whom nobility had become a birth caste, all those wealthy men of the middle class who were as scornful of and as detested by the roturier as if they boasted the bluest blood in France, all those princes ecclesiastical who enjoyed swollen incomes wrung from the rank and file of the Church, wrung from the peasantry, all those Commendatory Abbés who frisked on

scarlet heels in my lady's chamber, all those Intendants whom Law declared to be the real governors of France, all those worthies of the Periwig Makers' Guild who wrangled for precedence with the worthies of the Bakers' Guild. The extraordinary world that lived by and for the Old Order, might well have trembled at the tread of the Notables as they wended their way to Versailles, might well have trembled if they could have guessed what echo the utterance of one voice in that Assembly would awake.

In the midst of all the bustle and excitement of the arriving Notables, Vergennes died, on the night of January 12. Louis was in despair at the loss of his minister. Never a sovereign indued with a strong spirit of self-reliance, Louis was accustomed to lean very heavily indeed upon the ministers in whom he trusted, and he had trusted profoundly in Vergennes. As the grave closed over the coffin of the dead man, the luckless King, with tears in his eyes, was overheard to mutter the unkingly words: 'Oh, how happy I should be if only I were lying beside you in that grave!' The epitaph of the House of Capet was sounded in that piteous wail of the weak King, who felt himself upon the edge of events too potent for his feeble personality.

CHAPTER XVI

THE NOTABLES

CALONNE asked for his Notables, and he got his Notables. From all parts of France, the nobility and clergy who, with less than a dozen other persons, made up that curious body, came together 'in the bleak short days.' On February 22, 1787, they assembled, one hundred and forty-four of them in all, very uncertain as to what they were expected to do, still more uncertain as to what they, with their peculiar and ill-defined powers, could do. They were divided into eight committees, each presided over by a prince of the royal blood, the good Duke of Penthièvre, the two false royal brothers of Provence and Artois, the Duke of Orleans the most conspicuous. The Duke of Orleans seemed just then to be sunk in a kind of sullen tranquillity or angry stupor, seemed to be doing nothing, and even thinking nothing, of very much moment. Yet we may well believe that his thoughts were as momentous as his deeds were soon to prove momentous.

To this executive assembly Calonne unbosomed himself. It was a frank, somewhat cynical process; it looked as if the man thought that the luck of his

desperate audacity might again prevail in the face of those committees, those royal princes, those Notables steeped to the lips in privilege. He may have been hopeful; he certainly acted as if he were hopeful. In the stately Salle des Menus, destined later to shelter a more important assemblage, he faced his Notables with a cool courage which may almost be called admirable. His Notables indeed they were in a sense. The Notables were summoned, each individual man of them, by special order of the King, and Calonne, acting through the King, had so arranged the composition of the body as to weaken, as much as possible, the various forms of opposition. Wittily, airily, audaciously, he set forth before the astounded Notables the actual condition of affairs. Deficit, the one word deficit, that was the burden of his swan song, that was the real fact to be faced. The deficit, Calonne contended, was not all his fault, and he proceeded swiftly and sharply to assail Necker, and to controvert the 'Compte Rendu' in all its most important particulars. Then he denounced the abuses of the privileged orders with a vehemence which does something to justify the fantastic saying of Madame de Staël, that Calonne did more than any man to create the French Revolution. Then he unfolded his own plans of reform, cutting right and left at the rotting tree of feudalism, and sat down before the furious Notables, an incarnation, in their eyes, of rampant, deadliest democracy.

The furious Notables were in no mood to take

Calonne quietly. Their fury blew upon him from all the Bureaux. He was like a man in some wild cave of the winds, around whom all the hurricanes raged and wrangled. All his glittering words, all his bright audacities were now of no avail. The Bureaux clamoured for his accounts, a significant and most disagreeable demand. If sheer picturesque urbanity, if a tongue glibbed with all manner of soft speeches, and smooth speeches, and hopeful speeches, could have got Calonne out of the slough of despond into which he had waded so cheerily, Calonne had been a rescued adventurer. But they did not, could not, save him. The Notables were open enemies: Calonne had secret enemies too. Monseigneur Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, had got it somehow or other into his vain head that he was the man to save France at this crisis—the number of persons who were convinced that they and they alone could save France was appalling; he had somehow or other impressed the same belief in his own fitness into the mind of Abbé Vermond, Marie Antoinette's adviser, and also into the head of the Keeper of the Seals, Miroménil, whom Calonne looked upon as a trusty adherent. When Calonne got wind of the conspiracy, he promptly dismissed Miroménil and appointed Lamoignon in his stead, but it was now too late. The sun of Calonne's splendour was setting; he had fought a good fight if he had not kept the faith, but his time was up. On April 17 he was dismissed, and Loménie de Brienne reigned

in his place over the perplexing Controllership. 'The expelled Calonne,' says indignant, English Perry, 'now came over to London, in which Court he conjectured that these peccadillos do no injury to a minister's reputation. The warmth of friendship he has uniformly experienced ever since from the Court and the cabinet ministers, prove that he was in the right.'

In all the noise of the storm that blew Calonne from his post, the utterances of a certain young voice were drowned and made little impression. Yet those utterances were more significant and more important than anything else that was said during the whole of the troubled existence of the Notables. In the bureau that was presided over by the Count d'Artois there was present a young man who thought a good deal of himself, and whom some people were beginning to think a good deal of—the Marquis de Lafayette. Young Lafayette of the many names—he had seven of them, Marie Jean Paul Roch Yves Gilbert du Mottier—was born in Auvergne in the September of 1757 of a stately race of soldiers. Though he was only thirty years old when the Notables assembled, he had already lived a soldier's life in his generation. His boyhood, we are told, was even more deeply imbued with heroic longings than that of most generous youths of warlike stock. He dreamed of slaying fabulous monsters like a new Theseus. He was made a musketeer when he was only thirteen years old; he was married to a grand-

daughter of the Duke de Noailles when he was sixteen; when he was scarcely twenty, and longing for the active career of arms, his attention was captivated by the outbreak of the American Revolution. In defiance of the wishes of his own Government he crossed the Atlantic and offered his bright sword to Washington.

Some critics have formed a very poor opinion of Lafayette's merits in the American business and after. They say that even if his birth and natural disposition had not made him vain, the reception he met with in America would have been enough to turn a wiser young man's head. Though he was only twenty, though he had never set a squadron in the field nor the division of a battle knew more than a spinster, Washington gave him important commands, in which he exhibited great personal courage, but gave no signs of any military ability. It was the policy of Washington, according to this hostile criticism, to win the active help of France, by on every possible occasion linking Lafayette's name with his own. In this way Lafayette acquired as much fame in America and in his own country as Washington himself, and when he returned to France in 1779, to beg for the assistance of a French army, he found himself hailed as a conquering hero. The King gave him the command of the Royal Dragoons, and he returned to America more convinced than ever of his military genius. He served through the last campaigns, and was in

command at the capitulation of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown. Then he came back to France, after the conclusion of the war, to find himself still regarded as a warrior famous for fight. He was praised in the Bull's Eye, acclaimed in the streets, applauded in the theatres, and flattered in the salons. It is not perhaps surprising if he came to regard this flattery as his due, if he became a thought conceited as to his military merits. It is more to be regretted that he tried to play the part of a leader of the gay young French nobility as well as a great general, with far less qualifications for the part. One day he had managed, with great pains, to get drunk, and his last words, as he was being helped into his carriage, were, 'Do not forget to tell Noailles how splendidly I have been drinking.' A sorry piece of feather-headed affectation for the hero of Yorktown!

But if there is much to prompt an unfavourable judgment, much must be admitted on the other side. Lafayette's American admirers maintain with great reason that Lafayette's character, after allowance has been made for all its weaknesses, must be regarded as that of a great man. Washington was a well-nigh unerring judge of character, and he gave to Lafayette, almost from the beginning, a confidence which was the basis of a rare disinterested friendship, a friendship which continued to the end. It was no weak character who turned his back upon all the luxury, ease, pleasure, and honours which high birth

and position, wealth and youth could give; who braved the displeasure of his sovereign and the angry sneers of his kinsmen to share the hardships and dangers of the Continental army, to starve and freeze at Valley Forge with Washington, and to participate with the neglected soldiers of the Continental army in what must have appeared to the sober-thinking world an insane struggle against hopeless odds. His tact also enabled him to perform as great service in the way of mediation as he performed by his sword. He prevented by this the failure at an early stage of the American alliance with France, and to him more than to any other was due the gaining of the needful co-operation with Washington at Yorktown of De Grasse and Rochambeau.

On the whole, we must admit that Lafayette was a high-minded gentleman; he was also an ambitious gentleman, and Carlyle's term of 'Cromwell-Grandison' is not unhappy. We must bear in mind that he was still very young, that he had been a great success in America, that he was also a great success in Paris, that he was deeply imbued with principles which, for the time in which he was then living, were extremely advanced, though it needed but the turn of a couple of years to make them seem exceedingly reactionary. In short, he was an honourable, handsome, self-conceited, eminently well-meaning, well-born second-class young man.

Contemporary evidence is always interesting if

it is not always the best: let us see what shrewd, simple, English Perry says of Lafayette. 'The Marquis de la Fayette, as he was then called, distinguished himself much at this time for his opposition to the arbitrary measures of the Court and its ministers. He had made seven or eight campaigns in America, much to his reputation as a soldier; he had also spent his leisure hours with Washington, Paine, Schuyler, and others, not less to his honour as a philosopher; and was highly esteemed by them all. It was in their company that he attempered the fierceness of the warrior with the philanthropy of the man; it was from them he learnt, for he was very young, those maxims of civil polity, which served as the groundwork in the constitution of the free American Government, and which were one day to be disseminated among his compatriots at home. He returned to France a conqueror, and, at the same time, a polished gentleman; he spoke our language fluently, and, by that means, could converse with every Englishman residing in his metropolis, whose knowledge in the science of government might make him a desirable companion. The French Court was flattered in taking to itself all the honour it could derive from claiming this promising young man as one of its choicest subjects, and, at the same time, entertained many well-founded fears that this champion in the American cause might eventually prove a missionary from it to the genius of French liberty. Thus,

by mixing with and being admired by all classes of his countrymen, he taught them to carol songs to reviving freedom, instead of those dirges they had so lately chaunted over its remains. In all public discourses, or debates, M. de la Fayette not only maintained his philosophical sentiments of the question upon the ground of speculative reason, but he almost constantly introduced the example of American practice. The King, under all these circumstances, of which he was far from ignorant, nominated La Fayette, with considerable reluctance, to be one of the Notables. He prophetically apprehended many disappointments to his views by such nomination; but to leave him out of the appointment was to invite other ills of equal magnitude at least, and much more near.

'The refractoriness of the members of the Notables was ascribed wholly to the Marquis; and as the Bastille at this time was in being, and in fashion, it was expected every moment, by the friends of the Marquis, that he would be sent there by a lettre de cachet. He nevertheless persevered with spirit, and went so far as to accuse the minister, then in the zenith of his power, with peculation in his department; that he had sold crown lands to the amount of two millions of livres, without rendering an account of the money, or even showing that he had had the King's consent to dispose of them. This was like taking a bull by the horns; and the friends of the Marquis trembled for the issue of the denun-

ciation. The Prince, in a menacing voice, asked La Fayette if he would venture to put the accusation in writing; to which he immediately answered, "Most certainly"—and the paper was carried to the King, and occasioned, though not immediately, that very minister's dismissal; but as that was all the punishment inflicted on him, it was shrewdly suspected that the Queen and her party knew the whole transaction, and had shared in its profits.'

But if he had been ten times vainer or weaker than he was, he would still be a serious player in this great play, if only for sake of the momentous words which he uttered in the Artois Bureau of Notables, and which were, as it were, whistled down the wind that blew Calonne into outer darkness. It was Lafayette who lifted up his voice first and suggested that the right thing to do in the existing crisis was to convoke the States-General. It was a great suggestion, and fraught with consequences which had not entered for a moment into the handsome head of the young soldier who made it. Did Lafayette ever, we may wonder, in those long years of life which were yet to be his, and in which the French Revolution was to be but an episode, did he ever think upon the terrible importance of the suggestion he then made, and wish, perhaps, that he had never made it? It would have mattered really very little if young American General Lafayette had held his peace on that memorable occasion. The words had to be said, the proposition had to be made. If Lafay-

ette's lips had not framed the words they would have been framed by the lips of some other. But the first person who actually formulates the desire for some great reform deserves recognition and honour, if only for being the happy mouthpiece of the stirring need and thought of the hour. Lafayette was the lucky man whom chance or fate appointed to first give tongue to that cry for the States-General which was so soon to resound from one end of France to the other.

Calonne's successor was destined to prove no more successful than Calonne. Loménie de Brienne had touched the top of his ambition only to prove himself disastrously unequal to it. He was essentially a queen's man, as opposed to a king's man. The King did not like him, distrusted him. Had not the King's father, the late Dauphin, written down Loménie de Brienne as a sceptic, even an atheist?—accusations which stuck in Louis' memory and led him to say when De Brienne's name was proposed for the Archbishopric of Paris, 'Let us have at least an archbishop who believes in God.' We have no means of knowing what Loménie de Brienne did or did not believe in, but he certainly belonged to the worse rather than the better order of eighteenth-century Churchmen. He was a scholar in his way, and liked to pose as a thinker, a philosopher, an economist. A child of the Church, he affected or displayed sympathy with the Encyclopædists; a man of God, he loved to act as a bril-

liant man of the world. Born in 1727, he was now fifty years old, but his smooth, femininely graceful features wore still something of the air of youth. The friend of the Abbé Vermond, he was also naturally the friend of Marie Antoinette. He had, or thought he had, the art of pleasing women, as he thought that he had the art of governing men. His own profound impression had helped him to the reputation abroad, for what a man profoundly believes of himself he can often get an idle world very willingly to believe too. Men and women of the Bull's Eye and the Court agreed that Loménie de Brienne was a great man, a wonderful man. The Queen thought so too, and so he became minister.

The Notables, called into existence in a vague, unmeaning kind of way, were destined to vanish out of existence as an organized body after a scarcely less vague and unmeaning fashion. Loménie de Brienne considered that he could set about his great task of regenerating France very much better without their assistance. It seemed to his thin intelligence that they were beginning to meddle too much with things out of their star. A Lafayette demanding States-General, and generally obtruding himself in a reforming attitude, a Duke de la Rochefoucauld sneering at tithes, a King's brother, Count de Provence, describing the gabelle as an 'infernal machine,' all this was very unbecoming, not to say unpleasant. So Loménie de Brienne thought that the best thing he could do was to dismiss them with

all decent courtesy. This he accordingly did after delivering to them one of the most astonishing speeches ever made by minister chosen of men, in which he gravely thanked them for having established the existence of a deficit of forty millions in the national exchequer. It was hardly worth calling the Notables together to establish what must have been already painfully familiar to any finance minister. However, Loménie had to thank his Notables for something, so he thanked them for that, and for their other suggestions—to be accepted or not as the case might be—and so bowed them out of Versailles and away to the four corners of France, every single member of the thus disbanded Notables carrying with him to his own home, no matter what his own principles, the seeds of agitation, of disaffection, of revolution. If Calonne had wanted to precipitate the course of the Revolution he could not have hit upon a better plan than this of the Notables. It gave the country, as a whole, its first jog; put into the minds of plethoric towns and sleepy parishes far away the idea of delegation, of a national voice which might have its word to say. If the Notables, who had not been summoned for a century and a half, might thus be brought together to express, as it were, the opinion upon things in general of the surface of the body politic, why should not the States-General be summoned to express opinions upon things in general which should go below the surface, go as low as the Third Estate? Such were

the questions which the dispersal of the Notables set people asking each other in every part of France in the early summer of the year 1787.

