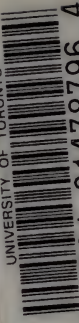


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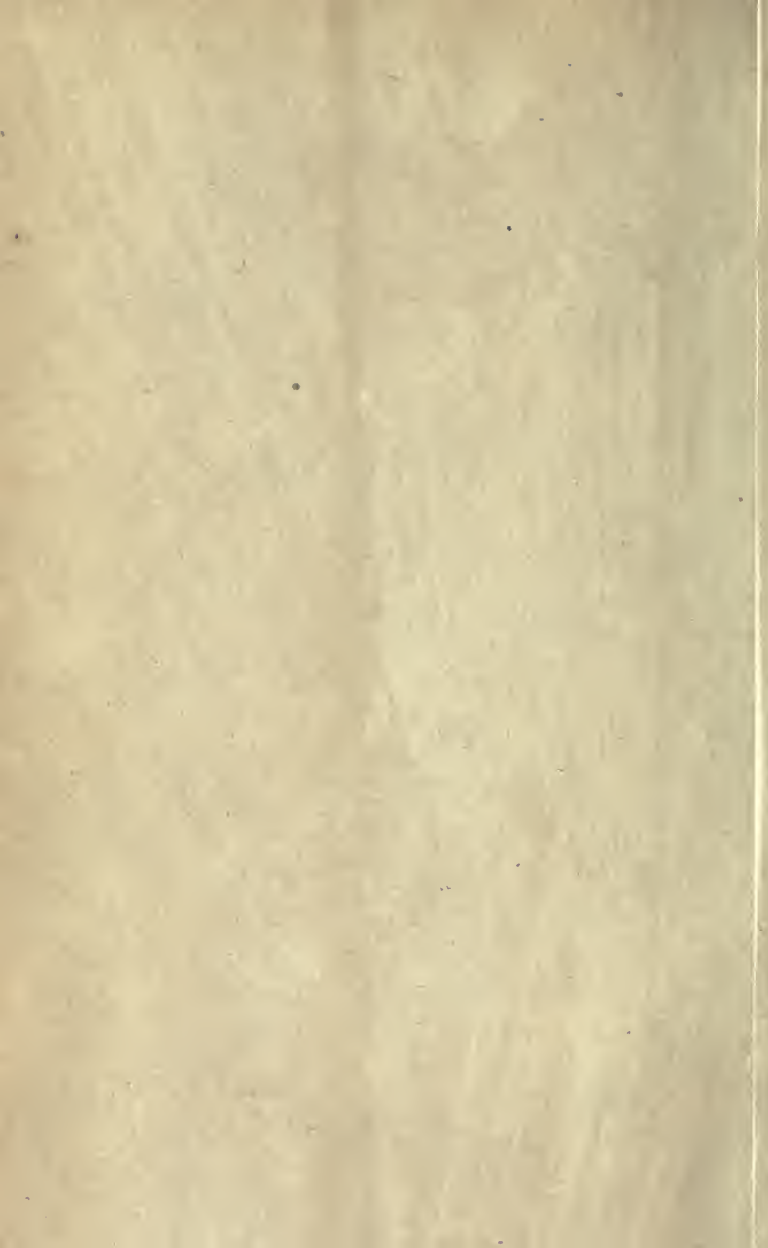


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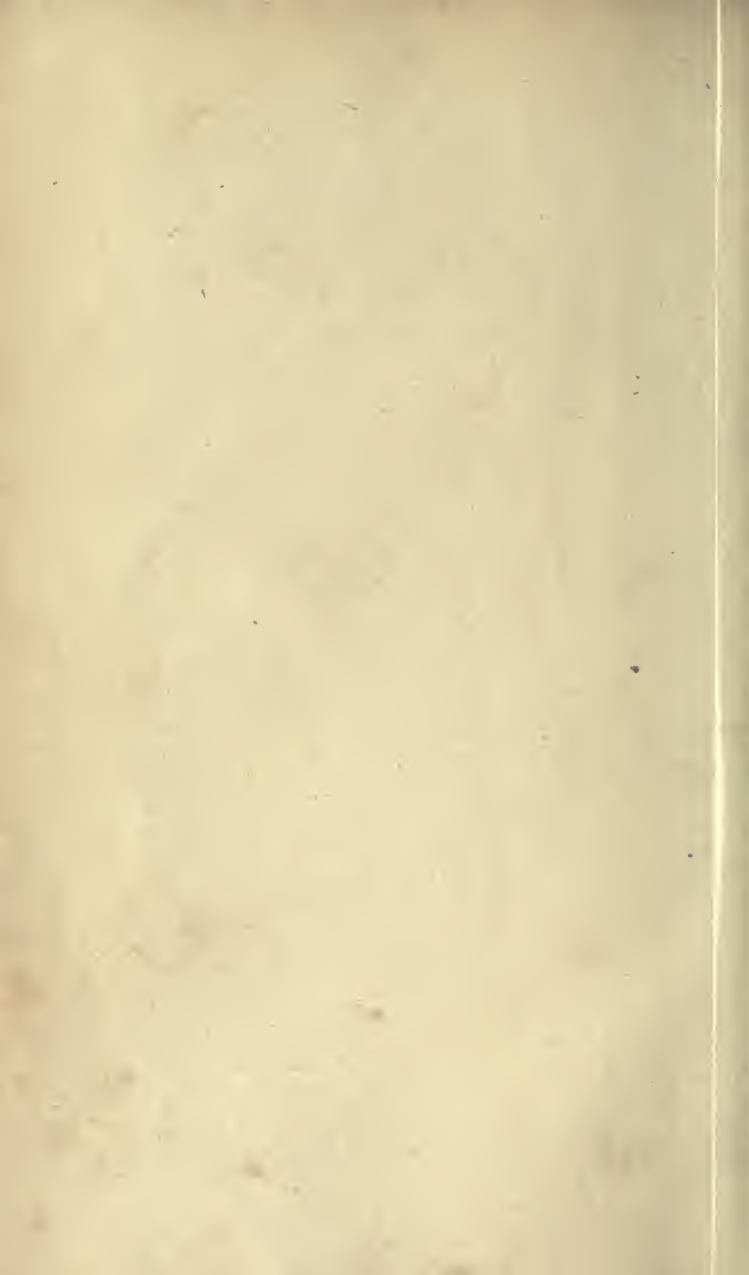


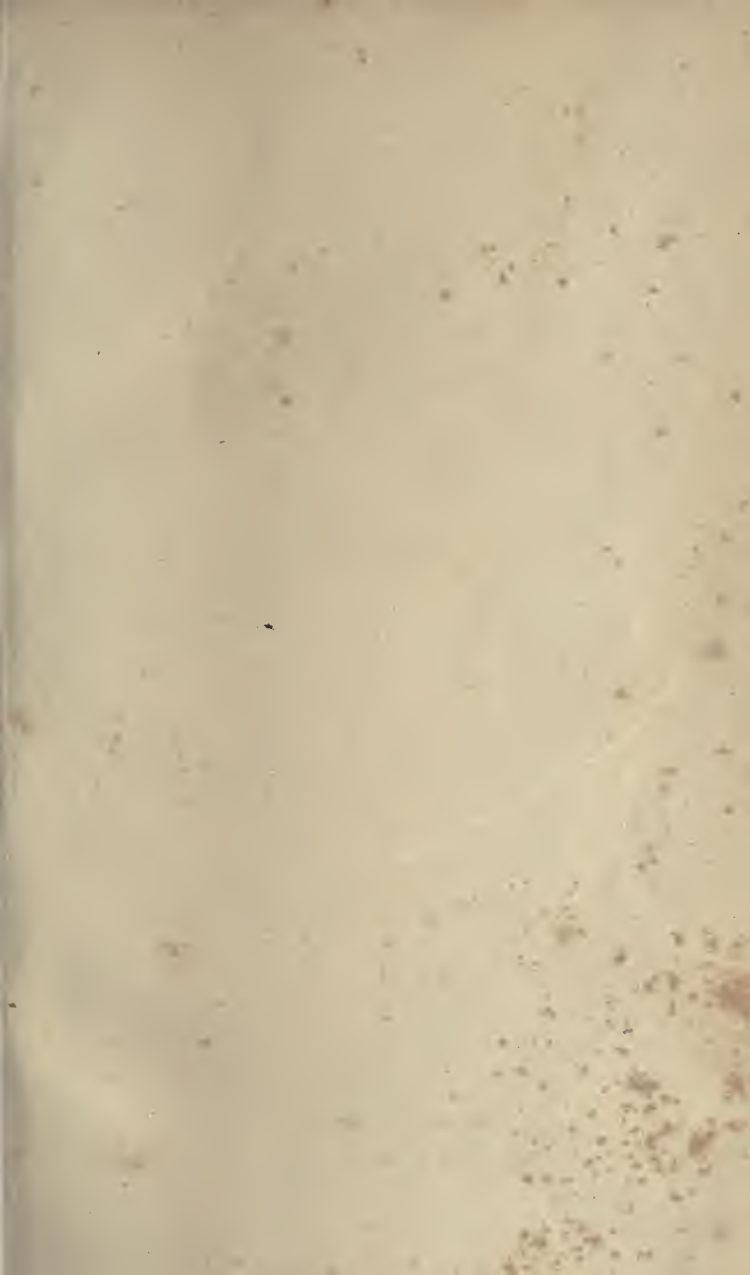
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HISTORY OF EUROPE

FROM THE

COMMENCEMENT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

IN M.DCC.LXXXIX.

TO THE RESTORATION OF THE BOURBONS

IN M.DCCC.XV.

BY ARCHIBALD ALISON, F.R.S.E.

ADVOCATE.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

SEVENTH EDITION.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS,
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PREFACE.

THE History of Europe during the French Revolution naturally divides itself into four periods:—

The first, commencing with the Convocation of the States-General in 1789, terminates with the execution of Louis, and the establishment of a republic in France, in 1793. This period embraces the history and vast changes of the Constituent Assembly; the annals of the Legislative Assembly; the revolt and overthrow of the throne on the 10th August; the trial and death of the King. It traces the changes of public opinion, and the fervour of innovation, from their joyous commencement to that bloody catastrophe, and the successive steps by which the nation was led from the transports of general philanthropy to the sombre ascendant of sanguinary ambition.

The second opens with the strife of the Girondists and the Jacobins; and, after recounting the fall of the former body, enters upon the dreadful era of the Reign of Terror, and follows out the subsequent struggles of the now exhausted factions till the establishment of a regular military government, by the suppression of the revolt of the National Guard of Paris, in October 1795. This period embraces the commencement of the war; the immense exertions of France during the campaign in 1793; the heroic contest in La Vendée; the last efforts of

Polish independence under Kosciusko ; the conquest of Flanders and Holland ; and the scientific manœuvres of the campaign of 1795. But its most interesting part is the internal history of the Revolution ; the heart-rending sufferings of persecuted virtue ; and the means by which Providence caused the guilt of the Revolutionists to work out their own deserved and memorable punishment.

The third, commencing with the rise of Napoleon, terminates with the seizure of the reins of power by that extraordinary man, and the first pause in the general strife at the Peace of Amiens. It is singularly rich in splendid achievements, embracing the Italian campaigns of the French hero, and the German ones of the Archduke Charles ; the battles of St Vincent, Camperdown, and the Nile ; the expedition to Egypt, the wars of Suwarroff in Italy, and Massena on the Alps ; the campaigns of Marengo and Hohenlinden ; the Northern Coalition, with its dissolution by the victory of Copenhagen ; the overthrow of the French in Egypt, and their expulsion from it by the arms of England. During this period, the democratic passions of France had exhausted themselves, and the nation groaned under a weak but relentless military despotism, the external disasters and internal severities of which prepared all classes to range themselves under the banners of a victorious chieftain.

The fourth opens with brighter auspices to France, under the firm and able government of Napoleon, and terminates with his fall in 1815. Less illustrated than the former period by his military genius, it was rendered still more memorable by his resistless power and mighty achievements. It embraces the campaigns of Austerlitz, Jena, and Friedland : the destruction of the French navy at Trafalgar ; the desperate struggle in Spain, and the gallant, though abortive, efforts of Austria in 1809 ; the degradation and extinction of the Papal authority ; the slow but steady growth of the English military power in the Peninsula ; the persevering, and at last splendid career of Wellington ; the general suffering under the despotism of France ; the memorable invasion of Russia ; the convulsive efforts of Germany in 1813 ;

the last campaign of Napoleon, the capture of Paris, and his final overthrow at Waterloo.

The two first periods illustrate the consequences of democratic ascendancy upon the civil condition ; the two last, their effect upon the military contests and external relations of nations. In both, the operation of the same law of nature may be discerned, for the expulsion of a destructive passion from the frame of society, by the efforts which it makes for its own gratification, and the just punishment alike of guilty nations and individuals, by the consequences of the very iniquities which they commit. In both, the principal actors were overruled by an unseen power, which rendered their vices and ambition the means of vindicating the justice of the Divine administration, asserting the final triumph of virtue over vice, and ultimately effecting the deliverance of mankind. Generations perished during the vast transition, but the law of nature was unceasing in its operation ; and the same principle which drove the government of Robespierre through the Reign of Terror to the 9th of Thermidor, impelled Napoleon to the snows of Russia and the rout of Waterloo. " *Les hommes agissent,*" says Bossuet, " *mais Dieu les mene.*" The illustrations of this moral law compose the great lesson to be learned from the eventful scenes of this mighty drama.

A subject so splendid in itself, so full of political and military instruction, replete with such great and heroic actions, adorned by so many virtues, and darkened by so many crimes, never yet fell to the lot of an historian. During the twenty-five years of its progress, the world has gone through more than five hundred years of ordinary existence ; and the annals of Modern Europe will be sought in vain for a parallel to that brief period of anxious effort and checkered achievement.

Although so short a time has elapsed since the termination of these events, the materials which have been collected for their elucidation have already become, beyond all precedent, interesting and ample. The great and varied ability which, since the general peace, has been brought to bear upon political

and historical subjects in France, has produced, besides many regular Histories of extraordinary talent, a crowd of Memoirs of various authority, but throwing, upon the whole, the fullest light on the manners, feelings, and sufferings of those troubled times. The previous state of France, with the moral, political, and financial causes which brought about the Revolution, are fully developed in the able works of Rivarol, Necker, and Madame de Staël, the elaborate Memoirs of the Abbé Georgel, the acute History of the reign of Louis XVI. by Soulavie, and the impartial Digest by Droz of the same interesting and important period. Its financial and social condition are unfolded in the luminous statements of Calonne, Necker, and Arthur Young. Nor are the materials for the history of the convulsion itself less abundant. On the one hand, the faithful and impartial Narrative of M. Toulangeon, the elaborate and valuable *Histoire de la Révolution par Deux Amis de la Liberté*, in eighteen volumes, with the brilliant works of Mignet and Thiers, have done ample justice to the Republican side; while, on the other, the elaborate Histories of Lacretelle, La Baume, and Bertrand de Molleville, with the detached Narratives of Chateaubriand, Beauchamps, and Bertrand de Molleville, in his Memoirs, have fully illustrated the sufferings of the Royalists during the progress of the Revolution. The singular and interesting events of Poland are admirably detailed in the able Narrative of Rulhière, and the eloquent pages of Salvandy. But the most interesting record of those times is to be found in the contemporary Memoirs by the principal sufferers during their continuance, the best of which are to be met with in the great collection, published at Paris, of *Revolutionary Memoirs*, extending to sixty-six volumes, and embracing, among other authentic Narratives, those of Bailly, Rivarol, Riouffe, Barbaroux, Buzot, Condorcet, Madame Campan, Madame Roland, Madame Larochejaquelein, Clery, Hue, Carnot, Sapinaud, Thureau, Madame Bonchamps, Doppet, Abbé Guillon, Abbé Morellet, Count Ségur, General Kleber, M. Puisaye, and many others. In Professor Smyth's *Lectures on the French Revolution*, these various original accounts

are passed in review with the acuteness of a critic and the spirit of a philosopher; while Mr Adolphus, in his able *History of France* from 1790 to 1803, has brought to light much that the French writers would willingly bury in oblivion. The *Papiers Inédits de Robespierre*, and the *Correspondence du Comité du Salut Publique*, lately published at Paris, are full of new and valuable information. In the graphic *History of the Convention*, and the admirable *Souvenirs de la Terreur*, by Duval, in six volumes, recently published in the same capital, many vivid and striking pictures are to be found, evidently drawn from life; the Memoirs of Barère and Berryer throw much light on the worst characters of the Revolution; while the admirable sketches of Dumont, Brissot, and Mounier, convey the most faithful idea of the early leaders of the Assembly, and the singular Memoirs of Levasseur de la Sarthe furnish a portrait of the extreme of Jacobin extravagance.