Lafayette, writing to his friend Jay in America in this May of 1777, said that the Assembly of Notables had given the country 'the habit of thinking about public affairs,' and the phrase sums up the situation with sufficient dexterity. The patriotism of the Notables, as a whole, does not appear very brilliant in the eyes of the later generations, but for its time it was positively dazzling. The men who overthrew Calonne, who reproached Brienne for want of faith, who refused to vote imposts, who talked of States-General, and nicknamed the gabelle an 'infernal machine,' were men who at least proved, in words written at the time, that 'the nation still existed;' and to have proved so much was to have given a very good reason for gratitude. Loménie de Brienne began to find that he had not gained much by his polite dismissal of the Notables. His task of regenerating France, of filling up that fatal deficit, was as difficult, as desperate as ever. He was still face to face with antagonism; it was only the antagonists who were different. Loménie de Brienne found himself engaged in that fight with the Paris Parliament which was to make him, after a fashion, famous.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BRIENNE ILIAD

Loménie de Brienne had got a bitter business in hand. It would have needed a political Hercules to grapple with the Hydra Parliament, and Loménie was no Hercules. Things were not as they once were; government by lettre de cachet was drifting to its doom; a parliament flushed by its late delight in trying a cardinal, in almost trying a queen, was in a decidedly democratic mood, more inclined to run counter to courtly wishes than it had ever been in the days when the Jansenist-Jesuit feud was raging and the Bull Unigenitus of the one party was the red rag of the other.

We have already seen that the Parliaments played their part in the expression of opposition to royal will. Let us, however, examine the position of the Paris Parliament before we enter into the Brienne Iliad. What was the actual method by which government was administered in the year 1789? An absolute monarchy to begin with. Louis XV. had asserted with the uncompromising directness of a deluge-discerning king the unquestionable, unim-

peachable authority of the King as law-maker. But even the royal will was not brusquely promulgated without any decent appearance of consultation. Even the impetuous sultans of Arabian tales have their grand viziers whose opinion they invite, listen to with courtesy, and even occasionally follow. The princes of the House of Valois, the kings of the seed of Capet, found their counsellors in the Paris Parliament. The Parliament of Paris came into being in the fourteenth century. The despotic sovereigns of the fourteenth century had a Grand Council with whom they settled political questions, and a Chamber of Accounts with whom they discussed grave questions of finance, and they had their Paris Parliament with its three divisions, Great Chamber, Chamber of Enquiries, and Chamber of Requests, with whom they were pleased to consult before administering justice. Within a very short time the Paris Parliament, as was but natural, increased in power and in authority. It was allowed to administer justice by itself, though always, of course, with the royal sanction, and, occasionally, presumed so far upon its position as to argue, and pretty roundly too, with the King. When the argument got too warm for the kingly patience, the King had always a trump-card to play. He had only to come down in person to his faithful but slightly aggressive parliament, and hold what was called a Bed of Justice in its presence, in order to compel them to accede to any edict he had framed. But this

was a kind of trump-card which the King did not always care to play. There are some victories that are too costly to win, and the Bed of Justice always left such a train of irritation behind it that the kings, as a rule, found it but an uneasy couch. Step by step, and inch by inch, the Parliament of Paris grew in dignity, grew in authority. Louis XI., with that keen eye for the main chance which at times made him politically shortsighted, made the councillors over the Paris Parliament irremovable, except in case of condemnation for high treason. By this arrangement Louis made a seat in the Paris Parliament a valuable marketable article, which he always disposed of to the highest bidder. Under Francis I. and his successors, the Parliament throve, and it was not until the advent of Richelieu that it encountered any serious check in its career of increase. But Richelieu made as light of it as he made light of all orders and all institutions, all men and all things which stood in his imperious way, and the policy of the Great Minister was inherited by the Great Monarch. It was in Louis XV., in Louis the Well-beloved, however, that the Parliament found its most aggressive, most active enemy. The Well-beloved was a parliament-hater and a parliament-hunter. He thought nothing of sending a whole parliament to the rightabout. He exiled it from Paris in 1753, though he consented to the suppression of its enemies, the Jesuits, in 1762; and in 1770, on the advice of Maupeou, he

abolished the old Parliament altogether, and established the Parliament Maupeou. Louis XVI., whose good deeds generally did him harm, had on his accession recalled the former councillors, and Loménie de Brienne was now to find that their spirit was as stiff-necked as ever, and that they would not be satisfied to register the royal edicts without discussing them, as they had done in the days of the Sun-King. The Parliament of Paris was further strengthened in the country by the existence of twelve provincial parliaments in the chief provinces. These provincial parliaments at Toulouse, Grenoble, Bordeaux, Dijon, Pau, Metz, Besançon, Douai, Rouen, Aix, Rennes, and Nancy, though they had no actual connection with the Parliament of Paris, invariably made common cause with it in all its struggles with the crown.

The Parliaments, which ranked first of the Supreme Courts, above the Courts of Accounts and the Courts of Excise and Exchequer, never missed an opportunity of insisting upon their supremacy. They maintained permanent rivalry with the High Council and those other Councils and Ministries which, ranking immediately after the royal authority, had under their jurisdiction not only the Supreme Courts, but also all the civil and ecclesiastical tribunals. They strove to maintain their ancient privileges, and to assert their political predominance, which they had first definitely gained when after the troubled days of Charles VI. they

had succeeded in converting their right of Registration into the widely differing and far more powerful right of Verification. The Paris Parliament was the first, as it was the oldest and most illustrious, of the French Parliaments. It claimed to be the delegate of a portion of the sovereign power, and was convinced that upon its existence depended that of the Crown, in spite of the fact that the King had for many years ceased to consult it upon questions of Government. To this Parliament the princes of the blood, the five classes of the peers of France, the six ecclesiastical peers, the chancellor and the keeper of the seals, were admitted, with the right of speaking. It was composed of a first president, several junior presidents, several honorary councillors, and four royal masters of requests-in-ordinary; of two hundred and thirty-two councillors, a procureur-general and three advocates-general. These officers of the highest rank were disseminated amongst four groups of chambers—the Grand Chamber, which judged all the chief cases; the three Chambers of Inquests, the Chamber of Requests, and a Chamber for criminal cases called La Tournelle. The Grand Chamber only took cognisance of those criminal processes which concerned gentlemen and State personages, such as ministers or other high Government officials. The duties of the Grand Chamber, the other Chambers, and the Criminal Chamber also necessitated the creation of a certain number of officials of lower rank.

It has been estimated that more than forty thousand persons were employed in the various courts of judicature, from the president-à-mortier down to the humble writ-server. To this large number of persons, who peopled the law-courts and formed what was called the Robe, must be added a host of subordinate agents and satellites, from the verger to the crier and the man who posted up the decrees. This little host of legal satellites formed a population apart from the rest of the nation. They looked upon themselves as possessing a certain share of legal power; a fact which made them accept all the more blindly, not only the orders of their immediate superiors, but the influences of the Parliaments, more especially that of Paris. The Parliaments, having control over so many persons and opinions, always possessed a decided authority, even under Louis XIV., who had limited their power to the administration of justice. They were confident of recovering their former preponderance as soon as they could resume their political functions, and this was their constant aim throughout the course of the eighteenth century. There had, for a long time, been a bitter rivalry between the Court and the Men of the Robe, between the nobles and the parliamentary class. The latter, it is true, acquired, by reason of their profession, an official nobility which brought them certain honorary prerogatives, but which did not put them on a level with the nobility by birth. Thus this semi-nobility often

served to increase the irritation of the haughtiest members of the parliamentary class against the ancient nobility.

The nobility of the long robe kept aloof from the Court through envy, from the higher bourgeoisie through disdain, even from the members of the financial profession, though that had close affinity with theirs, considering that all magisterial posts went by purchase. Evil and astonishing though this system of purchase seems, it was not an entire evil. If it was a choice between a body nominated entirely by a monarch, a mere shadow of authority, and a body which had at least purchased a right to a certain individual independence, then undoubtedly, of the two evils, the nation preferred the latter. The value of the post of councillor rose or fell, like the value of real estate. One of these posts, which fetched only from twenty-five thousand to thirty thousand livres in 1712, when the Parliament merely administered justice, was worth double the latter sum in 1747, when Parliament insisted upon being recognised as a political body. The emoluments varied very much, according to the amount of work undertaken by each member of the Parliament, and also according to the value which he set on them. When this was very high, it made the fees fall very heavily upon litigants; for the law-suits, at that time, were accompanied by a thousand minute formalities which, by making them extend over a long period, multiplied the costs.

The very excellent Bibliophile Jacob paints a curious picture of the way in which the Parliamentary families formed, in the midst of French society, a society apart, which had few relations with other classes. This society, which was a complete corporation in itself, consisted of different groups extending upwards, in accordance with their origin, fortune, and position, from the humblest employments to the highest posts of the judicature. Every new-comer who had purchased an office at once became an integral part of the association, and henceforward obtained naturalization into the long robe, breaking off, in a manner of speaking, all family ties. Parliamentary society had always been notorious for its gravity and severity, its formality, its pride and hauteur. Eschewing fêtes, balls, concerts, and theatricals, it was renowned for its dinners. These were followed by some discussion on matters of jurisprudence, or some quiet game of cards, and the company always separated early, for the magistrates were in the habit of rising before daybreak. The interior of their houses, with large stone staircases, wide vestibules, and richly decorated reception rooms, was in keeping with their character for gloom and severity, and the very servants seemed redolent of the law-courts. Their masters rarely smiled, and assumed a solemn gait, and a majestic, not to say unamiable exterior. The ladies of the long robe, who mixed only with their peers, were said to have no knowledge of social usages, or to have very inaccurate

knowledge. They were said to be wedded to formality, and to have envy and hatred for their only occupation. It must be said in their excuse that they only appeared in public at the ceremonies of the Parliaments and the Sovereign Court, and it was on these occasions that they imbibed the taste for the minute and unbending formalities observed by the 'robins,' as the nobility contemptuously nicknamed the Men of the Robe. The number of bows and their character, from the révérence en dame to the mere inclination of the head, were all regulated by a law of etiquette as complicated and as rigorous as that which prevailed at Court.

It is hardly surprising that such a body, so constituted, should have inspired an almost religious respect, in spite of the faults committed by individual members. This respect was never more strongly displayed than on solemn occasions such as that described by Barbier in his journal. A formal procession of the Sovereign Courts, in their state robes, was sufficiently impressive, with its presidents, councillors, advocates-general, procureurs-general, registrars and secretaries of the Court wearing the scarlet robe, some with the mortar-cap of black velvet, and others with the red hood trimmed with ermine; with its officers of the Court of Accounts in black robes of velvet, satin, damask or satin; its officers of the Court of Excise in black velvet robes with black hood; its officials of the Court of Exchequer in red robes with ermine hood, and,

following them, all the judicial bodies appertaining to the Parliament, each with their respective costumes and insignia, and taking precedence according to their rank.

The Paris Parliament, in fighting mood, refused to register the Stamp Tax and Land Tax which Loménie in his desperate mood had thrust before them. It did not remain content with an attitude of mere opposition. It fermented with demands and protests. It set all Paris fermenting around it. It became in its turn aggressive. It insisted upon being furnished with 'states of the finances,' a demand which led to the ominous joke of the Abbé Sabathier, 'It is not States of the Finances, but States-General that we want, gentlemen.' Lafayette's demand, which startled d'Artois, thus echoed by Abbé Sabathier, and startling d'Ormesson, was becoming the watchword and the catchword of the hour. A Parliament that refused to register, and that talked about States-General, began to tell upon Loménie's nerves. He lost his head, and imagining, as such weak things are given to imagining, that he was a strong man, he resolved upon strong measures. After a month of waiting and of wrangling, the King, prompted by Loménie, brought the old crazy machinery of a Bed of Justice into play, and solemnly ordered his Parliament, transported to Versailles for the purpose, to do the royal bidding. Never had a Bed of Justice failed before; but this time under weak Loménie's auspices it did fail. No

sooner had the Parliament returned to Paris, than it annulled the events of the previous day, and treated the Bed of Justice as a thing of naught. Hereupon Loménie, now desperate, tried again his part of strong man. He issued the requisite number of lettres de cachet, and sent the whole Parliament into exile in Troyes in Champagne. Life was dull at Troyes in Champagne for an exiled, if heroic, Parliament, thus standing in a corner like a naughty child. A compromise was arrived at. The Parliament agreed to register an edict for the collection of a tax to be levied on all property alike, and in the pleasant late September days they came back to Paris and popular applause. Paris had been in a wild condition without its beloved Parliament, seditious, tumultuous, noisy, even assailing, with intent to do bodily mischief to, the person of the King's royal and unpopular brother Artois, whom we can still see after all these years in a familiar print protected from an irritable populace by the bayonets of the Guards. Who could guess that the time was so very nigh when the irritable people would be less easily repelled by those bayonets; when those bayonets would be less ready to repel them?

In the dull November days, Loménie found himself once more at his wit's end. Like the London Lackpenny in Lydgate's poem, for lack of money he could not speed, so he had to come again to the Parliament to ask for a registration of an edict for

raising large loans for a term of five years, and holding out dim hopes of States-General as a bribe. It was an eventful day. The King came with Loménie, the King and all his Court; but the royal presence did not render the Parliament the more tractable. It argued away for six hours steadily; then when the King, pushed beyond his patience, insisted upon the edicts being registered, suddenly a new champion of the Parliament, a new antagonist of the Court, loomed into historic sight astonishingly. From the place where he sat, the Duke d'Orléans rose after the imperative demand of the King, and asked if the occasion were a royal session or a Bed of Justice.

This was mischievous, but there was more mischief to come. For Louis, promptly converting the session into a Bed of Justice, ordered the immediate registration of the edicts, and, while the Parliament was waiting to take its vote, the Keeper of the Seals gravely announced that the registration must take place. Thereupon d'Orléans again pushed himself to the front. 'Sire,' he said, 'I entreat your Majesty to permit me to place at your feet and in the heart of this court the declaration that I regard this registration as illegal, and that it is necessary for the justification of those who have taken part in these deliberations to add that it has taken place by the express command of the King.' The angry King replied that the registration was legal, and marched out of the place. The Duke d'Orléans brought

him on his way to the door, and then returned full of his new heroic mood to record his protest against the illegal registrations. So, for the first time, d'Orléans appeared in any serious way upon the great stage of events. He will appear again often and ominously enough. This was his first taste of rebellion. The next day a lettre de cachet sent him off to exile in his estate at Raincy. The Parliamentarians Duval, Sabathier who wanted States-General, Fréteau, and Robert shared in his disgrace. This was, as we have said, Orléans' first serious appearance before the world. Let us see what the new patriot was like.

CHAPTER XVIII

EQUALITY ORLEANS

A REPULSIVE creature with a blotched and pustuled face and body, lethargic from premature, long-sustained debauch, was, for the moment, the hero of agitation against the Court. Louis Philippe Joseph, Duke of Orleans, had ingeniously contrived of late years to surround his disagreeable identity with an attractive legend. To the public at large he was soon to be Philippe Égalité, Philip Equality, Equality Orleans, soon to be associated with the new democratic movement, to be avouched an enemy of the Old Order and all its ways. Intelligent scribes and energetic draughtsmen devoted their pens and their gravers to the service of their lord. He was represented as a pattern of august benevolence, the true friend of the people, the zealous antagonist of a profligate and oppressive Court. He was even held up to emulation as a model of chivalrous courage and daring. Did he not on one occasion, when travelling in the country, get upset with carriage, horses, and servants into a stream; and did not he while saving himself by swimming actually condescend to call out to his struggling

valet to cling to the boughs of a tree from which in due time his master rescued him? That a noble should so far unbend as to recognise that the life of a jack servant was worth saving was a circumstance so remarkable that it called for and received all the honours of pictorial celebration. To the Parisian mob, slowly quickening into a sense of its democratic importance, Equality Orleans became a sort of popular Bayard without fear and without reproach.