For the memorable period of the Consulate, and the character of the illustrious men who were assembled round the throne of Napoleon, the memoirs of Thibaudeau, General Rapp, Bourrienne, Savary, Fouché,* Bausset, Meneval, Caulaincourt, Gohier, and the Duchess of Abrantes, have furnished an inexhaustible mine of information, the authenticity of which may, in general, be judged of with tolerable accuracy by comparing these different narratives together. But the most valuable authentic documents during this period are to be found in the ample volumes of the *Moniteur*, the great quarry from which all subsequent compilers have extracted their materials; in the admir-

* The author, in the first instance, had some doubts of the authenticity of Fouché's Memoirs; but they have been since removed by a more minute examination of their contents, and by having learned, from the late lamented Lord Wellesley, that the facts as to the Secret Negotiation with him in 1809, mentioned in these pages, were, with one trifling exception, correct. They must, therefore, have been written at least from his papers, as they contained facts known only to the French Minister and two British Statesmen. The author has heard, on good authority, that an opinion of their containing facts which were known only to Fouché, has been expressed also by the Duke of Wellington. M. Beauchamps is generally understood to have compiled these curious Memoirs from Fouché's papers.—See *Biographie Universelle, Supplement*, vol. lxxviii. p. 474.

able Parliamentary history of France, in forty-one volumes, by Buchez and Roux, the most interesting portions of which have been well abridged in the *Histoire de la Convention*, in six volumes, by Leonard Gallois; and the *Débats de la Convention*, forming part of the Revolutionary Memoirs.

In the memoirs of these contemporary authors, many of them leading actors in the events they describe, it may be thought the reader is transported near enough to the actual theatre of this bloody drama. But to those who are enamoured of its tragic scenes, (and few can study the subject without becoming so,) it is not sufficient to have the memoirs written at a subsequent period, even by the principal actors in the dreadful progress. We long to get nearer the mournful catastrophes; to hear the fervour of the orator at the tribune; to be present at the interrogatories of the prisoners at the trials; to listen to the words of the captives on the scaffold. Ample materials exist to satisfy the most ardent thirst for such entrancing details in the contemporary journals, though the greater part of them are now extremely rare, and some would be "cheaply purchased for their weight in gold." The *Révolutions de Paris*, by Prudhomme, published in daily numbers from 1789 to 1794, and which now forms seventeen thick octavo volumes, exhibits a picture of the republican party during the whole progress of the convulsion, by an ardent democrat, intimately acquainted with the leaders of the Revolution. His marked partiality for the cause they supported, renders his testimony the more valuable when he comes to recount their excesses, as he has done in a minute detail, comprising six volumes, entitled *Crimes et Erreurs de la Révolution*. The *Actes des Apôtres*, in ten volumes, embracing three hundred and ninety-six numbers, published twice a-week during the Revolution, by Peltier, exhibits a picture of the ideas of the Girondists and some of the Jacobin party, by an able but impassioned Royalist, at its most interesting periods; while the *Vieux Cordelier*, by Camille Desmoulins, contains a precious contemporary record of the views of one of the ablest of the party of Danton, in the period immediately preceding its fall.

The *Chronique de Paris*, written chiefly by Brissot and the Girondists, gives daily, throughout the whole struggle, the views of that celebrated party; while the proceedings and principles of the Jacobins are amply unfolded in the *Journal de la Montagne*, by Charles Leveaux, which, beginning on 1st June 1793, comes down to the 28th November 1794, and forms seven quarto volumes. The *Journal des Jacobins*, commencing on the 1st June 1791, gives the whole debates of that memorable body, including some of the best speeches of Robespierre and Danton, down to the 29th November 1794.

The *Père Duchesne*, by Hébert, also a daily journal from March 1791 to October 1793, which now forms eleven volumes, contains the obscene and hideous ribaldry of that atrocious faction, the creatures of the municipality of Paris, elected under universal suffrage, which even Robespierre was obliged to guillotine for their crimes. Marat's vehement passions, cold-blooded proscriptions, and prodigious mental fertility, are fully portrayed in his celebrated journal *L'Ami du Peuple*, beginning on 28th November 1789, and coming down to his assassination in July 1793. It forms a collection amounting to eighteen volumes. The debates of the Convention are to be found fully reported in the ample columns of the *Moniteur*, and the admirable *Histoire Parlementaire de France*, by Buchez and Roux, in forty-one volumes. The *Liste des Condamnés* contains the name and designation of every one of the many victims of the Revolutionary Tribunal at Paris. But all the contemporary records sink in interest and value before the *Bulletin du Tribunal Révolutionnaire*, published daily from the institution of that tribunal, on 10th March 1793, till its close with the conviction of Fouquier Tinville, in December 1794. All the most important trials of the Revolution, except that of Louis, are there given in the fullest detail; and the *Procès de Louis XVI.*, in three volumes octavo, gives the fullest account of that memorable proceeding.

Few subjects of study are so entrancing as these contemporary records of the Revolution. From them could, with ease, be

extracted a work equaling in bulk, and perhaps exceeding in interest, that which details, most readers will probably think at sufficient length, in addition to that convulsion, the whole wars consequent on it. The impression left on the mind by the study of these strange and melancholy monuments of human insanity, guilt, and suffering, is very remarkable. In the first place, they clearly demonstrate, what will probably be found to be true of most successful rebellions, that the French Revolution was entirely carried through by the incessant application of exaggeration or mendacity to the public mind. Falsehood was its staff of life. In the second place, the aspect of the convulsion, as thus painted at the moment by its principal actors, is incomparably more sombre, its guilt and devastation appear far greater, than could be imagined from the later compilations; and the author, from the study of their own words, has been compelled, in most cases, to draw the leading characters of the Revolution in much darker colours than he at first was inclined to have done, from the representations of their enemies.* Lastly, they exhibit in as shining colours the generosity and dignity of human nature, as its baseness and ambition; and if, in surveying the guilt of the Revolutionists, or the aristocratic selfishness which preceded it, we are sometimes almost tempted to despair of the fortunes of the species, we are led by the heroism of its victims to more cheering views, and a right appreciation of the checkered destiny of man in this scene of probation.

In military annals the materials are not less ample. The great scientific history of General Jomini, in sixteen volumes,

* Few even of the public libraries in Great Britain contain the curious and interesting works noticed in the two preceding paragraphs; in private collections, whether in England or France, they are hardly ever to be met with. A very valuable collection on the subject exists in the British Museum, in great part the gifts of J. W. Croker, Esq., whose intimate acquaintance with, and deep research into the details of the Revolution are well known. The author has been fortunate enough to acquire, through the kindness of M. Amyot, the well-known Paris bookseller, an extensive and valuable collection of these contemporary journals and pamphlets, made at the time by a distinguished member of the Convention, and which has proved of the utmost service in the preparation of the later editions of this work.

with the lucid narratives of Marshal Jourdan, Marshal St Cyr, and General Dumourier, leave nothing to be desired for the earlier years of the war ; while the genius of Napoleon, as conspicuous in his memoirs as his victories, throws a clear light over the Italian campaigns, and renders it only a matter of regret, that his fidelity as an historian was not equal to his ability as an annalist. The Victories and Conquests of the French Armies, in twenty-six volumes, by Petitot, is a vast magazine of valuable information, though sometimes characterised by the partialities of a too devoted French patriot. The eloquent and graphic Narrative of General Mathieu Dumas, in eighteen volumes, commencing with the first appearance of Suwarroff in Italy, embraces the whole subsequent German campaigns of Napoleon ; the Histories of Berthier and Regnier, with the Memoirs of Miot, and the Narrative of Sir Robert Wilson, illustrate the brilliant episode of the Egyptian expedition ; while on the side of the Allies the works of the Archduke Charles bear as high a character for truth and integrity as military ability ; the eloquent History of M. Botta makes us acquainted with the melancholy catalogue of Italian sufferings ; the interesting life of Pius VII., by Artaud, opens up an interesting episode of Christian resignation and firmness in the midst of such a sea of blood ; and the Memoirs and Histories of the Prussian writers,* supply all that was wanting to complete their side of the picture.

For the history of the Empire, no works exist of equal ability or authority as those regarding the Revolution ; but in many detached publications, the principal facts of importance are to be found. M. Bignon, to whom Napoleon bequeathed, with a large legacy, the duty of compiling the history of his diplomacy, has executed the task, as far at least as 1810, with much ability, though a jaundiced and partial view of Great Britain pervades his pages. M. Norvins, in an animated and popular narrative,

* Especially Prince Hardenberg, in his highly interesting and curious *Mémoires d'un Homme d'Etat*, in thirteen volumes, with the brilliant Sketch, by Sir Robert Wilson, of the Polish campaign in 1807.

has detailed, in the spirit of a partisan of Napoleon, the most picturesque events of the Imperial history ; while the Abbé Montgaillard, in his elaborate history, in twelve volumes, with equal prejudice on the other side, has accumulated many facts necessary to be understood, for a right understanding of the Imperial government. M. Thibaudeau has, with great judgment, though in a spirit of undue national partiality, treated, in his history of the Consulate and Empire, in ten volumes, of the whole of Napoleon's reign. The negotiations with the Court of Rome are to be found recorded in the collections regarding the Italian Transactions, in three volumes, by Schoell, the able work on the Concordats by the Abbé du Pradt, and the valuable Memoirs of Cardinal Pacca ; while the chief diplomatic papers of the period are collected in the great works of Martens and Schoell, the former in twenty-two, the latter in twelve volumes, and in the valuable *Recueil des Pièces Officielles*, in nine volumes, by the latter of these laborious compilers. Goldsmith's *Cours Politique et Diplomatique de Napoleon*, in seven volumes, contains also a variety of most important documents, many of which the Imperial annalists would willingly bury in oblivion. Capefigue's eloquent history of Europe during the French Revolution, in six volumes, of the Empire of Napoleon, and the Hundred Days, in twelve volumes, recently published, and his earlier narrative of the causes which led to the restoration and fall of the elder branch of the House of Bourbon, also in twelve volumes, abound with rich and varied information, especially in relation to the diplomatic events of the period, interspersed with episodes painted with poetic fire. In the *Biographie Universelle*, also, edited by M. Michaud, in fifty-two volumes, and its additions in the Supplement, embracing contemporary characters, now in course of publication at Paris, many interesting particulars regarding the chief characters who figured during the Revolution and the Empire are to be found scattered amidst a profusion of other and varied information. The military events of the campaign of 1809 in Germany, are ably recorded in the works of General Pelet, General Stutterheim, and the Archduke John's

Account of his Italian Campaign ; while the interesting *Life of Hofer* by Bartholdy, and the brilliant sketch of the war in the Tyrol by Forster, convey as vivid pictures of the astonishing efforts of the inhabitants of that romantic region.*

As the contest advanced, and Great Britain was drawn as a principal into the continental war, the materials for a general history became still more ample. The invaluable record of the Duke of Wellington's Despatches, in twelve volumes, contains an authentic narrative of his Indian and Peninsular campaigns, told with equal judgment, penetration, and simplicity ; while his general orders, and Sir George Murray's orders as Quarter-master-General, lately published in quarto, afford an important contemporary record of these events. The Despatches of Marquis Wellesley shed a clear light over the complicated maze of Indian politics, during the splendid period of his administration. Mr Southey's incomparable *Life of Nelson* contains all that England could desire to have recorded of her naval hero ; while his *History of the Peninsular War* contains a heart-stirring narrative of that memorable struggle. The delightful Memoirs of Lord Collingwood, with the recent able Lives of Howe, Earl St Vincent, Lord Exmouth, Lord de Saumarez, and Sir Henry Blackwood, open up a fund of interesting adventure in our naval transactions. But with the glories of Wellington's campaigns the name of Colonel Napier is indissolubly united : and his glowing pages, and scientific reflections, render it only an object of regret, that political feelings should sometimes have tinged with undue bias his otherwise impartial military relation. Count Toreno has, in an able work in six volumes, given the Spanish account of the whole Events of the Peninsular War. If any thing were wanting to complete the picture, it would be found in the animated Narratives of Lord Londonderry, Colonel Jones, Mr Gleig, Captain Hamilton, Captain Scherer, and Mr Maxwell, whose works exhibit a succession of sketches, so vivid and yet so faithful, that the historian must be

* Geschichte Andreas Hofer und Beitrage zur Neueren Kriegsgeschichte, von Friedrich Forster. Berlin, 1816.

insensible indeed who does not partake, in some degree, of their enthusiasm.

The French side of the Peninsular War has not been so fully illustrated as their other and more successful campaigns; but the impartial Narrative of General Jomini, with the detached works of General Foy, Count Thiebault, General Lapene, M. Rocca, Marshal St Cyr, and Marshal Suchet, throw a clear light over part, at least, of those complicated events. The *Journaux des Sièges dans la Peninsule*, by M. Belmas, recently published in four volumes, by authority of the French Government, at Paris, is a work on this subject of equal splendour and authenticity.

For the memorable occurrences of the Russian campaign, the eloquent and pictured pages of Count Ségur, M. Chambray, Baron Larrey, Baron Fain, La Baume, and General Vaudoncourt, corrected by the details of General Gourgaud, the scientific sketch of General Jomini,* the powerful narrative of General Clausewitz, and the luminous and impartial Russian narrative of Colonel Boutourlin, furnish ample materials. The campaign of 1813, in Germany, has been equally illustrated by the pens of General Vaudoncourt, La Baume, Generals Muffling, Gneisenau, and Bulow; Baron Odeleben, Colonel Boutourlin, Baron Fain, Lord Burghersh, and Lord Londonderry; while the whole official details are to be found in the accurate German compilation of Plotho. The German writers have not been so rapid as might have been expected in recounting the transactions of this glorious year; but at length several valuable publications have appeared on it, particularly the small but able narrative of Carl Bade, the larger work of Richter, and *Die Grosse Chronique*, which contains an able abstract of all the authorities on the subject. The Russian account of that campaign is admirably given in the work of the Emperor Alexander's aide-de-camp, General Danilefsky. The graphic details of these works are admirably condensed in the *Précis des Evènements*

* In his *Life of Napoleon*, a work of extraordinary ability and most impartial observation.

Militaires en 1813, recently published at Leipsic, in French and German ; while to the last and greatest campaign of Napoleon, the vivid descriptions of Beauchamps, La Baume, Koch, and General Vaudoncourt, corrected by the official documents of Plotho, and the highly interesting Russian narrative of Alexander's aide-de-camp, Danilefsky, with the able narratives of Jomini and Baron Fain, have done ample justice.

No historian, however, can have gone over the military events of the Revolutionary War, without having experienced the benefit of the splendid Atlas and accurate description of battles by Kausler, in French and German ; a work unparalleled in the annals of art, and which almost brings the theatre of the principal battles of the period before the eyes of the reader. For the subsequent and proudest year of England's achievements, the various accounts of the Battle of Waterloo by Generals Gourgaud, Grouchy, and above all, General Jomini in his recent work on the campaign of that year, with the admirable details given in the narrative of the battle of Waterloo by a near observer, over which the gifted mind of Sir Walter Scott has thrown the light of his genius, furnish inexhaustible resources, and close the work with a ray of glory, to which there is nothing comparable in her long and illustrious annals.