Paris had not always regarded Equality Orleans in this way, however. The record of his still brief career was not always written in such gracious characters; at one time he was regarded, not without justice, as the crown, if the term may be used in such connection—as the crown of the matchless corruption of the age. He was born on April 13, 1747, at Saint Cloud; thus he was only forty years old at the time of his question about the Bed of Justice. His father was Philippe Louis d'Orléans, familiarly known to history as Fat Philip. It was hardly to be expected that much good could come of such a parentage. Fat Philip was one of the most debauched men of his age, which is saying much, a kind of brutal Falstaff conceived by Plautus and drawn by Callot; cynical, vicious, grotesque, coarsely immoral, as enormous a feeder as the gluttonous Trimalcio of Petronius. But if strange stories were told of Fat Philip, stranger still were told and credited about his duchess. She was accused of the most amazing, the most reckless

profligacy; she was seriously believed by no small number of persons to have conserved her beauty and her health by baths of human blood.

It is scarcely necessary for us to pay much heed to these blood-baths and the like. The blood-bath is an old friend in historical fiction, cropping up again and again whenever popular passion wants some fresh stone to throw at one of its butts. All the scandals of that most scandalous age have to be taken with grave and great allowances. The age was corrupt, indeed, without its being necessary for us to admit that all the pictures of its corruption are faithful, austere, unexaggerated. A man might be bad, abominably bad, a woman might be wicked, even vile enough without deserving all the opprobrium of popular report and chroniques scandaleuses. But it must be admitted that the fact that the blood-bath story could spring up at all, could gain any kind of credence—and it was in some quarters most religiously believed—does throw its light upon the character of the Duchess of Orleans who brought forth Philip Equality. The police of the time were accused of pandering to her terrible taste by carrying off the children of vagabonds and beggars and sacrificing them to this new Moloch. But even if this gravest accusation glances off, too monstrous for belief, other accusations enough and to spare arraign her. She was conspicuous in a lascivious and a lustful age for her lasciviousness and for her lust. Dissolute, cynical, and depraved, she lived like some

grotesque survival of the decomposing Roman Empire; dissolute, cynical, and depraved she died. Of such a sire and such a dam it would be hard to expect a noble breed.

We are told that the birth of Philip Equality caused his mother terrible suffering, and we are invited by the superstitious to see in these circumstances something of that prophetic pain which should accompany the birth of monsters like Nero and monsters like Philip Equality. We learn, however, that the child born of such bitter travail was comely enough to delight the wicked old hearts of his parents; and when at first it was feared that his health was feeble the grim Duke and Duchess were terribly afflicted. However, the young Louis Philippe Joseph did live. His education was not of the kind that turns out an estimable nobility. His early years were left to his mother's care, and were passed in the midst of the curious and corrupt society which she gathered about her. His nature, never a very strong one, was easily influenced in the impressionable hours of childhood, and, unhappily for the young prince, the influences to which his rising manhood were especially exposed, and to which he readily yielded, were of the most unfortunate kind. While we make all possible allowances for the exaggerations of pamphleteers, the scurrility of scandalous lampoons, the exigencies of the compilers of gossip and the tellers of strange tales, it is still impossible to deny that the reign of Louis XV.

was one of the very worst that ever stained the history of a royal race. We must recognise, too, that the nature would have to be very strong, the instincts for good very vital and very deeply implanted, to allow a young man brought up in the influence of such a Court to escape from its contamination. Under the cynical guidance of his father he was early initiated into all the evils of the day. The tastes of the father were not unnaturally the tastes of the son. If the father had an itch for villainous society, the son was of a like mind. All that was worst among the youth of the worst Court in Europe rallied round the son, as their sires had rallied round the father. He reeled from dissipation to dissipation in a desperate, incoherent determination to be the foremost of that wild brotherhood. In the dawn of his manhood he had promised a fair presence. He was above the middle height; he carried himself well; his teeth were good, his skin unusually white and fine; if his features were feeble, they were regular and cleanly cut; his lips habitually wore a smile; his blue eyes seemed to regard the world with a languid interest, though sometimes we are told that they could glitter as dangerously as the eyes of a hyena. That famous 'hell-fire' flash which has yet to be recorded could occasionally gleam then in the days when Philip Equality was only the handsome Duke de Chartres, who knew nothing of Dame de Buffon nor dreamed of Dr. Guillotin. He danced well, fenced well, swam well;

bore himself well indeed in most bodily exercises: the accounts of his early manhood present a sufficiently pleasing picture of a personable young prince. But the excesses to which he delivered himself without rhyme or reason soon marred his comely presence. Crapulous debauchery starred his discoloured visage with pimples, blotches, and unwholesome growths, till his enemies declared that he resembled Sulla, whom the Athenians likened to a mulberry sprinkled with flour. His hair fell, leaving him ignobly bald, and driving the young courtiers who surrounded him to depilate their own foreheads in the sycophantic effort to keep him in countenance and to make ignoble baldness fashionable. With the brutalization of his body his mind grew brutalized as well, and the chronicles of the time are full of records of the almost savage roughness of his manners. The accounts of his orgies, of his infamies, were the theme of Paris, and the young Duke took a pleasure in spreading the worst reports concerning himself. No doubt there was immense exaggeration in the popular reports; no doubt there was immense exaggeration in the stories which the young Duke delighted to blow abroad about himself, blazoning defiantly his ambition for bestial supremacy. But no matter how much we may minimize, or seek to minimize, the record, we are left perforce with but a sorry picture of the young de Chartres. Whether the stories told of him, most of them unrepeatably fantastic, are true or no, it was

certainly de Chartres' abominable vanity to wish them to be believed.

Such was the man, so tarred by evil reputation, whom the strange customs of the time gave in marriage to the daughter of the Duke de Penthièvre. If there was anything to be said for the Old Order, for the old nobility, the Duke de Penthièvre embodied most of the arguments in his own proper person. He deserves to be remembered in the history of his time as the good Duke de Penthièvre. He was the richest peer in France. He had one daughter and one son. The son, the young Prince de Lamballe, was married to that princess of the House of Savoy whom we have met before and shall meet again, the beautiful, unhappy Princess de Lamballe. The scandal of the time will have it that the Duke de Chartres schemed a very villainous scheme. He resolved to marry the daughter of the Duke de Penthièvre, and to get rid of the Duke's son, so that the vast inheritance of the Penthièvre wealth should fall into the Orleans exchequer. To carry out this scheme he lured the young Prince de Lamballe into the wildest excesses of debauchery, and, so the story goes, lest the weakened constitution and the tainted blood of the Prince should resist the persistent licentiousness to which he was urged, de Chartres assisted the process by the actual use of poison. How far these horrible accusations are true, or what shadow of truth belongs to them, it is impossible to say, almost

impossible to guess. What is certain is that the Prince de Lamballe was the intimate companion of the debaucheries of de Chartres, that he did die, very horribly and very mysteriously, and that the Duke de Chartres did marry his sister, Mademoiselle de Penthièvre, on April 5, 1769. It is a hundred and twenty years since that marriage took place, but we can still feel the profoundest pity for the unhappy lady whom fate flung into the arms of the young de Chartres.

By this marriage there were five children—the first, Louis Philippe, in 1773; the second, the Duke de Montpensier, in 1775; the third, the Count de Beaujolais, in 1776; and fourth and fifth in 1777, Mademoiselle Adélaïde and a twin sister who died young. Concerning the first-born a queer story circulates, a story akin to that of the warming-pan which threw such discredit upon the birth of the Old Pretender, James Stewart. It is alleged, and gravely believed by many, that Louis Philippe, the Duke de Chartres of 1789, the Equality Junior of later days, the Mr. Smith of wanderings over sea, the King of the Barricades, was in reality no son of the Duke de Chartres and of the daughter of the Duke de Penthièvre, but the child of an Italian gaoler named Chiappini, who lived at Modigliana, in the Apennines. It is alleged that the Duke de Penthièvre began to get anxious about the succession when he found that after four years of marriage there was no male issue, and that the only child

of the union was a female child who was stillborn. The Duke de Penthièvre was still a comparatively young man; he was not yet fifty years old; he did not wish his vast wealth to pass to collateral heirs, as it would have passed by the feudal law; he talked of marrying again. This suggestion was not at all to the taste of the Duke de Chartres, hungry for the Penthièvre succession. Finding that his wife was again with child in the beginning of 1773, he carried her off to Italy, with the determination, if she was delivered of a female child, to substitute a male child. At Modigliana, in the Apennines, the Duchess de Chartres was delivered of a female child, and on the same day the wife of the gaoler Chiappini was delivered of a male child. In return for a large sum of money the Chiappinis consented to exchange the children, and the Duke and Duchess de Chartres returned to Paris with a son and heir who had nothing whatever to do with the House of Orleans. Such is the extraordinary story which is told, a story which, whether we believe it or not, has undoubtedly a great many curious circumstances attendant on it.

How far this fantastic story has any element of truth in it, it would be profitless enough to inquire. History teems with such tales of audacious substitutions; the bearer of more than one famous name has sat upon a throne by virtue of that name without, according to rumour, the slightest right to name or throne. It is certain that the story was told;

that it was and is believed by some; that the son and heir of the Duke de Chartres was declared to have no resemblance to either of his alleged parents; it is certain that when Louis Philippe in the fulness of time came to be king for a season, he was harassed by a lady who claimed to be the first-born child of Philip Equality, the girl who was exchanged for the child of the Chiappinis. The Chiappini story is the story of the enemy of the Orleans; the story of the Orleans themselves is simply that Louis Philippe was born in Paris on October 6, 1773. There were great rejoicings in honour of the occasion. The beautiful Sophie Arnould, fairest of stage-queens, the wandering star of so many loves and legends, gave, after permission duly sought and obtained from Fat Philip, a great display of fireworks in the gardens of the Palais Royal in honour of the event, to the delight of an enormous crowd. It really matters very little whether Louis Philippe was or was not the son of Philip Equality. But it is worth noting that, when Voltaire came to Paris in 1778 for his final triumph, he took the boy of five upon his knee and declared that he traced in his childish features a striking resemblance to the Duke de Chartres.

Into the dim, debauched, disorganised mind of the Duke de Chartres, at no time very brilliant, and now enfeebled by excesses, there seems to have glimmered a kind of impression that he was in some way destined to make a figure in the world. How

this was to be accomplished was less evident, but in his uncertain way he sought after success in many directions. He sought, as we have seen, to be infamous among the infamous, to wear the libidinous laurels of a new Trimalcio, with the result chiefly of converting a sufficiently comely gentleman into a pustuled horror. He sought for success in the service of his country with yet more disastrous results. He was not to forget for long enough that disastrous sea fight off Brest, in which English Admiral Keppel was so very near to capturing the 'Saint-Esprit,' with Vice-Admiral the Duke de Chartres on board, and when all Paris rang with d'Orvilliers' declaration that he would have won the day if it had not been for the stupidity or the cowardice of the Prince. For days and days Paris rang with jeer, epigram, and lampoon against the luckless Prince. The English journals, with their cruel comments on his cowardice and ignorance of naval war, were largely circulated, largely read. De Chartres was the ignominious hero of the hour. Yet, in spite of all this, in spite of La Motte-Piquet's declaration, 'If I had been such a coward as your Royal Highness I should have blown my brains out,' the Duke de Chartres was still obstinate enough and absurd enough to press Louis XVI. for the coveted title of Grand-Admiral of France. This was too much. It was impossible to accord the highest naval dignity in the kingdom to the hero of the Brest catastrophe. The request was refused, and,

though the blow was softened by the creation of a post of Colonel-General of Hussars and of light troops, to which he was appointed, Philip was not to be placated. It is from this point that his hostility to the King and Queen may be considered to date its most acrid virulence. Between Marie Antoinette and the Duke de Chartres there had long been war. It would seem that among the many vague ideas or semblances of ideas that floated through the bemused intelligence of the Duke de Chartres, one idea which appeared at one time especially inviting to him was to become the lover of the Dauphiness. Whether some dim notion of acquiring power and influence spurred him in this direction, or merely the habitual promptings of a profligate nature, to which any woman seemed an invitation, it would be hard to decide. Whatever advances De Chartres made did not receive favourable reception from Marie Antoinette, and she found a most unforgiving foe.

The popularity which Philip had failed to acquire by heroism at sea, he succeeded, however, in acquiring by other means. Whether he was, as some historians would have us believe, a desperately ambitious man, or, as others insist, merely a more or less helpless tool in the hand of schemers who wanted a figure-head and found in him the man for the purpose, it is clear that he courted notoriety and popularity, and that he became both notorious and popular. His Anglomania helped him to obtain the

one, helped him indeed to obtain the other. From his various visits to England, where he had shone a lustrous foreign star in the most dissolute set of the day, he had brought back a taste for the English mode of dress, for English vehicles, English horses, English jockeys, English races. He set smart Paris wild with Anglomania. It was vastly comic to see the gay young nobility of the Court aping the manners and the customs of the race with whom they were so incessantly at war. But no number of English horses to run, English clothes to wear, English jockeys to back, or English oaths to swear, would have made de Chartres popular with the Parisian masses, however much notoriety they might lend to his marred personality. For his popularity he relied largely upon the influence he gained from his association with an institution which, though now firmly established on French soil, owed its origin to England. Freemasonry had grown and flourished since it had been implanted in the days of the regency, and among the Freemasons the Duke de Chartres was an important personage. In 1771 he had been named grand master of all the lodges in France. Freemasonry had not then penetrated at all into the mass of the people; it was confined practically to the upper classes; it seems certain that the influence of the French lodges was solidly given to the Duke de Chartres and the principles which he represented or was supposed to represent. Such as he was, notorious by his manners, powerful by his

influence with the Freemasons, popular by reason of his large fortune and his ready hand, the unlovely Philip of Orleans was one of the most dangerous of the many dangerous enemies that were to confront Louis XVI. on the day when the States-General were opened.

Perry contributes his sketch to the historic portraits of Equality Orleans. 'The Duke of Orleans, as he was then called, communicated, by means of his wealth, a powerful impulsion to the growing spirit of the times. He gave dinners, he gave suppers to the new reformers; he collected at his table all that was learned, all that was experienced in the polity of nations, and this he did, perhaps not wholly from a love of the principle that had put all this in motion, but partly from an hatred he had to the Court; an hatred rendered the more inveterate from a reprimand he had received from the King for certain irregularities, committed too near the eyes of the palace. Besides these parties formed in the private rooms of the Prince, he instituted a "club of sçavans," into which the learned of any nation might be introduced by two members. This club every day increased in numbers; such discussions took place in it as occasioned the King to send an express order for its discontinuance, under pain of royal displeasure. The Duke found it was too soon to resist, he therefore withdrew, and the members wholly dispersed. This may be considered a great stretch of arbitrary

power, at such a period especially, as the club was held in a private room, at a house under the colonnade of the Palais Royal, upon his own estate, and where, by the rules drawn up by the members, no gaming was allowed. The company in the coffee-houses talked politics louder than ever had been known before; these disputants were not to be checked, although mouchards, as they were called, were planted in all the most considerable places of public resort, to listen and report to their employers what they had heard and seen.' Perry's portrait adds one more testimony to the extreme importance of the part that Equality Orleans chose to play or was made to play. Beneath the corruption of an Alcibiades he had, as we are yet to learn, something of the courage of an Alcibiades; had he also something of the ability of an Alcibiades as well? It is difficult to believe that a man who filled so large a place in so grave a time could have been merely a puppet in the hands of others, an able Duport, an able Laclos. The Regent Orleans was a scoundrel, but he was also a man of ability. His grandson may be admitted to have resembled him in both particulars, only with more of the scoundrelism and less of the ability.

CHAPTER XIX

BRIENNE IS BLOWN OUT

On November 21 the King sent for his Parliament and rated them roundly for daring to make any protest against his good pleasure. But while he menaced he reminded them of his promise concerning States-General. 'I have said that I will convoke them before 1792—that is, in 1791 at the latest; my word is sacred.' Poor King, it was not he who was convoking the States-General, but a stronger power than he, which, after finding voice through the mouths of its Lafayettes and Sabathiers, was beginning to find voices in every mouth that could articulate in France. To the royal menace and the royal pledge the President of the Parliament very respectfully answered by informing the King of the surprise with which the Parliament had heard of the disgrace of a prince of the royal blood, and the imprisonment of two magistrates, 'for having uttered freely in the royal presence what their duty and their conscience dictated.' The King answered curtly that his Parliament ought to assume that he had strong reasons for

banishing a prince of his blood; as for the two magistrates, he had punished them because he was displeased with them.

From that moment out, the quarrel between the King and his Parliament grew keener and more acrid. Through the long winter, through the long spring, the Parliament kept firing off its protests against the royal proceedings; the contagion began to spread, and the provincial parliaments to grow mutinous like the Paris Parliament. Everywhere was confusion rapidly growing worse confounded, the discontent increasing, the deficit also increasing, and Loménie de Brienne on the top of all as a man is on the top of a wave, and as little able to control or guide it as a single swimmer could control or guide the sea. In the face of all the popular clamour, the Court made a pitiable little effort to show an economical spirit. Marie Antoinette diminished the number of her horses, carriages, and servants. Certain offices were suppressed and their emoluments in consequence saved, very much to the indignation of the stately gentlemen who held those offices. The Duke de Polignac, who was Master of the Bear Hounds, made luckless Loménie almost apologize to him in the Queen's presence for purposing to suppress his office, and then turning to the Queen made her a present of his post 'out of the generosity of his heart.' The Duke de Coigny, whom popular report declared to be one of the many

lovers of the Queen, quarrelled so angrily with the King about the suppression of his post that, in Louis' own words, they nearly came to blows.

But it was not the suppression of petty pelting little offices of this kind that was to fill the empty exchequer or to appease popular discontent. Loménie, gravely sick in body, more sick than ever in mind, was becoming more and more desperately convinced that his part of strong man was to be decisively played now. He had an idea in his head, one of the insanest of his many insane schemes, which he was now about to carry into execution. This was no other than the entire suppression of all the parliaments in France, and the establishment of a brand-new 'Cour plénière.' It was to consist of certain great nobles, officials, and lawyers named for life. It was to have the registering powers of the Parliaments. Small law courts were to be appointed to administer justice in the bailiwicks of France. The States-General were to be summoned for January 1791. Several reforms, based, like those of Calonne, on Turgot's suggestions, were to be brought forward.

All this was to be prepared with the strictest secrecy and suddenly sprung upon an astonished people and a defeated Parliament. But unhappily for Loménie de Brienne, against whom the very stars in their courses seemed to fight, it could not be kept secret. It was plain that something was in the air: mysterious movements of troops, mysterious

orders to all the provincial intendants to be at their posts on a certain day, mysterious incessant printing at the guarded royal château. The apparently triumphant Parliament took alarm. Most especially one of the triumphant parliamentarians took alarm, the wildly eloquent Duval d'Éprémesnil. D'Éprémesnil was a son of that d'Éprémesnil who had served the brilliant, unfortunate Dupleix out in India—Dupleix, whose star set before the genius of Clive—and had married Dupleix's daughter. Parliamentarian d'Éprémesnil had been born in Pondicherry in 1746, and he was now in his forty-first year, a distinguished, very eloquent, very hot-headed advocate. It became his fixed determination to find out what was being printed, and by patience and the bribery of a printer's wife he did find out what was going on. A proof of the royal edict concerning the new Plenary Court was smuggled out and into d'Éprémesnil's hands. On May 3 d'Éprémesnil communicated his discovery to the Parliament, which immediately passed a series of highly dignified resolutions which, reduced to their simplest terms, implied that the Parliament meant to stick to its guns.

But if the Parliament meant sticking to its guns, so also did Loménie de Brienne, clinging fanatically to his ill-omened part of strong man. He launched two lettres de cachet, one against d'Éprémesnil, one against a brother parliamentarian, Goislard de Montsabert, who had made himself obnoxious by his opposition to the ministerial devices. But

luck was heavily against Loménie. Somehow or other, d'Éprémesnil and Goislard heard of the threatened arrests, escaped somehow in disguise from the hand of the law, and made their appearance before an indignant Parliament on May 5, 1788, and told their tale. The indignant Parliament solemnly placed the two threatened men and all other magistrates and citizens under the protection of the King and of the law—an imposing but scarcely very serviceable formula—then it sent off a deputation to Versailles to the King and remained in permanent session to see what would happen. Captain d'Agoust happened — Captain Vincent d'Agoust at the head of the French Guards, with fixed bayonets, and a company of sappers. Captain Vincent d'Agoust was a steadfast, soldierly man who may remind us a little of Dumas the Elder's d'Artagnan. Whatever he had to do, he would do thoroughly without the slightest regard for anything in the world but his own consigne. He was famous, testifies Weber, for an exceeding firmness ; a gentleman of the most ancient stock, steeped in the spirit of his ancestors—much more inclined to push the principles of honour to an extreme than to forget them for a single second. Once his pertinacity and firmness had driven the Grandson of the Grand Condé, whom he considered to have given him cause of offence, although a prince of the blood, into fighting a duel with him. It was not in the nature of such a man, murmurs

poor Weber plaintively, to make himself, as was said in those days of exaggeration, the vile instrument of ministerial despotism; but as a servant of the King he believed it to be his duty to obey whatever the King ordered. He certainly now carried out his orders in very thorough fashion. He surrounded the Palace of Justice with his troops, allowed no one out, and solemnly entered after some formal delays into the presence of the infuriated and possibly slightly alarmed Parliament. D'Agoust demanded the persons of d'Éprémesnil and Goislard, produced a royal order addressed to himself and signed by the King authorizing him to arrest them wherever they might be. Here, however, a difficulty arose. Captain d'Agoust did not know Goislard or d'Éprémesnil by sight: he invited the Parliament to surrender them, to point them out. The Parliament as a body emphatically declined. 'We are all Goislards and d'Éprémesnils here,' one enthusiast cried out. 'If you want to arrest them, arrest us all.' From the midnight when d'Agoust first came till nigh midday, the Parliament remained sitting while d'Agoust sent for further orders. There was something sublime, but there was also something ridiculous, in this eccentric all-night sitting, with the men of the sword watching the men of the robe, to the grave physical discomfort of some of them, through the small hours, and nobody knowing what was to happen next. At eleven in the morning d'Agoust came

back again, bringing with him one Larchier, 'exempt de robe-courte,' whom he called upon to point out to him the two men he was looking for. The pale, perturbed exempt looked tremblingly over the lines of parliamentarians, sitting Roman Senator-like in their places, and declared that he could not see them. Perhaps he closed his eyes. Baffled d'Agoust again appealed to the Assembly, and on receiving no answer again withdrew. Then d'Éprémesnil and Goislard resolved to surrender themselves, in order to save Larchier from the grave peril to which his refusal to point them out might expose him. D'Agoust was summoned to return, d'Éprémesnil and Goislard surrendered themselves with much eloquence and solemnity, and were escorted out through lines of bayonets to the carriages that were in waiting for them. D'Éprémesnil was sent to the Isle of Sainte-Marguerite, Goislard to Pierre-en-Cise. Then the whole Parliament had to march out in its turn through the lines of bayonets, while the gallant d'Agoust locked the doors of the Palace of Justice and carried off the keys. So ended the first mad stroke of a waning despotism against an awakening nation. Loménie, the strong man, had done the most foolish thing it was in his power to do, and so in one sense at least had attained excellence. Why was there no one to remind Louis of that other king, that English monarch, who had also played at the game of arresting representatives of popular feeling and who had paid a heavy price

for his play? Louis XVI. was imitating Charles I. of England, and with a like result.

It is curious to read in Weber's book that he, being attracted to the neighbourhood of the Palace of Justice, while all these events were going on, overheard a man in the crowd ask one of the Gardes Françaises if he would fire upon the people in the case of any attempt being made to rescue the menaced Parliamentarians. 'Ay,' responded the soldier, 'I would fire upon my friend, I would fire upon my brother if I received the order to do so.' A soldierly response of a kind dear to such as Weber. But Weber had only to wait another poor year or so to find that sort of soldierly mood strangely changed.

The country would have none of the new courts. A spirit of fierce opposition spread like flame all over the country. Paris blazed like a volcano, vomiting seditious placards and proclamations of all kinds, more than desperate authority could suppress, more almost than fiery-eyed sedition could read or certainly digest the whole meaning of. But the pith of it all was that Paris would not be off with the old love and would not be on with the new. Impassioned, if discreetly anonymous, patriotism called upon indignant citizens in highly inflammatory language to resist to the uttermost. The old, old cry that had been the burden of so many tumults was repeated again and again in the written and the spoken word, 'To your tents, O Israel!' Nor did the

opposition come alone from inflamed civism, from an irate bourgeoisie, from an insurrectionary populace. Peers and princes were as eloquently hostile as the most belligerent burgess of them all. Did not the three great Dukes of La Rochefoucauld, de Noailles, and Luxembourg positively and peremptorily refuse to sit in the new court? Did not peers and princes of the Church approach the ear of majesty and urge him with eloquent if dutiful solicitations to reflect?—a thing not much in poor Louis' line.

Paris was in a highly irritable mood. Bread was very dear: it had risen from two-and-a-half to four sous a pound. In fear of worse to come, prudent families began to dismiss all superfluous servants, and these, seeking situations and finding them not, added themselves to the floating discontent. Want of bread and want of employment are two potent factors of disaffection, and neither of them was wanting in Paris in the winter of 1789.

Poor Loménie was now in something of the position of Faust when he has summoned the Earth Spirit and is afraid of it, or of the Arabian fisherman when he set free the Djinn. He had aroused a storm which he was wholly unable to lay. It was all very well for the King in solemn formality of a Bed of Justice to register his edicts. He could not get them obeyed. Public opinion was all against him; the Châtelet protested by passing a vigorous resolution against the edicts; all over the provinces

the flame of fierce protest spread and spread. The Parliament of Rennes declared that any one who entered the new Plenary Court was infamous. After sitting from four o'clock in the morning until six o'clock in the evening, it passed, among other violent resolutions, one in which it declared all persons who should in any degree attempt to carry the sovereign's new ordinances into execution to be guilty of high treason, and to be prosecuted and punished as such. The arrival of a strong detachment of the troops in garrison interrupted their proceedings; but the inhabitants came in crowds to the rescue of the Parliament, reinforced by a vast concourse of people from the adjacent country. There was a scuffle which grew into a riot. The troops found themselves compelled to give way to the immense multitude of their antagonists and relinquish their designs upon the Parliament. No person could be found venturesome enough to serve the lettres de cachet which had been sent down for the exile or imprisonment of the members. The excitement became so violent and the rioting so alarming that the Bishop of Rennes judged it wise to set out himself express to Paris, and to use such expedition as to spend but thirty-six hours on a journey of two hundred miles, in order to lay before the King a clear statement of the desperate condition of things in that province.

But of all the opposition to the schemes of Brienne, the most serious came from Dauphiné.

Grenoble had battled briskly, even bloodily, against the exile of its Parliament; had set up its Parliament by force of arms. When the tumult subsided, the Parliament obeyed the lettres de cachet that had been levelled at it, and Grenoble found itself without a government. But Grenoble boasted a citizen of import, a man of some thirty years of age, whom failing health had driven from the bar; a man who had studied much his Montesquieu and his Blackstone, who was a perfervid admirer of the English Constitution. His name was Mounier; we shall meet with him again. Prompted by Mounier, the city held a solemn conclave, and decided upon a convocation of the three orders of the Province, with double representation of the Third Estate. The enthusiasm knew no bounds. Brienne in vain endeavoured to stop the current of public feeling. Orders of Council prohibiting the Assemblies were only put up to be promptly torn down again by an enthusiastic populace. Marshal de Vaux, sent down to prohibit by force of arms, found it better to temporize. He found the whole province against him, the Three Orders unanimous. His troops, too, showed themselves to be in sympathy with the popular will. The Marshal was assured by his subordinate officers that the soldiers, and the officers too, were not to be counted upon. What was he to do? He did the best he could. If the Assembly were held at Grenoble he would put it down, he said; but if it were held somewhere else, why, he would take

no hostile notice of it. It accordingly was held at Vizille, in the tennis-court—tennis-courts are important in these times—of the château of a rich manufacturer whose name deserves to be recorded, M. Claude Périer. The Assembly elected Mounier its secretary, gravely demanded the summons of the States-General, and then gravely adjourned, having performed the most momentous deed yet done by them. Brienne was for meeting this rebellion by armed force: the King was too prudent; the demand of Vizille was to be obeyed at Versailles. It would be impossible to overrate the importance of that early movement in Dauphiné or of the debt that a dawning democracy owed to Grenoble and Vizille.

In Flanders, in Brittany, in Languedoc, in Béarn, and in Provence, disturbances of the like sinister kind broke out. Brienne had certainly roused the country; he still made desperate efforts to tranquillize it by the old devices. He met Parliamentary opposition with decrees of exile, but decrees of exile would not fill his treasury.

The very elements fought against Loménie, much as the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. We learn that on July 13, 1788, about nine in the morning, without any eclipse, a dreadful and almost total darkness suddenly overspread the face of the earth in several parts of France, and this awful gloom was the prelude to a tempest or hurricane supposed to be without example in the temperate climates of Europe. The whole face of Nature was

sò totally changed in about an hour that no person who had slept during the tempest could have believed himself in the same part of the world when he awoke. The soil was changed into a morass, the standing corn beaten into the quagmire, the vines broken to pieces, and their branches buried in the same manner, the fruit-trees of every kind demolished, and the hail lying unmelted in heaps, like rocks of solid ice. The disordered state of public affairs prevented both the course and extent of this hurricane from being defined as it would have been in a happier season. The thoughts of those who were qualified to observe and record so extraordinary a phenomenon were otherwise occupied; and the sufferers could only describe what they immediately felt, with little curiosity as to the fate of others. Several large districts were entirely desolated; one of sixty square leagues was totally ruined. Of the sixty-six parishes included in the district of Pontoise, forty-three were entirely desolated, while of the remaining twenty-three some lost two-thirds, and others not less than half their harvest. The entire loss or damage was said to be moderately estimated at fourscore million of livres, or between three and four million pounds sterling.

Brienne, at his wit's end now, called an extraordinary Assembly of the Clergy, which immediately passed an address to the King calling for abolition of the Plenary Courts and the summoning of the States-General. Loménie had to go. He went in

August, 1788, leaving ruin behind him. It is impossible not to pity the poor creature, called in at so desperate a pinch to do what no one could do, and quitting the scene amidst universal execration, because he could not achieve the impossible. He had filled his own pockets, however, which may have served to slightly console him, and he vanished into outer darkness after urging the King to send for Necker.

Sardonic Grimm declared that there never was a minister who showed such talents for throwing everything into confusion as Loménie de Brienne. He had shaken to pieces the whole political machine in the space of a few months. Thanks to the happy ascendency of his genius, it could truly be said that there was not a single public body in France that remained in its place or retained its natural movements. Grimm's amused eyes noted a Parliament suddenly adopting a system directly opposed to its own interests, a system it had anathematized a hundred times; noted a nobility, the existence of which seemed the most intimately connected with the rights of the throne, wearing an air of being disposed to separate itself. Even the military spirit seemed to that ironic gaze overpowered by some spirit, laudable in itself, perhaps, but rather difficult to reconcile with that character of subordination without which there could be neither discipline nor army. The clergy no longer preached obedience, and the soldiers seemed no longer disposed to

maintain it. What seemed still more remarkable to the astute Grimm was, that this universal discontent had been preceded by declarations from the King the most favourable to public liberty. The King had just been making more sacrifices of his authority than any of his predecessors had ever ventured to do. The Parliaments had called aloud for the assistance of that which of all other things they had most to fear, a meeting of the States-General, 'carried away by a man totally without consideration among them, an Abbé de Sabathier.' All, he declares, holding up his hands in amazement, as if actuated by some supernatural influence, have demanded the convocation of the States-General, making, as it were, in this manner amends to the nation for having so long usurped the most capital of its rights.