In one particular, not the least important or interesting of the whole work, the author for a very long period had very great difficulty. This was in understanding the different accounts of the battle of Waterloo itself, or reconciling them with each other, and extracting from the whole any thing like a correct account of that memorable conflict. The author need not be ashamed of making this admission, as General Jomini himself admits that he never could understand thoroughly the battle, especially in its later stages ; and that of all the engagements he had ever studied, it was the one which presented the most difficulty in detail. In consequence of this circumstance, there were several respects in which the account of the battle in the first, and even in the second edition of this history, was incorrect. At length, however, the admirable industry of Cap-

tain Siborne, in collecting accounts of their several shares in the conflict from officers in all the regiments engaged in it, as well as his careful analysis of the German and French authorities on the subject, have reconciled all the seeming contradictions regarding it, and smoothed away nearly all the difficulties with which it was surrounded. Of this invaluable aid, the Author has largely availed himself in the later editions of the last volume; and the account there presented is, he trusts, in all material points correct, and is as full as is consistent with a work of general history.

In the description of the theatre of these great events, the author, when he does not quote authority, has in general proceeded on his own observation. This is particularly the case with the fields of Marengo, Novi, Arcola, Rivoli, Lodi, the Brenta, the Trébia, the Tagliamento, Zurich, Ulm, Echmuhl, Hohenlinden, Salzburg, Jena, Austerlitz, Aspern, Wagram, Dresden, Leipsic, the Katzbach, Hanau, Laon, Brienne, Craonne, Soissons, Paris, and Waterloo, the passage of the St Bernard, the St Gothard, and the Splugen; and, in general, the seat of war in 1796 and 1797, in the Alps of Savoy, Switzerland, Tyrol, and Styria, the theatre of Napoleon's and Suwarroff's campaigns in Italy, those of the Archduke Charles in Germany, the memorable struggle of the Tyrolese in 1809, and of Napoleon's last efforts in the north of Germany and France. He has not deemed it advisable to accompany the work with maps, as that would render it inaccessible to the generality of readers; but those who are not familiar with the places referred to, will frequently find such a reference of great service; and the military student of Napoleon's campaigns in Germany and France, will see the theatre of war admirably delineated in Mr Johnston's maps of these countries contained in his general collection. But those who study Wellington's campaigns, are in an especial manner referred to the splendid Atlas of his victories recently published by Wyld—a work so graphic and accurate as to bring the inequalities of the ground, and the positions of the troops, with all the vividness of reality before the mind of the reader.

Every one who investigates the events of this period, must be struck with the great inferiority, generally speaking, of the English historians who treat of the same subject. Till the era of the Peninsular War, when a cluster of gifted spirits arose, there are no writers on English affairs at all comparable to the great historical authors on the Continent. In this dearth of native genius applied to this subject, it is fortunate that a connected narrative of events of varied ability, but continued interest and extensive information, is to be found in the *Annual Register*; that the *Life of Mr Pitt* by Gifford embodies with discriminating talent all the views of that great statesman; and his biography by Tomline leads the reader only to regret that it should terminate at the most eventful crisis of his administration; while the *Parliamentary Debates* through the whole period, edited nominally by Cobbett and Hansard, but really under the able direction of Mr Wright, who has recently, in the important and interesting Cavendish Debates, supplied the long-lost link in our Parliamentary History, not only contain most of the statistical details of value to the historian, but all the arguments urged, both in the legislature and elsewhere, for and against the measures of government.

An invaluable mass of statistical information for the whole period is to be found in the *Parliamentary Reports*, compiled with so much care by the Committees of both Houses of Parliament, and admirably digested in the able works of Marshall, Colquhoun, Moreau, and Pebrer, as well as the elaborate official compilations of Porter, both in his *Parliamentary Tables*, in fourteen volumes folio, and his *View of the Progress of the British Empire*, in three volumes 12mo; an immense treasure of important knowledge regarding our colonies is to be found in Martin's valuable Colonial History; while, for the details of our naval forces and successes, ample materials are to be found in the minute and incomparable work of Mr James, and the able but less accurate history of Captain Brenton. Nor are the French statistical works in relation to this period of less value than the Parliamentary compilations of England. In parti-

cular, the splendid "*Statistiques de la France*," in ten volumes folio, published in Paris, may well be placed beside Porter's *Parliamentary Tables*, for extent and accuracy of statistical information.

An episode in general history, equally interesting and important, growing out of the attack by Napoleon on Spain, is the South American Revolution. It is hard to say, whether this subject is most attractive from the splendid and varied character of the vast continent which it embraces, the romantic and tragic interest of the dreadful convulsions of which it became the theatre, or the immense effect which their progress has had on the supplies of the precious metals from the globe, and, through them, on the prosperity and fortunes of the British empire. The historian here discovers the same application of just retribution to the interested iniquity of his own country, which the annals of the period in general afford examples of, in a more signal manner, to similar aggressions on the part of other nations. Materials do not exist, as yet, for a full and correct narrative of the bloody struggles which arose from, or were connected with the rise of South American independence; and the principal events in it occurred so long after the period when this History, in other events, terminates, that a cursory reference could be alone attempted. But the admirable narratives of Herrera, and the early Spanish historians, with the splendid and accurate works of Humboldt and Malte Brun, afford ample materials for the description of physical nature; and in the able Life of Bolivar by General Ducondray Holstein, one of his gallant companions in arms, the Memoirs of General Murillo, by himself, and the very interesting narrative of General Millar, himself a leading actor in the campaigns he describes, enough is to be found to convey a general idea of the leading events, and make the reader desire fuller details of such momentous and heart-stirring transactions.

Another episode of the most important and interesting kind, is afforded by the rise and progress of the United States, and the adjoining splendid colonies of Great Britain, in North America.

Though these Transatlantic States are of such recent origin, yet the materials in regard to their moral, political, and physical circumstances, are singularly ample and important. The statistics of the American Confederacy have been ascertained in recent times, with a degree of accuracy equal even to that evinced in similar investigations in France or England; and may be found well digested in several publications, particularly the Statistical Almanac of America, annually published at Boston. The peculiarities, advantages, and evils of the institutions, manners, and customs of the United States, have been ably delineated, though sometimes perhaps with somewhat of an unfriendly hand, by Captain Hall, Captain Marryat, Captain Hamilton, and Mrs Trollope; while Miss Martineau, albeit strongly imbued with partiality to liberal institutions and dissent, has, with admirable impartiality, accumulated a great variety of facts, throwing the clearest light on the effects of their political and ecclesiastical system, and frequently not a little at variance with the preconceived opinions with which she commenced her travels. But it is remarkable, that by far the fullest and most philosophical view of America has been presented by foreign writers; and the works of M. De Tocqueville and M. Chevalier will be admired, so long as profound thought, enlightened views, and luminous reasoning, shall retain a place in human estimation. For the physical description of America, both North and South, recourse has constantly been had to the incomparable geographical system of Malte Brun, and the splendid travels of M. Humboldt; works which demonstrate, that the most accurate information, the widest range of scientific knowledge, and the most unbounded labour, may be combined with the eye of a painter, the soul of a poet, and the highest flights of descriptive power.

The minute and intricate, but important events of the American war, are embodied in works of various merit, but affording, on the whole, a clear insight into the complicated details of Transatlantic hostilities. Mr Cooper's History of the American Navy gives a minute, and on the whole, allowing for national partial-

ity, fair account of the maritime contest ; though the unequalled graphic powers for naval painting which his novels prove he possesses, render it often a matter of regret, that he has not lent to reality the colours, true to nature, which he has employed in fiction. Armstrong's War of 1812, gives the whole military events of the period with great impartiality, and from authentic documents ; while Christie's War in Canada furnishes all the corrections necessary for the English side of the question. The military operations of the British in Canada, at Washington, and New Orleans, by Mr James, exhibits an animated narrative of that checkered contest ; while the powerful mind and masterly hand of Mr Bancroft, render it a matter of regret, that his elaborate history has not come down so far as the second American war. For the whole details of the maritime contest, so interesting to all who have the honour of the British Navy at heart, constant recourse has been had to the elaborate work of Mr James, whose inimitable accuracy supersedes, and renders superfluous, every other authority on the British side of the conflict.