Back came Necker again, as serenely confident as ever that if a crisis existed he was the man for the crisis. That unconquerably conceited heart imagined itself equal to all emergencies. Family affection is a very beautiful thing, and a very wholesome thing, but it is possible that the family affection which surrounded Necker was not overgood for him. To have a clever wife and a clever daughter daily and hourly assuring an ambitious man that he is a new saviour of society, a sort of little god upon earth, often has the disastrous effect of making the ambitious man believe it. And Necker was inclined to believe almost anything in the way of praise that could be offered to him. The fire of his ambition,

assiduously fanned within the circle of his family, was for the moment assiduously fed outside. The public had got into their heads a queer kind of belief in the omnipotence of Necker. He was known to be an honest man, and honest men had been so rare in the administration of the finances that it was scarcely surprising if other qualities were attributed to him even more miraculous. It seemed, a satirical observer said, as if they conceived that he possessed a magical wand; that by waving it he could pay off an immense public debt without money; and that by another movement he could with the same ease supply twenty-five millions of people with corn and bread. Circumstances seemed for a moment to give a sanction to the delusion; the funds suddenly rose, and the general good-humour seemed to dispel the black clouds which hung so heavily over the political horizon.

Necker on the spur of the moment could think of nothing better to do than to summon the Notables again, and see how they might help him out of the muddle into which Loménie had plunged things. Since the States-General were to be summoned, the best thing now was to settle how they were to be composed, what form of convocation should be used, in what order the elections should take place, and the manner in which the different assemblies which were to give instructions to their deputies to the States should be held. These knotty points were lengthily discussed. The year drove on: russet

autumn deepened into bitter winter; France fermented and poured forth its cahiers; theatrical nobles solemnly renounced in the nick of time their pecuniary privileges and were laughed at, not admired; Bertrand de Molleville wept tears of blood over the ingratitude of men. To his amiable mind it seemed that the Third Estate ought to have been satisfied with the important sacrifices made by the princes of the blood and the nobility; but they were sometimes represented as acts of hypocrisy, which ought not to be relied on; sometimes as indications of fear, which should encourage that order to rise in their demands. De Molleville did not like the look of things at all. The most inflammatory pamphlets against the clergy and the nobility were circulated through the whole kingdom without the least opposition; the most shameful caricatures, exposed to view in the squares, on the quays, and at the print-shops in Paris, excited the crowds they collected to insult not only the ecclesiastics, but every well-dressed man who happened to be passing. It was a terrible time for the de Mollevilles.

Bouillé, too, was much alarmed at the turn things were taking, though he was intelligent enough to see that so totally was every principle of the Old Order crumbling, that the public mind was already democratical, while the monarchy still existed. He could see that neither Notables nor States-General might avail while the magistracy was ambitious,

while the clergy were jealous of their privileges, while a spirit of innovation prevailed among the nobility, while there was a total want of subordination in the army, while licentiousness and insolence pervaded the middle ranks of society, while the lower class experienced the extreme of misery, and the rich indulged themselves in the most unbounded luxury. But he was also intelligent enough, and enough attached to his order, to see that there were possible consequences of the grimmest kind in what Necker was about to do. He had a talk with Necker in January 1789. He represented to Necker with force and with truth the danger of assembling the States-General in the manner he intended. He told him that he was arming the people against the first orders of the state, and that, when thus delivered up unarmed, they would soon feel the effect of their vengeance, urged on by the two most active passions of the human heart, interest and self-love. Enthusiastic Bouillé even entered into particulars, but Necker coldly answered, raising his eyes to heaven, that it was necessary to rely on the moral virtues of mankind. Bouillé replied that this was a fine romance, but he would see a horrible and bloody tragedy, unless he were wise enough to avoid the catastrophe. At this Necker smiled, and said that such apprehensions were extravagant.

As if to confute Necker, however, the populace of Paris began to make a display of that ungoverned

and riotous disposition which afterwards made them so grimly conspicuous. A multitude of people assembled, seemingly for sport, about the Pont Neuf, where they amused themselves harmlessly enough for some time with dancing, with throwing squibs and crackers, and obliging the passers-by to take off their hats and bow to the statue of Henry IV. They burnt Brienne in effigy; they set fire to a guard-house; they fought the watch. After a while, however, they grew tired of such tame sport. Lamoignon, Keeper of the Seals, had just fallen from office. The mob burnt him too in effigy. But by this time they were ready for graver work. Lamoignon's hostility to the Parliament made him especially obnoxious. Lighted torches were seized by eager hands, and the mob proceeded in a body to set fire to the residence of Lamoignon. The timely interference of the military saved the house and probably the life of Lamoignon. The French Guards and the Swiss Guards faced the rioters. The fury of the mob was raised so high that they stood a battle with the soldiers, but were soon routed, many of their number being killed, and a much greater number undoubtedly wounded. So the first serious scuffle between people and soldiery began and ended.

Necker's measure as a statesman was never more clearly shown than in his report to the King, which was printed as a supplement to the Result of the Council, published on December 27, 1788. In this report there were three points. Firstly, Necker

declared against the advice of the Notables, that the old States-General should be exactly copied, and that every bailiwick and seneschalty should return the same number of deputies. The effect of this would only be, he argued, to give exactly the same degree of representation to constituencies with enormous populations and to constituencies where the inhabitants were not a tithe of the number. Necker next considered the question of the double representation of the Tiers État. He decided to follow the example of Languedoc, Provence, Hainault, and the new assembly in Dauphiné, and to agree with petitions from all parts of the kingdom, in urging that the Third Estate should have as many representatives as the other two orders put together. Here he ran most definitely counter to the wishes of all that party both in the Court and in the country who wished to keep the States-General narrowly within the limits that had confined it in old days and under very different conditions. Finally, he urged that the different orders need not be bound to elect only members of their own order. By this provision he hoped to enable the Third Estate to elect members of the liberal clergy and nobility for their deputies. The Result of the Council was based on this report. It decided that the States-General should consist of a thousand deputies, elected in proportion to their population by the various bailiwicks and seneschalties, in two hundred and fifty deputations of four deputies each—one for the order

of the nobility, one for the clergy, and two for the Third Estate. What was perhaps the most important question that agitated the public mind was left unsettled by the decree. Nothing was said as to whether voting was to be by order or by head. The privileged orders regarded vote by order as the real keystone of the difficulty, and the Third Estate perceived that their double representation was of no use if it left them with a practical majority of two to one against them. It was very characteristic of Necker to leave the real crux of the difficulty to settle itself when the time came.

The publication of the Result of the Council gave rise to a very deluge of pamphlets of the newest and most approved democratic pattern. Many were by men of great importance, whom we shall meet with again, men like Target, men like Brissot de Warville, men, above all, like Sieyès. There were others by men of less note, the Volneys, the Ceruttis and their like, who wrote and printed and scattered their pamphlets broadcast, as if the welfare of France depended upon the amount of printed paper that was produced. But if Paris deluged the provinces with pamphlets, the provinces in their turn were not behindhand in the activity of their pamphleteers. Many of these provincial pamphleteers were fated to be famous, if not to be fortunate. Most notable was Jean Paul Rabaut, the Protestant pastor whose 'Desert name' of Saint-Étienne recalled those evil days when Paul Rabaut, his father,

was a hunted Huguenot in the wild Cevennes. Rabaut Saint-Étienne had been many things in his forty-five years of life. He was a scholar and a poet as well as a divine; he had studied law; he had written a grim romance; he had succeeded in getting Louis XVI. to propose, and the Paris Parliament to register, an edict of toleration for non-Catholics; he had written an approved book on early Greek history; he adored Lafayette, England, and America. Now he had written his pamphlet and joined the army of politicians. Rabaut Saint-Étienne was a well-known man when he wrote his pamphlet even outside the circle of his provincial fame. There were other pamphleteers whose names had hardly passed outside the murmur of their rustic burgh. One of these was a young Arras lawyer whose name will soon be familiar. The pamphleteers were all especially interested in the great question of vote by order or vote by head. The popular mind dwelt upon it, and the innumerable pamphlets might have shown Necker the need of deciding this question at once. But it is obvious to those who study Necker's character closely that to do the right thing at the right moment was an act entirely outside his capabilities.

So the year 1788 drifted to its end. All through the long and bitter winter, France that was fed and clothed discussed the States-General with voice and pen, pouring out pamphlet after pamphlet, a very wilderness of pamphlets. France that was not clothed

and not fed shivered and starved, and felt hungry and mutinous. The States-General were to give it food and clothing no doubt, but in the meantime discontent was deepening, widening; the forces of disaffection were fed, as they always are fed, by famine. Over in Versailles an amazed and angry Court was breaking up into desperate cabals, full of vague, uneasy premonitions, of vague, uneasy fears. The year that now was dying had been an evil, ominous year for them. What would the year that was about to be hold in its bosom?

CHAPTER XX

WHAT ARTHUR YOUNG SAW

It fortunately pleased Providence towards the close of the last century to inspire a worthy Suffolk gentleman with a desire for foreign travel. The desire did not carry him very far, nor into many very out-of-the-way places, if we were to gauge his undertaking by the standard of recent travel. But at the time when, in the May of 1787, Mr. Arthur Young of Bradfield, in Suffolk, crossed the Channel and entered upon the first of his tours in France, foreign travel was judged upon a very different plane. It was not then so very far from the time when a journey into Scotland was regarded as an adventure as perilous as an expedition into Central Africa; and though the Grand Tour had made Paris as familiar as London to most gentlemen of fashion, it was still possible for the Suffolk farmer to look upon his travels in France as something in the nature of an enterprise. An enterprise indeed it was, and destined to prove momentous to history and to literature. Arthur Young crossed the English Channel to make a personal inspection of the agricultural condition of France. This was

what he proposed to do. What he actually accomplished was to put on record the most valuable account of the political and social condition of France during the most important period of her history. What was intended as a series of notes for the instruction of the British farmer ended by becoming one of the most precious contributions to historical and political literature ever penned. Arthur Young's travels in France during the years 1787, 1788, and 1789, convey the most perfect and accurate picture of France under the Old Order, and France in the very dawn of the Revolution, that exists. It would hardly be unfair to say that the student would know more of the France of that most momentous time by knowing Arthur Young well, and not knowing any of all the vast number of other books on the subject, than by knowing all the other books and not knowing Arthur Young.

'That wise and honest traveller,' Mr. John Morley calls him. It is one of those felicities for which Mr. Morley is celebrated. He was very wise, was Arthur Young, wise with the wisdom of the brilliant age which boasted still of the genius of Burke, of Fox; he was very honest, with the austere and flawless honesty which might have made him a great statesman and which, at all events, made him a great man. Somebody has well said that gentlemen are gentlemen all the world over; all that is necessary to make a man a gentleman is that he should be honest and brave

and kind. Arthur Young was all of these; the term 'Gentleman Farmer' was never more happily applied since man first abandoned the acorn and turned to the service of Ceres. There was a high heroic strain about his bravery which in other conditions would have made him a gallant soldier—a Wolfe, or a Clive. When he was at the Duke de Liancourt's, in 1787, he inspected the school for training the orphans of soldiers to be soldiers themselves. 'There are at present 120 boys, all dressed in uniform. My ideas have all taken a turn which I am too old to change: I should have been better pleased to see 120 lads educated to the plough, in habits of culture superior to the present; but certainly the establishment is humane and the conduct of it excellent.' Yet one feels that it was but a turn of the wheel under Fortune's hand and Arthur Young would have made as sterling a soldier as ever followed the colours in some great campaign. His amazing courage and coolness under trying and even dangerous conditions in France, when the revolutionary fever was first hot, have in them something of the man of the sword rather than the man of the plough; they smack of the camp rather than the farm. But what most of all shows the true heroic temper of the man is the way in which he waged, all through his life, a war with iron fortune, losing again and again in his magnificent farming experiments and always returning to the charge, heedless of poverty, heedless of ruin,

with all the fine audacity of some gallant of the Old Guard.

It is encouraging to think of Arthur Young, of his struggles, his courage, his simple patriotism. To say that his life was not all happy is to say that he was mortal, and shared the lot of mortals. But upon the whole he must be accounted happy, for he was a good man and did good things. His married life was not happy; the loss of his beautiful and beloved daughter, the 'Bobbin' of so many affectionate allusions in his letters, plunged his later years into grief. There are few more tragical things in their quiet way than the description Arthur Young gives of a visit to Burke in Burke's decline, when grief for the loss of Richard Burke has well-nigh broken Burke's mighty heart, and Arthur Young feels a kind of heroic pity for the great man thus desperately brought low, and rides serenely away. And then his own great grief and loss comes upon him, and he is as despairing, as dejected and wretched as Burke himself. It is a sermon, a very old familiar sermon, but it comes home to us with a peculiar keenness when two great men give out the text for it. Blindness came upon Arthur Young's eve of life, as it came upon that of Milton; and he bore his affliction with a dignified, a religious resignation. The happy things in his life were his hopes, his honest patriotic ambitions, his travels and his friends! He had many friends; the pathway of his life was happily

starred with them. Wherever he went he made friends. The Burneys were very fond of him, father and daughter. It is a bright picture that Fanny Burney paints of a visit one day from Arthur Young, 'most absurdly dressed for a common visit, being in light blue, embroidered with silver, having a bag and sword, and walking in the rain.' 'He was grown all airs and affectations,' she adds, 'yet I believe this was put on—for what purpose I cannot tell, unless it were to let us see what a power for transformation he possessed.' It is pleasant to think of famous Arthur Young in all this foppish fantasy.

It is, however, Arthur Young the traveller, and Arthur Young the traveller in France, who most interests us in this anniversary of Revolution. What life-like, brilliant pictures he draws of all he sees; how skilfully and intelligently he records all that he hears! There never was another traveller like him in the world, since the days of dear Herodotus, for a keen eye and a clever pen. All the rural France of the Old Order comes up before us, as we read, as clearly as if evoked by the wave of a wizard's wand. We shudder as we cross with him the threshold of the foul, unlovely inns against whose dirt and discomfort he is never tired of inveighing with a kind of whimsical ferocity which is exquisitely entertaining. We smile at his satirical emphasis upon the provincial ignorance of events, upon the dearth of journalism, upon the irritating precautions and

formalities with which the new authorities of the Third Estate occasionally hobbled his wandering footsteps. We see Paris rise up before us, the Paris of 1789, which M. Babeau has been lately describing, and it seems more familiar to us than the Paris of to-day. But the especial charm of the travels lies in the portraits they paint, as their especial value lies in the studies of social and political life they present. His testimony to the beauty of Marie Antoinette is an interesting supplement to Burke's; his sketch of the excellent Duke de Liancourt, who competed with the Duke de Penthièvre for the honour of being considered the best of the nobility, is one of the most admirable historical sketches extant. Arthur Young was a man who must have adorned any age: it is a special gratification to us to reflect that he belonged to the age which gave birth to the French Revolution. We are better able to understand that world-disturbing portent by the illumination of his fine intelligence.

In a very poor book by a very able man, the 'Ancien Régime' of Charles Kingsley, the author is pleased to imagine that he discerns the whole of the Old Order in one book; and that book is—it seemed incredible to read, it seems almost too incredible to repeat—'Gil Blas.' Of 'Gil Blas' Charles Kingsley has written some very wild and whirling words, sufficiently regrettable to peruse. A critic who declares with all seriousness that he could 'recommend no human being' to read it, who finds

it merely a 'collection of diseased specimens,' is scarcely worth considering with gravity when he pronounces that it is also 'the "Ancien Régime" itself.' Statements of this kind pass beyond the limits of the eccentric into the region of the absurd. There is a good deal of the Old Order in 'Gil Blas,' because 'Gil Blas' was written in the days of the Old Order, and Le Sage was a man who knew how to use his eyes. But it would be as unreasonable to expect to find the whole of the Old Order in 'Gil Blas' as it would be to find it in the book which Kingsley somewhat absurdly puts into contrast with it—'Télémaque.' There was more in the Old Order for good and evil, and very certainly for evil, than is to be found within the fascinating pages of the great novel. The man who could say that 'the most notable thing about the book is its intense stupidity; its dreariness, barrenness, shallowness, ignorance of the human heart, want of any human interest,' is out of court at once as an authority or a critic. Such a man might find the 'Ancien Régime' or the Baconian cipher in Le Sage's masterpiece. The student who wants to understand what the Old Order was like in France will waste no time in whimsies about 'Gil Blas'; he will plunge deeply into the pages of Arthur Young.