While justice requires, however, that this general praise should be bestowed on the continental and transatlantic writers who have treated of this period, there is one particular which it is impossible to pass over without an expression of a different kind. Of whatever party, nation, or shade of opinion, they seem all at bottom imbued with a profound hatred of this country, and, in consequence, they generally ascribe to the British cabinet a dark or Machiavelian policy, in matters where it is well known to every person in England, and will be obvious to posterity, they were regulated by very different motives, and often proceeded, from inexperience of warlike measures, without any fixed principle at all. The existence of so general and unfounded a prejudice in so many authors of such great and varied ability, would be inexplicable, if we did not reflect on the splendid post which England occupied throughout the whole struggle, and recollect, that in nations equally as individuals, the conferring of obligations too often engenders no other feel-

ing but that of antipathy; that no compliment is so flattering, because none is so sincere, as the vituperation of an adversary who has been inspired with dread; and that, though the successful party in a strife is always secretly flattered by the praises bestowed on his antagonists, it is too much to expect of human magnanimity a similar feeling in those to whom fortune has proved adverse.

The events of this period, especially during the earlier years of the Revolution, are so extensive and complicated, that the only way in which it appeared possible to give a clear narrative, was to treat in separate chapters of the civil and military transactions, and in many cases to break into different ones the events of a single campaign. In this way the order of chronology has not, in every instance, been strictly followed; and the same events required to be sometimes-mentioned twice over, once as affecting the civil history of the times, and again as forming part of their military annals. This inconvenience, however, was unavoidable, and is a trifling disadvantage, compared to the benefit arising from following out a certain set of transactions, without interruption, to their termination.

In treating of a subject of such extent, embracing so great a variety of events, and involving almost all the points now in dispute between the two great parties who divide the world, it appeared advisable to the author, with a view both to impartiality and historical fidelity, to adopt two rules, which have been faithfully adhered to throughout the whole work.

The first of these was to give on every occasion the authorities by volume and page, from which the statement in the text was taken. This has been carried to an unusual, some may think unnecessary length, as not only are the authorities for every paragraph invariably given, but in many instances also those for every sentence have been accumulated on the margin. This appeared, however, indispensable in treating of subjects on which men are so much divided, not only by national but political prejudices, and in which every statement, not supported by unquestionable authority, would be liable to be called in

question or discredited. For the same reason, care has been taken to quote a preponderance of authority, in every instance where it was possible, from writers on the opposite side from that which an English historian, surveying events with the feelings which attachment to a constitutional monarchy produces, may be supposed to adopt; and the reader will find almost every fact, in the internal history of the Revolution, supported by two Republican and one Royalist authority; and every event in the military narrative by at least two writers on the part of the French, for one on that of their opponents.

The second rule adopted was to give the arguments for and against every public measure, in the words of those who originally brought them forward, where it was possible, without any attempt at paraphrase or abridgement. This is more particularly the case in the debates of the National Assembly of France, the Parliament of England, and the Council of State under Napoleon; and in effecting the selection, the author has been most forcibly impressed with the prodigious, though often perverted and mistaken ability, which distinguished those memorable discussions. There can be no doubt, that in thus presenting the speeches in the words of the real actors on the political stage, the work has assumed, in its earlier parts, a dramatic air, unusual at least in modern histories; but it is the only method by which the spirit and feelings of the moment could be faithfully transmitted to posterity, or justice done to the motives, on either side, which influenced mankind; and a modern author need not hesitate to follow an example which has been set by Thucydides, Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus.

It seemed advisable to adopt this plan for another reason. The course of a Revolution is so completely at variance with the ordinary tenor of human events, and the motives which then influence men are so different from those which in general obtain an ascendancy, that, without the running commentary of their own expressions, it is impossible to do justice either to their motives, or to the great moral lessons to be derived from their history. It is only by comparing their words with their

actions, that the deceitful nature of the passions by which they have been misled can be made manifest, and the important truth demonstrated, that nations, not less than individuals, are seduced by false but alluring appellations of things; that it is in the name of humanity that thousands are massacred, and under the banners of freedom that the most grievous despotism is established.

No attempt has been made on any occasion to disguise the real opinions of the author; but, on the contrary, the conclusions which he thought fairly deducible from the events which were recounted, have been fully given, with the grounds on which they are founded. At the same time, he has exerted himself to the utmost to give with force and accuracy the arguments which were advanced, or may be advanced, for the opposite side of the question; and those who do not go along with these conclusions, will find in the context the materials for correcting them.

In the discussion of the great questions, civil, political, and military, which have so frequently come under his notice in the following pages, the Author has invariably adopted another rule, which to many may perhaps appear to require explanation. This is, to express his opinion without reserve on all these subjects, undeterred by authority, unswayed so far as possible by national feeling; endeavouring at the same time to do justice to the great men whose actions are passed in review, where their conduct was censured, by quoting so far as possible their words in vindication, or referring to their deeds on other occasions in explanation of their conduct. On this principle he has not hesitated frequently to blame the political measures of Pitt and Fox, and sometimes to criticise the military manœuvres of Napoleon and Wellington. This course has not been adopted without mature consideration, nor followed out without foreseeing obloquy. The story of the sophist censuring the Carthaginian hero at Ephesus, may perhaps occur, when an author, neither a professional soldier nor a practical legislator, discusses the conduct of the greatest orators and statesmen of this, of the greatest commanders of this, or perhaps any other age. But

the distinction between such presumptuous conduct as censuring a great man in his own presence, and discussing his merits before the bar of posterity, is obvious and important, and has always been recognised. The unanimous voice of subsequent ages has condemned the presumption of Phormio, who *lectured* Hannibal; but it has as generally approved the judgment of Tacitus, who condemned the Cæsars, and the disquisitions of Polybius, who criticised the Scipios. Without ever hoping to rival, a modern author need not be ashamed of having endeavoured to imitate—*sed heu quanto intervallo!*—the fearless discrimination of these great men.

Military and political, like mathematical science, is essentially progressive; ordinary capacity in one age can attain what it required the utmost effort of intellect to reach in another. A boy at school can now solve problems to which Thales and Archimédes alone were equal in the infancy of geometry. Fearlessness is the first quality of an historian, as of a general, especially of one who records contemporary or nearly contemporary events: faultlessness never yet was given to a child of Adam. If mankind are to be overborne by the influence of great names, or silenced by the weight of national services, history need not be written, politics and war will cease to be progressive sciences, and the boasted control of public opinion will sink before the reputation of the very men over whom it should be exerted. What the historian does to others he willingly accords to himself, and certainly he feels no sort of impropriety in a youth of twenty making his first essay in letters by the criticism of the work of twenty years. It is by truth only that durable fame can be attained, by impartiality that a lasting impression is to be made. Many a great reputation has been stifled under the weight of indiscriminate encomium. Even the biographers of great men would, if they knew the real interests of their heroes, adopt the same course. It is a sense of its justice which gives weight to panegyric, and fixes it permanently in the opinion of men. If these pages are destined to outlive their author, the praises bestowed on Wellington

(and they are warm and frequent) will not be lessened in their weight by the recollection, that the author dealt out the same impartial measure to a living countryman, victorious and in power, as to a dead enemy, defeated and overthrown.