It is curiously difficult to get anything like a really comprehensive and exhaustive knowledge of the exact condition of the surviving inheritances of the feudal system which constituted what we have

called the Old Order in the reign of Louis XVI. But we can at least see how it looked to the eyes of Arthur Young. The extraordinary absence of any coherent system in the whole social arrangement of the country makes any study of the time the most perplexing of tasks. We seem, like the hero of some fairy tale, to be wandering in an enchanted wood from which it is impossible to extricate ourselves, and in which it is impossible to find a direct or serviceable path. In vain we hew our way, lopping down difficulties right and left; the broken branches grow again with Hydra activity, and the entanglements of the maze become more embarrassing than before. The complete confusion of what may be called the local government of the time is one of the most difficult factors of the problem. The various provincial administrations, offspring of time and chance, were conceived on no uniform plan, bore no relationship whatever to a common whole, and were frequently in themselves little centres of chaotic agglomeration of obsolete traditions and conflicting systems. Many of the provinces hardly knew how they were governed, and were driven to address the fountain of authority for information of the most rudimentary kind as to the very principles of their own political existence.

Nor were the principles of what has been called the feudal system less complicated and less conflicting. It is scarcely to be wondered at that a system should be involved in such murky obscurity

when we remember that the very essence of the system was to permit to every individual lord an amount of authority over his own domains which was little short of regal. The King himself had no power to intervene between one of these little feudal kings and his vassals. Monarch after monarch had essayed in vain to break down this barrier between themselves and the seignorial authority, and at last had given up the struggle in despair. Even when, in 1779, the royal edict abolished servitude and Main Mort in the crown lands, the language of the law expressly set forth that it had no power to enforce the decree upon the territories of the feudal nobility. Thus at the year 1789 we find this extraordinary feudal system, or want of system, making the whole social administration of France as bewildering as a child's puzzle and as logical as an idiot's dream. Bound by no rational laws, obedient to no principles, to no theories save those of individual pleasure and independent, isolated authority, the feudal system, a scheme of chaos within chaos, converted France into such an assemblage of disorders as the world has never seen before or since. No Eastern empire under whatever network of satrapies and pashaliks ever displayed a more grotesque incoherence, a more helpless and hopeless muddle than poor France displayed under the dying days of the Old Order—those days when Arthur Young was riding on her highways and weighing all things with his keen attentive mind.

If the rights of each great lord over his own lands were practically unimpeachable by the King himself, it did not follow that the rights of one great lord were necessarily the same as those of another great lord. The rules which governed each great domain and which regulated the relationships of lord and vassal, of sire and serf, had grown up like plants of the soil in their own way, and under their own conditions, unaffected by the ways and conditions of other places. Just as one field grew grass and another clover, so one great territory grew one set of laws, customs, and institutions, and another great territory other quite different regulations.

Seldom therefore in the whole history of humanity was a more curious structure offered to the scrutiny of mankind than the so-called social system of France under the Old Order towards the autumn of the eighteenth century offered to the scrutiny of Arthur Young. That the supporters of such a system, the persons who profited by it, adored it and fostered it, could have seriously believed in its stability and its power of permanent endurance is one of the most signal examples of purblind power whereof the world holds record. The Panurge of François Rabelais and the Elia of Charles Lamb genially and jocularly divide all mankind into the Borrowers and the Lenders, the Debtors and the Creditors. Such a jesting cap and bells division of the human family is scarcely more grotesque than the actual division which existed in France under the Old Order. It

was the case of the Haves and the Have-Nots over again. The population of France was, roughly speaking, divided into two lots—the privileged and the unprivileged classes. The former as compared with the whole bulk was but a handful of men. The latter was composed of what may be called the French nation. The apex of the social pyramid was formed by the greatest and the least of all the orders, by the King. The nobility came next, a shadow of antique feudalism. The Church, with its far-reaching influence and comprehensive dominion, formed the next grade of the pyramid. Then came the widening base of plebeians, themselves divided, the bourgeoisie rich or poor, the peasantry. There were even still actual serfs, as at Saint Claude, in the Jura. But the privileged orders were the governors; all the rest were the governed. The man whom low birth and iron fortune set apart from the privileged orders might till the ground or drive a quill or follow the drum, might live and breed and die as he pleased, but he had scarcely more share in the administration of the laws, scarcely more influence upon the makers of the laws, scarcely more right to be heard in protest against them or judgment upon them, than if he lived in Mars or Saturn instead of Franche Comté or Picardy.

Let us take a map of France, of the France in which Arthur Young is now in our fancy wandering, that old feudal France, with its ancient divisions into provinces, and look at it. Of all that fair land from

north to south and from east to west, a half belonged to the King, the nobility, and the Church. The nobility and the clergy, apart from the King and the communes, owned each a fifth part of the soil of France, a fifth remained for the middle class, a fifth for the peasantry. According to Taine, the nobility in France, just before the Revolution, numbered one hundred and forty thousand, and the clergy about one hundred and thirty thousand. This sum of two hundred and seventy thousand, when resolved into its component parts, consisted of some twenty-five thousand to thirty thousand noble families, and some twenty-three thousand monks in two thousand five hundred monasteries, thirty-seven thousand nuns in one thousand five hundred convents, and some sixty thousand curés and vicars in as many churches and chapels. These two orders, who were in a proportion of about one to one hundred of the population, owned, if the public lands are deducted, nearly half France.

And this monstrous cantle, it must be remembered, was the best part of the kingdom. Upon the portion of the two privileged orders were practically all the richest and most stately buildings, all the plate in precious metal, all the works of art, all the things in fact that constitute the wealth and luxury of a great state. The wealth of the two orders was enormous. The property of the clergy has been valued at nearly four billions of francs, and their income, including tithes, reached the stupendous sum

of two hundred millions. Vast as this wealth seems, it was in reality vaster. Money was worth practically twice as much then as it is worth now ; to get an approximation to the modern value of such sums we must double the total. Nor were the nobles behindhand in wealth and splendour. The appanages of the princes of the blood royal covered one-seventh of the surface of France. The Duke of Orleans boasted of an income of nearly twelve million livres a year. The temporal princes and the princes of the Church competed with each other in magnificence of income, in extent of their authority, over those unhappy drudges who were the people of France and whom the Old Order regarded but as the helots of a picked aristocracy.

The nobles and the clergy were practically exempt from all contribution to the state. Nobles did not pay any direct taxes in the same proportion as their fellow-subjects, and in the case of the taille, their privilege approached very nearly to entire exemption. The nobles had the pleasing privilege of appraising their own taxation, and the financial statement of a noble was never inquired into. To question the veracity of a noble would be to strike at the sublime perfection of the whole social system ; it would be an indirect insult to the King, who was himself only the noblest of the nobles. 'I pay pretty well what I please,' the Duke of Orleans boasted, in his pleasant, straightforward way ; and what the Duke of Orleans said aloud the rest of the

nobility said beneath their breaths, or in their hearts, as they followed his illustrious example. The clergy were, if anything, a trifle more fortunate. Except in a few frontier provinces, they paid personally no direct taxes whatever. They had so ingeniously arranged matters to please themselves that they had converted their share of contributions to the State into a 'free gift,' the amount of which was left entirely to their own discretion and generosity. It is the oddest comment upon their discretion to note that in the year 1789, the year of doom, they absolutely refused to make any gift at all. Nay more, there were actually occasions upon which they induced the King to give them something from the public treasury, bleeding to death as it was from a thousand wounds.

Nor were such exemptions limited to the clergy and the nobility. The bourgeoisie, although they were despised by the two great orders, might obtain certain of their privileges by paying heavily for them. Those who could acquired by purchase the rank and privileges of nobles. In this way a nobility of office and royal creation had come into existence, which, although scorned by the old nobility of the sword, enjoyed the same pecuniary immunities. Even those who had not thus bought nobility were themselves privileged to no inconsiderable extent. By living in towns, merchants, shopkeepers, and professional men were able to avoid serving in the militia and collecting the taille, from which, in the country,

nobles alone were free. They also purchased petty offices created by Government in order that they might be sold, offices with sham duties which conferred on the holders partial exemption from payment of the taille and of excise duties, and other privileges of a like character. It was an amazingly pleasant time for the handful of men who held France beneath their feet; it was a time terrible almost beyond description for the millions who toiled and spun that the lilies of Court and Church might flourish.

If taxation was thus oppressive, thus unjustly distributed between classes, it was made more oppressive still by the nature of some of the taxes, by the manner of their assessment and collection, by the want of all administrative unity. France was starred with custom-houses and tolls which hampered trade, fostered smuggling, and raised the price of all the necessaries of life. Excise duties were laid on articles of daily need, such as candles, fuel, wine, grain, and flour. Goods which might have travelled in three weeks from Provence to Normandy took three and a half months, through the delays caused by the imposition of duties. Artisans, for example, who had to cross a river on their way to their work were often met by customs duties which they had to pay on the food which they carried in their pockets. Some provinces and towns were privileged in relation to certain taxes, and as a rule it was the poorest provinces on which the

heaviest burdens lay. One of the most evil of the taxes was the gabelle, or tax on salt, which, as we shall see, aroused the indignation of Arthur Young. Of this tax, which was farmed, two-thirds of the whole were levied on a third of the kingdom. There were special courts for the punishment of those who disobeyed fiscal regulations of the most minute and grotesque kind. Throughout the north and centre of France, the gabelle was in reality a poll tax. The sale of salt was a monopoly in the hands of the farmers, who had behind them a small army of officials for the suppression of smuggling, or using other salt than that sold by them. Every person aged above seven years was forced to purchase seven pounds yearly, though the price varied so much that the same measure which cost a few shillings in one province cost two or three pounds in another. Yet this salt might be used for cooking purposes and cooking purposes alone. The fisherman who wished to salt his catch, the farmer who wished to salt his pork, must buy more salt and obtain a certificate that they had bought more salt. The exchequers were swollen, the galleys were manned, the gallows were weighted yearly with the fines of purse or of person paid by the victims of this odious tax. But the gabelle was not the only infliction. There was the taille, the first of the property taxes, the taille that was as cruel as the gabelle, and as fatal to agriculture. It was fantastically reassessed every year, not according to any

regular economic rule, but according to that more Oriental plan which varies its taxation with the varying fortunes of the place or person taxed. The over-taxed victims soon discovered that the smallest indication of prosperity meant an increase in the amount of the tax. Under its blight, farmer after farmer and parish after parish were degraded to a common ruin and a common despair.

The privileges of the great lords of the noble and clerical orders were imperial in their magnificence, recalling something of the opulence of Oriental satraps. The Archbishop of Cambray, who was at the same time a Duke and a Count, possessed the suzerainty of all the fiefs in a region containing some seventy-five thousand inhabitants. He named half the aldermen of Cambray. He named the entire administrative body of Cateau. He named the abbots of two large abbeys. He presided over the provincial assembly and the permanent bureau which succeeded it. Near him in Hainault the Abbé of Saint-Amand owned seven-eighths of the territory of the provostship, levied on the remainder the seignorial taxes, corveés, and dime, and named the provost of the aldermen. Something of the lost sovereignty of prince and prelate still lingered in these astonishing privileges. A large number of the bishops were spiritual as well as temporal lords in part, and in certain cases in the whole of their episcopal cities. Some nobles, too, wielded authority almost like viceroys. Certain

great houses had the right to collect for themselves the aides or taxes on wines and liquors, gold and silver, cards, paper, starch, manufacture of iron and steel, and the like. Lesser lords had their rights too. Such a lord had often the power of nominating the curé, the bailiff, the clerk of the court, the notaries and other officials; had his private prison, and sometimes his private scaffold. The property of any man under his jurisdiction who was condemned to death was confiscated to him; all lands which had lain uncultivated for ten years were swept by a similar process of confiscation into his net. He claimed and took toll upon the sale of land to the extent of a sixth, a fifth, and sometimes even a fourth of the price, and performed the like feat when land was rented for more than nine years. Then the tolls he levied were comprehensive and cruel. In 1724 the King had abolished some twelve hundred of these tolls, but enough remained to make the lives of the peasants most miserable, and to make us wonder how they existed at all under heavier inflictions. On the bridges, the roads, the ferries, the boats ascending and descending the water-ways, the grasping lord laid his toll. The drover with his horses and kine, his sheep and swine, the carrier with his merchandize, the farmer with his provisions in his cart had to pay, and pay stiffly, for the privilege of treading the lord's high road and passing within the shadow of the lord's château. The privilege of sale at his fairs or

markets had to be paid for. No one could eat, drink, or dress, without paying for the privilege to the lord of the land. To bleed the luckless peasantry further, the noble set up his great ovens, his wine-presses, his mills, and his slaughter-houses, and condemned the poor wretches under his dominion to have their bread baked, their wine made, their corn ground, and their cattle killed at his buildings, and to pay heavily for that too. Every deed of the peasant's life owed its tax to the lord, every fruit of the peasant's labour yielded its due to the lord. If the avaricious noble could have seen his way to taxing the very air the peasant breathed, he would have done so and rejoiced thereat.

It would be hard to say what rights the peasant did possess beyond the grudgingly accorded right to live. Wretched as his land was—for the fattest land went for farms for the privileged orders—he could not deal with it as he pleased. He could not sow, he could not reap, according to his own pleasure; meadowings had to remain meadowings, and tilled land tilled land. For if the peasant changed his field into a meadow, he deprived the curé of his dime; if he turned his meadow into a field, he diminished the commons; if he sowed clover, he could not prevent the flocks of the seigneur from pasturing thereon. His lands were encumbered with fruit-trees, which were annually let for the profit of the lord of the abbey. These trees were terrible enemies to the peasant. The shadow they cast,

their spreading roots, the annual injury caused by the fruit-gathering, all these harmed his fields, impeded his labour, impoverished his scanty substance. Yet he dared not cut down one of these trees. Nay more, if one of them perished by accident he was bound to replace it at his own cost. The luckless fellaheen of the Nile Valley were not more hardly used. The right of hunting was a mark of nobility, and only the noble therefore had a right to hunt. So in the hunting season the noble and his friends followed their game over the fields of the peasant, heedless of the damage they wantonly inflicted as they pursued their privileged pleasure, while the peasant who killed any game, even on his own fields, put himself in peril of the galleys.

The seigneur too, and the abbey, had the privilege of pasturage for their flocks an hour before the villager might venture to feed his sheep and cattle. Small wonder, therefore, if while the droves and herds of lord and abbot throve and waxed fat the sheep and cattle of the hind starved and dwindled and perished. But perhaps of all the wrongs, humiliations, and tortures which were thus inflicted by the privileged upon the non-privileged, that which may be rendered the 'right of dovecote' was felt most bitterly. The nobles alone possessed the right of owning pigeons, and the thousands and thousands of pigeons which the nobles kept fed upon the crops of the peasant, who had to sow a double seed in the hope of harvest, and to behold

with impotent hate and despair the dreaded flocks feed upon the grain his hand had scattered, while he dared not lift his hand to kill a single one of the birds. It was almost as rash to kill a pigeon as to kill a man, and the serf with a raging heart had to suffer in silence. There will be a great fluttering of dovecotes by-and-by when the day of reckoning comes, and vast flights of pigeons of a very different kind, but the time is not yet.