If there is any one opinion, which, more than another, is impressed on the mind by a minute examination of the changes of the French Revolution, it is the perilous nature of the current into which men are drawn, who commit themselves to the stream of political innovation; and the great difficulty experienced by those engaged in the contest, even though gifted with the greatest intellect and the most resolute determination, in avoiding the commission of many crimes, amidst the stormy scenes to which it rapidly brings them. It is not difficult to perceive the final cause of this law of nature, or the important purpose it is intended to serve in the moral government of the world, by expelling from society, through the force of suffering, passions inconsistent with its existence. But it is a consideration of all others the best calculated to inspire forbearance and moderation, in forming an opinion of the intentions or actions of others placed in such trying and calamitous circumstances, and to exemplify the justice of the sacred precept, "to judge of others as we would wish they should judge of ourselves." Inexorable and unbending, therefore, in his opposition to false principles, it is the duty of the historian of such times to be lenient and considerate in his judgment of particular men; and, touching lightly on the weakness of such as are swept along by the waves, to reserve the weight of his censure for those who put the perilous torrent in motion.

It is another duty of the historian, in recounting the events of a period when great and general public calamities have been produced by abuses of a protracted kind, or the false application of principles which are just to a limited extent, to put in as clear a point of view as possible the consequences of the errors, whether in government or public opinion, which he is engaged in tracing. The annals of Tacitus are justly filled with indignant exclamations against the tyranny of the emperors and the

decay of Roman virtue ; those of the religious wars of Modern Europe, with pictures of the ruinous consequences of religious fanaticism, and the atrocious tyranny of bigoted persecution. The history of the French Revolution alternately directs the mind to both the great sources of human oppression. Its earlier years suggest at every page reflections on the evils of political fanaticism, and the terrible consequences of democratic fervour ; the latter on the debasing effects of absolute despotism, and the sanguinary march of military ambition.

The composition of the volumes now submitted to the public, formed the recreation of many years, during the intervals of laborious professional employments ; the two first were completed before the second French Revolution broke out, or any political changes were contemplated in this country. The progress of domestic as well as foreign changes since that event, has given the author no reason to doubt the soundness of the conclusions drawn from the composition of the annals of the first great convulsion, and has inspired him with gloomy sentiments as to the future fate of his country. But no person will more sincerely rejoice than himself, if the course of time shall demonstrate that these fears are ill-founded, and that England has no cause to apprehend danger from innovations which proved so destructive to her more impassioned rival.

Finally, when he looks back to the vast series of splendid and heroic achievements which it is the object of these pages to commemorate ; when he reflects on the talent which has been exerted in the actions, and the genius which has been displayed in the narratives, which are here passed under review, the author cannot but feel his own inadequacy to so great an undertaking, or avoid giving expression to the feeling, that if the work contains any interest, it is in justice to be ascribed to the virtue, the bravery, or ability of others, and that its numerous defects he can impute to no one but himself.

A. ALISON.

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HISTORY OF EUROPE.

INTRODUCTION.

PROGRESS OF FREEDOM IN THE WORLD BEFORE THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

THERE is no period in the history of the world which can be compared, in point of interest and importance, to that which embraces the progress and termination of the French Revolution. In no former age were events of such magnitude crowded together, or interests so momentous at issue between contending nations. From the flame which was kindled in Europe, the whole world has been involved in conflagration; and a new era dawned upon both hemispheres from the effects of its expansion. With the first rise of a free spirit in France, the liberty of North America was established, and its last exertions spread the discordant passion for independence through the wide extent of the Southern Continent. In the midst of a desperate contest in Europe, the British empire in India has unceasingly extended, and the ancient fabric of Hindoo superstition at length begun to yield to the force of European civilisation. Though last to be reached by the destructive flame, the power of Russia has been indefinitely strengthened by the contests in which she has been engaged; and the dynasties of Asia can now hardly withstand the arms which the forces of Napoleon were unable to subdue. Assailed by the energy of England on the south, and by the might of Russia on the north, the deso-

INTRODUC-
TION.

1.
Importance
and magni-
ficence of
the subject.

INTRODUC-
TION.

lating reign of Mahommedan oppression seems drawing to its close ; and from the strife of European war two powers have emerged, which appear destined to carry the blessings of civilisation and the light of religion as far as the arm of conquest can reach, or the waters of the ocean extend.

2.
Compari-
son of the
era of Na-
poleon with
others in
the world.

In the former history of the world, different eras are to be observed, which have always attracted the attention of men, from the interest of the events which they present, and the importance of the consequences to which they have led. It is in the midst of the greatest struggles of the species, that the fire has been struck which has most contributed to its improvement. In the contest between Grecian freedom and Persian despotism, the genius was elicited which has spread the spirit of philosophy and the charms of art among mankind ; in the severer struggles between the Romans and Carthaginians, that unconquerable spirit was produced, which in half a century spread the Roman empire over the whole surface of the civilized world.¹ It was amidst the first combats between the Mahommedans and the Christians that the genius of modern Europe took its rise, and engrafted the refinements of ancient taste on the energy of barbarian valour ; from the wars between the Moors and the Spaniards, the enterprise arose which burst the barriers of ancient knowledge, and opened to modern ambition the wonders of another hemisphere. The era of Napoleon will be ranked by future ages with those of Pericles, of Hannibal, and of the Crusades, not merely from the splendour of the events which it produced, but the magnitude of the effects by which it was followed.

¹ Polyb. 1,
i. c. 1.

3.
Splendour
of its events.

Within the space of twenty years, events were in that era accumulated which would have filled the whole annals of a powerful state, in any former age, with instruction and interest. In that brief period were successively presented the struggles of an aged monarchy, and the growth of a fierce democracy ; the energy of Republican valour, and the triumphs of Imperial discipline ; the pride of barbarian conquest, and the glories of patriotic resistance. In the rapid pages of its history will be found parallels to the long annals of ancient greatness ; to the genius of Hannibal, and the passions of Gracchus ; the ambition of Cæsar, and

the splendour of Augustus; the triumphs of Trajan, and the disasters of Julian. The power of France was less durable than that of Rome, only because it was more oppressive; it was more stubbornly resisted, because it did not bring the blessings of civilisation with its eagles. Its course was hailed by no grateful nations; its progress marked by no experienced blessings: unlike the beneficent sun of Roman greatness, which shone only to improve, its light, like the dazzling glare of the meteor, "rolled, blazed, destroyed, and was no more."

Nor were the varieties of character, which appeared on the scene during those eventful years, less deserving of attention. If the genius displayed was unprecedented, so also was the wickedness; if history has little to show comparable to the triumphs that were gained, it has no parallel to the crimes that were committed. The terrible severity of Danton, the fanatical cruelty of Robespierre, are as unexampled as the military genius of Napoleon, or the naval career of Nelson. If France may, with reason, pride herself upon the astonishing accumulation of talent which was brought to bear upon the fortunes of the state during the progress of the Revolution, she must share the disgrace of the inhuman crimes which were committed by its leaders, and borne with by its supporters among the people. It is the peculiar duty of the historian to preserve, for future admiration, the virtues which adorned, and to consign to eternal execration the vices which disgraced, that eventful age:—"Exsequi sententias *haud institui, nisi insignes per honestiam, aut notabili dedecore; quod præcipuum munus annalium reor, ne virtutes sileantur, utque pravis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamia metus sit. Ceterum tempora illa adeo infecta, ut non modo priores civitatis, quibus claritudo sua obsequiis protegenda erat, sed omnes consulares, magna pars eorum qui præturâ functi, multi- que etiam pedarii senatores, certatim exsurgerent, fœdaque et nimia censerent.*"*

INTRODUC-
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4.

Extraordi-
nary varie-
ties of cha-
racter which
it exhibited.

¹ Tac. An-
nal. iii. 65.

* "I have resolved to record no sentiments unless such as are remarkable for their magnanimity or their baseness. And this is the chief use of annals, to hinder virtues from being forgotten, and to consign wicked deeds and words to eternal and dreaded infamy. But those times were so corrupted, that not merely the chiefs of the State, to whom their lustre should have proved a shield, but all persons of consular dignity, great part of those who had passed through the prætorship, many even of the ordinary senators, seemed to vie with each other in base and disgraceful actions."—TACITUS, *Annals*, iii. p. 65.

INTRODUC-
TION.