As the peasant man, so was the peasant woman. The peasant girls of Greuze's pictures, daintily capped and petticoated, simply innocent in the display of white bosom, are the creations of his canvas, the peasant girls of opera ballets, of courtly masquerades at the Little Trianon. We think of the ghastly creature whom Arthur Young saw near Mars-la-Tour as he was walking a hill to ease his horse. The haggard, hungered wretch, who looked some sixty or seventy years of age, and was some eight-and-twenty, who had been harassed from comeliness to a hag by years of bitter, grinding poverty, hard work and privation, she is the true type of the peasant woman of the time. A curious episode brings, in 1789, the fiction and the fact of peasant life strangely face to face in Paris. Favart in 1764 had played at the Comédie Italienne a little piece founded on a story of Marmontel's, and called 'Annette et Lubin.' The piece was one of those pastoralities in which the virtuous loves of a graceful and beribboned peasantry are duly crowned by

fortunate nuptials. The story and the piece were founded on fact. There was a real Annette, there was a real Lubin, and their loves had supplied the slender thread of story to the piece. Paris was amused by the piece; Annette and Lubin were talked of and thought of a good deal—and then quietly forgotten. Suddenly, in the April of 1789, the Journal de Paris made an appeal to the Parisian public. Lubin and Annette had grown old, were wretchedly poor. Would none of those who had been entertained by the story of their simple loves assist them now in their wretched old age? Paris thus appealed to, the Paris of the theatres and the salons, allowed itself to be touched. Subscriptions poured in for the aged and destitute couple, a performance in their benefit was given of 'Annette and Lubin,' and it is said that the real Annette and Lubin were themselves present in the theatre on the occasion. One seems to hear what George Meredith calls 'the laughter of gods in the background' as we think of this performance. Favart's beribboned Marmontelade goes through all its creaky sentimentality before an audience half-benevolent, half-cynical, and somewhere in balcony, box, or parterre sit that poor old withered couple doddering and dismal, looking with bleared eyes at the travesty of their early youth, and thinking of their sad and squalid life! One thinks of that poor woman of Arthur Young's, with her vague idea that 'something was to be done by some great folks for some such poor ones, but she did not

know when nor how, but God send us better.' Now indeed it would seem as if something were going to be done; the rumours of the coming States-General were in the ears of all men, as Lubin and Annette blinked their rheumy eyes at the idyllic stage sham, all Chloe and Daphnis and Pan's pipes and crooks, and thought of their thirteen children and the grinding tithes and tolls, and wondered in a dazed kind of way why all the fine people were making such a fuss about them, and whether the end of the world was at hand. The end of the world was at hand, the end of that world which loved its Lubins and its Annettes on canvas and on the stage, and left them to rot in misery—the poor, real wretches who shivered and sweated for the honour and glory of the Old Order.

One of the very greatest curses of the Old Order was the prevailing absenteeism. The great landlords, whether nobles or princes of the Church, loved to shine and be shone upon in the effulgence of the Court. The obsequious courtier who declared to the Sun-King that to be away from his sight was not merely to be unhappy but also to be ridiculous, set the fashion for all succeeding generations of courtiers. To the two great orders life was life only within the orb of the Court. To live on one's own lands, to play the great lord on one's own domains, was to attempt an intolerable vegetation. All the wealthy peers and prelates, therefore, thronged to Versailles and squandered their vast revenues in keeping up

the splendour of a splendid Court. These courtly satellites represented the fine flower of the noble and clerical orders. Although they numbered little more than a thousand each, they represented the highest wealth, the proudest luxury of the aristocracy —were, in a word, the elect of the elect, and also the most absolutely useless members of the bodies to which they belonged. They rendered no service to the State beyond that of adding by their presence and their extravagance to the magnificence of Versailles. They drained the life's blood of their luckless peasantry in order to ruffle it with more than imperial ostentation at the Court of the King. It must indeed be borne in mind that the desire of the greater nobility and the greater clergy to dazzle at Versailles was not entirely unprompted. The monarch liked to have his great nobles about him; liked them to spend their revenues in aggrandising his own royal glory, in swelling the glittering ranks of his attendant nobility. If a great lord or two, by way of change, took to dwelling for a while with their own people, on their own lands and in their own provincial châteaux, they were pretty sure to have it signified to them sooner or later that such behaviour was not pleasing to their royal master. Absence from Court for any lengthy period was noted and promptly construed by devoted Cabinet ministers into nothing less than a slight to the King's person, and very decisive hints would be addressed to the offending nobles, with the effect of bringing them

post-haste back to Versailles again. Life at Versailles was one endless Court pageant, in which the great nobles had to play their part by adding to the sumptuousness of the entertainment. The King moved like the central sun of an illustrious constellation. The disappearance of some star from one of the noted constellations would hardly have created as much surprise in the Bull's Eye as the disappearance of any great noble from his familiar attendance upon Majesty. Nothing but exile or death could sanction the absence of the high nobility from the presence of their King. Every now and then some lord would fall into disgrace and be sent peremptorily off to mope on his own estates, mewed dismally in his own castle, there to intrigue and scheme and plot to get back into royal favour and the ineffable glories of the Bull's Eye. Every now and then the grim sergeant Death, whom even Court ushers skilful as de Brézé cannot exclude, would obtrude his presence upon the boscages and saloons and carry off into an abiding exile the wearer of some lofty name, some Richelieu or Rohan or Grammont. To the true courtier even death was, however, less terrible than exile. To the satellites of the Court a country life was one of intolerable dulness. Ovid in Pontus, Ovid among the ruffian Goths, could not complain more piteously of his hard lot, removed from Rome and the favour of the Augustan face, than any luckless French nobleman bound by his sovereign's displeasure to

abide for awhile in some fair country place that would have seemed immeasurably enchanting in the eyes of a poet or a philosopher. 'Exile alone,' writes Arthur Young, 'forces the French nobility to do what the English do by preference; to reside upon their estates, to improve them.' Elsewhere he says of the estates of some great nobles: 'All the signs I have seen of their vast grandeur are heaths, moors, deserts, fern beds. Visit their castles, wherever they may be, and you will find them in the midst of forests inhabited by deer, wild boars, and wolves.' What a picture this affords us of pre-revolutionary France! A glittering handful of great nobles daffing the time away in Versailles, and the vast spaces of their neglected estates given over to the wild beast of the woods, and to those other less important wild beasts, the men and women who tilled and did not garner, who sowed and did not reap that the glory of Versailles might be sustained to the full.

Besides exile and death, a third force prevailed to keep certain of the nobility away from the centre of Versailles. The principle of primogeniture had reduced many of the nobles to a very hard pass. We learn from Chateaubriand that in Brittany the eldest son inherited two-thirds of the property, and the younger sons divided among themselves the remaining third. Thus in course of time the younger sons of younger sons came to the division of a pigeon, a rabbit, and a hunting-dog. They could not work; they were ashamed to beg; they drifted

deeper and deeper into the most ferocious of all poverties, the poverty which seeks to hold its head high and be brave in a faded and fretted gentility. High and puissant lords of a pigeon-house, a toad-hole, and a rabbit-warren, they strove for a while to keep up appearances, to play their annual part in Parisian society, until in the fulness of time nothing was left to them but their name, their abode, and their feudal rights. With these feudal rights as their only income, they naturally enforced them upon their unhappy peasantry with all the persistency of a pasha. The majestic misery of Scott's Ravenswood, of Théophile Gautier's Capitaine Fracasse, both ruined lords in ruined castles, was the frequent lot of the French nobility in the generation before the Revolution, but it was seldom borne with the heroic dignity of these heroes of romance. The poor nobility wore rusty swords and hob-nailed shoes and faded doublets of antique cut, but they would still hunt and play the prince, and grind the luckless peasant under their feet.

We must, however, remember that there was a better side to the picture. Some of the nobles whom poverty compelled to reside upon their own estates did in their way, and after their lights, behave not unkindly towards their people. The French nobles at Versailles knew and cared as little about the peasants who laboured and hungered for their good pleasure as their descendants know of the Red-skins of Canada or the Hindoos of Pondicherry.

But a certain proportion of the nobles were compelled by destiny to dwell in something like intercourse with the peasantry, and of these a certain small proportion allowed that intercourse to be tinctured by something like humanity. The influence of Rousseau and of the great masters of the Encyclopædia had extended from the metropolis into the provinces, and the comparatively few who were at all seriously imbued with the gospel of humanity as these proclaimed it did act with what was for the age great kindness to those who were dependent upon them. But these were the exception, not the rule. A selfishness which had become ingrained by long generations of power to oppress, a malign egotism that ignored all need except its own, that refused to recognise any rights save its own, a profligate passion for ostentation and display, a heartless indifference to all things except its own sublime existence, were the prevailing characteristics of the vast majority of the nobility in the time of the Old Order.

Of all the nobles' privileges, none was perhaps more galling to the peasantry than the privilege of the chase. Montlosier, in his memoirs, relates that on one occasion he was travelling in the provinces, and every time his peasant guides met a herd of deer on the route they exclaimed, 'There go the nobility!' The story assumes a graver significance from the fact that Montlosier was an ardent royalist then and for long after. There was a grim truth in the

peasants' description of the stags as the nobility of France. The herds of deer, the flocks of partridges, were infinitely more important in the eyes of the nobility than the lives and the welfare of the peasantry. It was one of the fantastic survivals of the feudal system that only the members of the noble order had the right to hunt. This right they guarded with a ferocious severity. No roturier might venture without special permission to enclose his lands with walls, hedges, or ditches ; even when the permission was accorded, it was with the condition that an open space should always be left wide enough to allow the noble huntsmen to pass through with ease. In certain places the peasants were not allowed to pull up the weeds that choked the wheat, lest they should disturb the game. Rash, indeed, was the luckless farmer who went to law to recover damages for any injury that the game might have inflicted upon him. Such suits were never won. Indeed, men's lives were considered of very little consequence in comparison with the safety and the comfort of the game. Poachers were killed at their work by gamekeepers and no heed taken. If a gamekeeper killed a peasant, it was enough to say that it had been done in defence of his master's game to convert a murder into an exemplary act of service. Woe be to the luckless knave who disturbed a sitting partridge, who interfered with the rabbit that gnawed his corn, with the stag that browsed upon his fruit-trees. Had he lived in

ancient Egypt, and lifted his hand against some animal sacred to the gods, some cat of Bubastis, some cow of Isis, some jackal of Anubis, he would scarcely have been worse off. The Egyptian of old who slew a sacred beast would have committed blasphemy against the gods of the strange Egyptian heaven; the peasant in France under the Old Order would have committed an offence against the deities of the Bull's Eye; in either case he was like to pay with the last stake of life for his mortal sin. Small wonder if the peasant hardly knew which he hated most, the great lord in Versailles or the wild beasts and birds of the woods, whose well-being was so much nearer to the heart of the great lord than the life of the peasant, or the peasant's wife, or the peasant's child. All over France vast tracts of land lay bare and desolate, ravaged by the game for whom they were reserved. But it never occurred to the average French nobleman that such a condition of things was not in itself excellent, that hunting was not the noblest mission of privileged mankind, or that a time would ever come when the unprivileged would like to take their turn, and hunt a well-kept, carefully-guarded quarry.

Perhaps, however, the body of men who were better hated than any body of men before or since in France were the Farmers-General. They formed perhaps the worst of the many evil institutions which belonged to the vast centralized system of the Old Order. It had long been the iniquitous

custom in France to lease out the aides or indirect taxes to persons who were willing to pay largely for the privilege in the hope of reaping still more largely. As it was their interest to wring every farthing they could from those on whom the taxation was levied, so it was inevitable that they should be cordially and indeed deservedly hated. Sully tried in vain, Colbert tried in vain to limit their rapacity. In 1720 the Farmers of the taxes formed a syndicate called the Ferme Générale, which soon became one of the wealthiest and one of the most dangerous institutions of the state. There were, as we know, virtuous men among the Farmers-General. But the direct effect of such an execrable institution was not to promote virtue among those who levied the taxes or those upon whom the taxes were levied. There is a story told often enough, but which bears re-telling, which illustrates the odour of the Farmers-General. Voltaire was once in a company where tales of robbers were the theme. Everyone present contributed to the amusement of his fellows by some appalling narrative of brigandage, outlawry, and crime. At last it came to Voltaire's turn, and the poet was called upon to tell some robber tale. 'Gentlemen,' said Voltaire, 'there was once a Farmer-General.' Then he was silent. His audience begged him to go on. Voltaire declined; that was the whole of his story. To be a Farmer-General was to be a champion robber of whom nothing further need be narrated.

CHAPTER XXI

WHAT ARTHUR YOUNG SAID

SUCH, in rapid lines, was the condition of France when Arthur Young travelled in it during the years which directly preceded the Revolution. He saw a country where the remains of the feudal system were still heavy upon the soil, where the monarchy had gradually absorbed the old warlike powers of the nobles, where the gabelle of Philip the Fair, the taille of Charles VII., the aides of the States-General of 1356 were bleeding the land to death. He saw a country where the provinces were administered by intendants acting on the royal commission, a country governed from Paris and Versailles. He saw a country where the two great orders and the rest of the people were marked off with the rigidity of Hindoo caste, where the existence of the most grotesque privileges mocked the advance of civilization and of thought, where the Court was crowded with a profligate nobility, while their domains ran to ruin, where power and dignity was the privilege of the few, and oppression and misery the lot of the many—a country, in a word, which was one mad masquerade of misgovernment.

Fortunately for us, fortunately for the world, Arthur Young has left upon record a brief sketch of the condition of France so important that we need no justification for reproducing the substance of it here. The immense value of such a contemporary study makes the use of it imperative.

It is not surprising to find the liberal-minded Englishman especially shocked by the gross infamy which attended lettres de cachet and the Bastille during the whole reign of Louis XV., an infamy which made them esteemed in England, by people not well informed, as the most prominent features of the despotism of France. They were certainly carried to an excess hardly credible ; to the length of being sold, with blanks, to be filled up with names at the pleasure of the purchaser, who was thus able, in the gratification of private revenge, to tear a man from the bosom of his family, and bury him in a dungeon, where he would exist forgotten, and die unknown. But Arthur Young was clear-minded enough to see that such excesses could not be common in any country, and that they were reduced almost to nothing after the accession of Louis XVI. The great mass of the people, those of the lower and middle ranks, could suffer very little from such engines, and as few of them were objects of jealousy, had there been nothing else to complain of, it is not probable they would ever have been driven to take arms. The abuses attending the levy of taxes were heavy and universal. The

kingdom was parcelled into generalities, with an intendant at the head of each, into whose hands the whole power of the crown was delegated for everything except the military authority; but particularly for all affairs of finance. The generalities were subdivided into elections, at the head of which was a sub-délégué, appointed by the intendant. The rolls of the taille, capitation, vingtièmes and other taxes, were distributed among districts, parishes, individuals, at the pleasure of the intendant, who could exempt, change, add, or diminish, at pleasure. Such an enormous power, constantly acting, and from which no man was free, might in the nature of things degenerate in many cases into absolute tyranny. It must be obvious, that the friends, acquaintances, and dependents of the intendant, and of all his sub-délégués, and the friends of these friends, to a long chain of dependence, might be favoured in taxation at the expense of their miserable neighbours; and that noblemen, in favour at Court, to whose protection the intendant himself would naturally look up, could find little difficulty in throwing much of the weight of their taxes on others without a similar support. Instances, and even gross ones, came under Arthur Young's notice in many parts of the kingdom, that made him shudder at the oppression to which numbers must have been condemned, by the undue favours granted to such crooked influence. But, without recurring to such cases, what, he asked himself, must have been the state of the poor people paying heavy

taxes, from which the nobility and clergy were exempted? It must have been a cruel aggravation of their misery, to see those who could best afford to pay, exempted just because they were able to pay! The enrolments for the militia, which the cahiers called an injustice without example, were another dreadful scourge on the peasantry; and, as married men were exempted from it, occasioned in some degree that mischievous population, which brought beings into the world, for little else than to be starved. The corvées, or police of the roads, were annually the ruin of many hundreds of farmers. More than three hundred were reduced to beggary in filling up one vale in Lorraine. All these oppressions fell on the Tiers État only; the nobility and clergy having been equally exempted from tailles, militia, and corvées. The penal code of finance made the generous gentleman-farmer shudder at the horrors of punishment inadequate to the crime. Arthur Young quotes elaborate contemporary calculations which serve to show that, upon an average, there were annually taken up and sent to prison or the galleys two thousand three hundred and forty men, eight hundred and ninety-six women, two hundred and one children, making a total of three thousand four hundred and thirty-seven persons. Of these three hundred were sent to the galleys. The salt confiscated from these miserable people came to an enormous amount and represented an enormous waste of money.

A few features, said Arthur Young, will sufficiently characterise the old Government of France. Then he proceeded to draw up the most scathing indictment ever levelled at the Old Order. The gross cruelties in connection with the Gabelle especially impressed him, as well indeed they might. Smugglers of salt, armed and assembled to the number of five, were punished in Provence with a fine of five hundred livres and nine years galleys;—in all the rest of the kingdom the punishment was death. Smugglers armed and assembled, but in number under five, underwent for the first offence a fine of three hundred livres and three years galleys. The second offence was punished by death. Smugglers without arms, but with horses, carts, or boats, were fined three hundred livres or got three years galleys. The second offence was rated at four hundred livres and nine years galleys. In Dauphiné, the second offence earned the galleys for life, but in milder Provence only five years galleys. Smugglers who carried the salt on their backs, and were without arms, were fined two hundred livres. If this was not paid, they were flogged and branded. The second offence meant a fine of three hundred livres and six years galleys. Women, married and single, who smuggled salt, paid for the first offence a fine of one hundred livres; for the second, three hundred livres; for the third, they were flogged, and banished the kingdom for life. Their husbands were responsible for them both

in fine and body. Children smugglers were punishable the same as women. Fathers and mothers were made responsible; and for defect of payment flogged. Nobles who smuggled were deprived of their nobility; and their houses were razed to the ground. Any persons in the employment of the revenue who smuggled, and all who assisted in the theft of salt in the transport, were punished by death. Soldiers smuggling, with arms, were hanged; without arms, they got the galleys for life. Buying smuggled salt to resell it met the same punishments as for smuggling. Persons in the salt employments were empowered if two, or one with two witnesses, to enter and examine the houses even of the privileged orders. All families, and persons liable to the Gabelle, had, as we have already seen, their consumption of salt, exclusive of salt for salting meat and the like, estimated at 7 lb. a head per annum, which quantity they were forced to buy whether they wanted it or not, under pain of various fines according to the case.

But if Arthur Young's blood boiled at the iniquity of the Gabelle, other iniquities kept it warm. The Capitaineries were a dreadful scourge on all the occupiers of land. By this term is to be understood the paramountship of certain districts, granted by the King, to princes of the blood, by which they were put in possession of the property of all game, even on lands not belonging to them;

and, what seemed still more singular to the traveller, on manors granted long before to individuals; so that the erecting of a district into a capitainerie was an annihilation of all manorial rights to game within it. This was a trifling business in comparison with other circumstances; for, in speaking of the preservation of the game in these capitaineries, it must be observed, that by game must be understood whole droves of wild boars, and herds of deer not confined by any wall or pale, but wandering, at pleasure, over the whole country, to the destruction of crops; and to the peopling of the galleys by the wretched peasants, who presumed to kill them, in order to save that food which was to support their helpless children. The game in the capitainerie of Montceau, in four parishes only, did mischief to the amount of one hundred and eighty-four thousand two hundred and sixty-three livres per annum. No wonder then if time should find the people asking for the destruction of these terrible game laws and demanding, as a favour, the permission to sow their fields and reap their meadows without regard for pheasants or other game. Truly the English traveller could scarcely understand, without being told, that there were numerous edicts for preserving the game, which prohibited weeding and hoeing, lest the young partridges should be disturbed; which prohibited steeping seed, lest it should injure the game; which prohibited manuring with night soil, lest the flavour of the partridges should be

injured by feeding on the corn so produced; which prohibited mowing hay before a certain time, so late as to spoil many crops, and taking away the stubble, which would deprive the birds of shelter. The tyranny exercised in these capitaineries, which extended over four hundred leagues of country, was so great, that many cahiers demanded the utter suppression of them. Such were the exertions of arbitrary power which the lower orders felt directly from the royal authority; but, heavy as they were, it was to Arthur Young's mind a question whether the others, suffered circuitously through the nobility and the clergy, were not yet more oppressive. Nothing can exceed the complaints made in the cahiers under this head. They speak of the dispensation of justice in the manorial courts as comprising every species of despotism: the indeterminate districts, the endless appeals, irreconcilable with liberty and prosperity, and irrevocably proscribed in the opinion of the public; the incessant litigation, favouring every species of chicane, and ruining the parties concerned, not only by enormous expenses on the most petty objects, but by a dreadful loss of time. The judges were commonly ignorant pretenders, who held their courts in wine-shops, and were absolutely dependent on the seigneurs, in consequence of their feudal powers. These were vexations which were the greatest scourge of the people and which made them demand that feudalism should disappear. The countryman was tyrannically enslaved by it. There

were fixed and heavy rents; vexatious processes to secure them; unjust appreciations, unjust augmentations. There were fines at every change of the property, in the direct as well as collateral line; feudal redemption; fines on sale, to the eighth and even the sixth penny; redemptions injurious in their origin, and still more so in their extension. There was the banalité of the mill, of the oven, and of the wine and cider-press, a horrible law, by which the people were bound to grind their corn at the mill of the seigneur only; to press their grapes at his press only; and to bake their bread in his oven; by which means the bread was often spoiled, and more especially the wine, since in Champagne those grapes which, when pressed immediately, would make white wine, would, by waiting for the press, which often happened, make red wine only. There were corvées by custom; corvées by usage of the fief; corvées established by unjust decrees; corvées arbitrary, and other fantastical servitudes. There were prestations, extravagant and burthensome; collections by assessments incollectible; litigations ruinous and without end: the rod of seigneural finance was for ever shaken over the people's heads. Under such vexation, ruin, outrage, violence, and destructive servitude, the peasants, almost on a level with Polish slaves, could never but be miserable, vile, and oppressed. Well might they demand that the use of hand-mills should be free; and hope that posterity, if possible, might be ignorant that

feudal tyranny in Bretagne, armed with the judicial power, did not blush, in those evil times, to break hand-mills, and to sell annually to the miserable the faculty of bruising between two stones a measure of buck-wheat or barley. The very terms of such complaints were, as Arthur Young was glad to think, unknown in England, and consequently untranslatable: they had probably arisen long since the feudal system ceased in the kingdom. What, asked Arthur Young, in manly British bewilderment, were those tortures of the peasantry in Bretagne, which they called chevauchés, quintaines, soule, saut de poison, baiser de mariées; chansons; transporte d'œuf sur un charette; silence des grenouilles? This last was a curious article. When the lady of the seigneur lay in, the people were obliged to beat the waters in marshy districts, to keep the frogs silent, that she might not be disturbed. This duty, a very oppressive one, was commuted into a pecuniary fine. What, he asked despairingly, were corvée à miséricorde; milods; leide; couponage; cartelage; barage; fouage; marechaussée; banvin; ban d'août; trousses; gelinage; civerage; taillabilité; vingtain; sterlage; bordelage; minage; ban de vendanges; droit d'accapte? In passing through many of the French provinces, Arthur Young was struck with the various and heavy complaints of the farmers and little proprietors of the feudal grievances, with the weight of which their industry was burthened; but

he could not at first conceive the multiplicity of the shackles which kept them poor and depressed. He came to understand it better afterwards, from the conversation and complaints of some grand seigneurs, as the revolution advanced; and he then learned, that the principal rental of many estates consisted in services and feudal tenures; by the baneful influence of which the industry of the people was almost exterminated. In regard to the oppressions of the clergy, as to tithes, Arthur Young's honesty compelled him to do that body a justice, to which a claim could not be then laid in England. Though the ecclesiastical tenth was levied in France more severely than usual in Italy, yet was it never exacted with such horrid greediness as was then the disgrace of England. When taken in kind, no such thing was known in any part of France, where he made inquiries, as a tenth; it was always a twelfth, or a thirteenth, or even a twentieth of the produce. And in no part of the kingdom did a new article of culture pay anything; thus turnips, cabbages, clover, chicory, potatoes, and the like, paid nothing. In many parts, meadows were exempted. Silk worms paid nothing. Olives in some places paid—in others they did not. Cows paid nothing. Lambs paid nothing from the twelfth to the twenty-first. Wool paid nothing. Such mildness in the levy of this odious tax was absolutely unknown in England. But mild as it was, the burthen to people groaning under so many other oppressions, united

to render their situation so bad that no change could be for the worse. But these were not all the evils with which the people struggled. The administration of justice was partial, venal, infamous. Arthur Young, in conversation with many very sensible men, in different parts of the kingdom, met with something of content with their government, in all other respects than this; but upon the question of expecting justice to be really and fairly administered, everyone confessed there was no such thing to be looked for. The conduct of the parliaments was profligate and atrocious. Upon almost every cause that came before them, interest was openly made with the judges: and woe betided the man who, with a cause to support, had no means of conciliating favour, either by the beauty of a handsome wife or by other methods. It had been said, by many writers, that property was as secure under the old government of France as it was in England. This assertion might, Arthur Young admitted, possibly be true, as far as any violence from the King, his ministers, or the great was concerned: but for all that mass of property, which comes in every country to be dealt with in courts of justice, there was not even the shadow of security, unless the parties were totally and equally unknown, and totally and equally honest. In every other case, he who had the best interest with the judges was sure to be the winner. To reflecting minds, the cruelty and abominable practices attending such

courts were sufficiently apparent. There was also a circumstance in the constitution of these parliaments, but little known in England, and which, under such a government as that of France, might well be considered as very singular by Arthur Young. They had the power and were in the constant practice of issuing decrees, without the consent of the crown, and which had the force of laws through the whole of their jurisdiction. Of all the laws, these were sure to be the best obeyed; for as, by a horrible system of tyranny, all infringements of them were brought before sovereign courts, composed of the same persons who had enacted these laws, they were certain of being punished with the last severity. It might well appear strange, in a government so despotic in some respects as that of France, to see the parliaments in every part of the kingdom making laws without the King's consent, and even in defiance of his authority. The English whom Arthur Young met in France were surprised to see some of these bodies issuing orders against the export of corn out of the provinces subject to their jurisdiction, into the neighbouring provinces, at the very time when the King, through the organ of so popular a minister as Necker, and even at the requisition of the National Assembly itself, was decreeing an absolutely free transport of corn throughout the kingdom. But this was nothing new; it was their common practice. The parliament of Rouen passed an order against killing of calves; it was a pre-

posterous one, and opposed by the administration; but it had its full force; and had a butcher dared to offend against it, he would have found, by the rigour of his punishment, who was his master. Inoculation was favoured by the court in Louis XV.'s time; but the parliament of Paris passed an order against it, much more effective in prohibiting than the favour of the court in encouraging that practice. Such instances were innumerable, and they forced Arthur Young to remark, that the bigotry, ignorance, false principles, and tyranny of these bodies were generally conspicuous; and that the court, except on a question of taxation, never had a dispute with a parliament but the parliament was sure to be wrong. Their constitution, in respect to the administration of justice, was so truly rotten, that the members sat as judges even in causes of private property in which they were themselves the parties, and had, in this capacity, been guilty of oppressions and cruelties, which the crown had rarely dared to attempt.

Such is the picture in little of the intolerable condition of things which rendered revolution inevitable. Such is the picture in little which presented itself to the keen eyes of that wandering Englishman, whose statements of what he saw and what he heard are so inestimably precious to us. We seem as we read his words as if we had sat by his side in some stately London drawing-room, or in the wide hall of some Sussex country house, and listened to his clear descriptions of the troubled

France that he knew so well, and to his shrewd judgments upon the hideously unnatural system under which it had so long groaned. A contemporary of that system, he was able to look at it from the outside almost as much as if he were an Englishman of to-day ; he was able to weigh it and to judge it with a mind as clear and as impartial as that of any of his fellow-countrymen in the brilliant epoch to which he belonged and which he helped to adorn. We shall later on find ourselves face to face with an existing and active National Assembly, ready to deal very summarily with all the peculiar privileges and abuses which belong to what is known as the Old Order. When Arthur Young was riding his horse along those French highroads and making the reflections which afterwards bore fruit in the remarkable judgment he gave to the world, he little thought that a day was close at hand when all the injustices of which he complains would be formally abolished by a constitutional body. But the day of the Great Renunciation was close at hand, the day that was to witness the solemn denial, the solemn destruction of that grotesque, fantastic, intricate, and altogether horrible institution, the Old Order.

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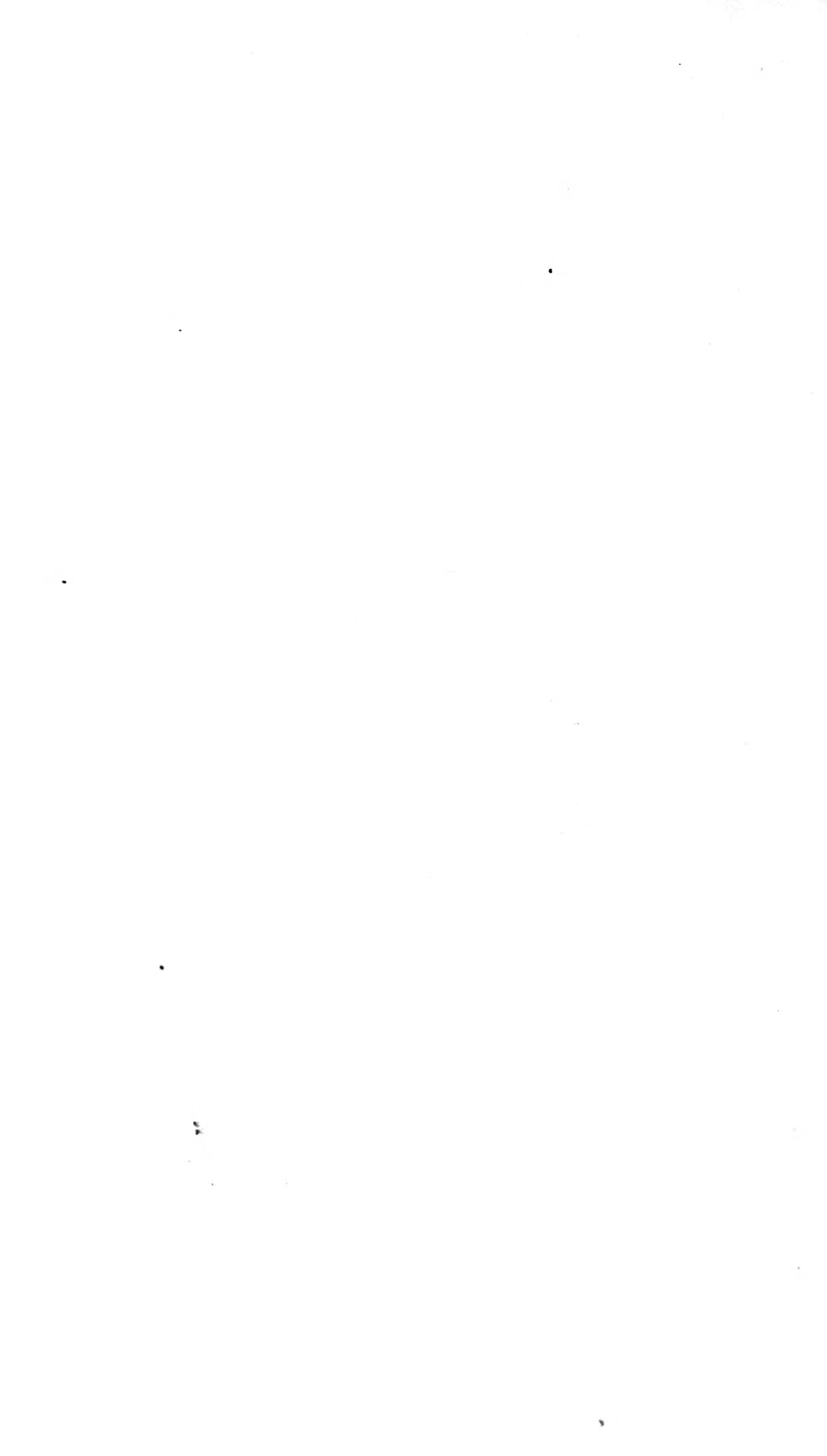

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