5.
Character
and virtues
of the Eu-
ropean na-
tions which
were exhi-
bited.

The peculiar virtues and character of all the European nations were eminently exemplified during those disastrous years. The obstinate hostility of the Spaniards, the enthusiastic valour of the French, the ardent spirit of the Prussians, the persevering steadiness of the Austrians, the devoted courage of the Russians, the freeborn bravery of the English, have been successively put to the test. The boasted glories of Louis XIV. sink into insignificance compared to the triumphs of Napoleon; and the victories of Marlborough produced less important consequences than those of Vittoria and Waterloo. Since the Western World was arrayed against the Eastern on the shores of Palestine, no such assemblages of armed men have been seen as those which followed the standards of Napoleon; and the hordes which Attila displayed on the plains of Chalons, were less formidable than those which Alexander led from the deserts of Scythia.

6.
Its intellec-
tual efforts.

Nor were the intellectual exertions of this animating period less conspicuous than its warlike achievements. In this bloodless contest, the leaders of civilisation, the lords of the earth and the sea, outstripped all other states. The same age which witnessed the military glories of Wellington and Napoleon, beheld the completion of astronomical investigation by Laplace, and the hidden recesses of the heart unfolded by Sir Walter Scott. Earth told the history of its revolutions through the remains buried in its bosom, and the secrets even of material composition yielded to the powers of philosophical analysis. Sculpture revived under the taste of Canova, and the genius of Thorwaldsen again charmed the world by the fascinations of design; architecture displayed its splendour in the embellishments of the French metropolis, and the rising capital of Russia united to the solidity of Egyptian materials the delicacy of Grecian taste.¹ Even the rugged ridges of the Alps yielded to the force of scientific enterprise, and the barriers of nature were smoothed by the efforts of human perseverance; while the genius of Britain added a new element to the powers of art, and made fire the instrument of subduing the waves.

¹ Clarke's
Travels, xi.
391, 392.

Effects so various could not have arisen in the ordinary course of human events. The talent developed was too great, the wickedness committed too appalling, to be

explained on the usual principles of human nature. It seemed rather as if some higher powers had been engaged in a strife in which man was the visible instrument; as if the demons of hell had been let loose to scourge mankind, and the protection of Heaven for a time withdrawn from virtue, to subject its firmness to the severest test. The fancy of antiquity would have peopled the scene with hostile deities, supporting unseen the contests of armies; the severer genius of Christianity beheld in it the visible interposition of Almighty Power, to punish the sins of a corrupted world. There was nothing, however, supernatural in the events of that momentous age. The magnitude of the effects produced arose entirely from the intensity of the feelings which were roused; the extremes of virtue and vice which were exhibited, from the force of the incitements to the former, and the temptations to the latter, which were presented. The interests which were at stake were not the loss of provinces or the retreat of armies, but the fate of whole ranks in society, and the lives of multitudes, from the throne to the cottage; the passions which were called into action, not the momentary excitation of national rivalry, or the casual burst of hostile feeling, but the mutual and deep-rooted hatred which had been gathering strength from the foundation of the world. The friends of liberty inhaled their spirit from the example of antiquity, and drank deep of the fountains which the writers of Greece and Rome had opened; the supporters of the throne struck the profounder chords of religion and loyalty, and summoned to their aid the precepts of Catholic faith and the honour of modern nobility. The fervour of ancient eloquence, the recollections of classical achievement, warmed the former; the feelings of hereditary devotion, the glories of chivalrous descent, animated the latter. It was not the ripple of a minute that burst upon the shore, but the long swell of the Atlantic, wafted from distant realms, and heaved on the bosom of remote antiquity.

The struggle between the high and the low, the throne and the people, has subsisted from a remote period; but it is only in modern times that the principles of general freedom have been established, or those powers brought into collision which had been mutually gaining strength from

INTRODUC-
TION.

7.
Causes of
these cha-
racteristics

8.
Causes of
the early de-
pression of
the lower
orders.

INTRODUC-
TION.

the earliest times. How just soever it may appear to us, that the welfare and interests of the great body of the people should be protected from the aggressions of the powerful, there is nothing more certain than that such is not the primitive or original state of man, nor indeed, from the state of society, is it then possible. The varieties of human character ; the different degrees of intellectual or physical strength with which men are endowed ; the consequences of accident, misfortune, or crime ; the total destitution and helpless state of the poor in the infancy of civilisation ; the general want of foresight by which they are then distinguished—early introduce the distinction of ranks, and precipitate the lower orders into that state of dependence on their superiors, which is known by the name of slavery. This institution, however odious its name justly becomes in later times, is not an evil when it first arises ; it only becomes such by being continued in circumstances different from those in which it originated, and in periods when the protection and secure sustenance it affords to the poor are no longer required.

9.
Consequent
universality
of, and ne-
cessity for,
slavery.

The universality of slavery in the early ages of mankind, is a certain indication that it is unavoidable, from the circumstances in which the human species is every where placed, in the first stages of society. Where capital is unknown, property insecure, and violence universal, there is no security for the lower classes but in the protection of their superiors ; and the sole condition on which this can be obtained is that of slavery. Property in the person and labour of the poor, is the only consideration which can then induce the opulent to take them under their protection. Indolence is the great bar to the progress of mankind ; the species seems chained to the savage or pastoral state, from the universal antipathy to continued labour. War, dictated by the savage passions of the human heart, is in such an era a work of extermination ; the victor seeks only to satiate his wrath by the blood of the vanquished. Compulsion is the only power which can render labour general in the many ages which must precede the influence of artificial wants, or a general taste for its fruits ; the prospect of gain by the sale of captives, the only counterpoise that can be relied on to stay the uplifted hand of the conqueror. Humanity, justice, and policy, so

powerful as principles of government in civilized ages, are then unknown, and the sufferings of the destitute are as much disregarded as those of the lower animals. If they belonged to no lord, they would speedily fall a prey to famine or violence. How miserable soever the condition of slaves may be in those unruly times, they are incomparably better off than they would have been if they had incurred the destitution of freedom.¹

The simplicity of rural or patriarchal manners mitigates the severity of an institution which necessity had first introduced. The slaves among the Arabs or the Tartars enjoy almost as much happiness as their masters; their occupations, fare, and enjoyments are nearly the same.* It was with *unwilling* steps that Brisëis left the tent of Achilles;† and, in our own times, when some thousand female Greek captives were taken by Ibrahim Pacha from the Morea and the islands of the Archipelago, not more than five or six, when freedom was offered them on the conclusion of peace, would accept the offer and return home. To the maids of Circassia, who are trained from their earliest years to look forward to entering the haram of some Oriental potentate, the moment of leaving their paternal home is one in which hope and excitement generally overbalance grief; and in the slave-market of Constantinople itself, hardly any symptoms of sorrow are perceptible among the young women, excepting such as run the risk of being separated from their offspring. To the young and the handsome, it is the theatre of the same excitement as the ball-room or the opera in the capitals of Western Europe. To this day, the condition of a slave in all the Eastern empires differs but little from that of a domestic servant in modern Europe; and even the enfranchised poor of France and England would find something to envy in the situation of a Russian peasant. Succour in sickness, employment in health, and maintenance in old age, are important advantages even in the best regulated states;²

INTRODU-
TION.

¹ Sism.
Hist. de
France, i.
50-160.

10.
Difference
in the con-
dition of
slaves in
early and
later times.

² Park's
Travels in
Africa, i.
434. Vol-
ney's Syria,
p. 312.
Clarke's
Travels, i.
901-70.

* "Dominum ac servum nullis educationis deliciis dignoscas. Inter eadem pecora, in eodem humo degunt; donec ætas separet, ingenuos virtus agnoscat."—TACITUS, *De Mor. Germ.* c. 20.

† Εκ δ' αγαγε κλισιης Βρισηιδα καλλιπαρηνον
Δωκε δ' αγειν τω δ' αυτις ιτην παρα νηας Αχαιων,
'Η δ' αεκουσ' ἄμα τοισι γυνη κειν.

Iliad, i. 346.

INTRODUC-
TION.

during the anarchy of early times, their value is incalculable.

11.
Causes
which per-
petuate
slavery.

There is no instance in the history of the world of the peasantry in a level country, who are solely employed in the labours of agriculture, emancipating themselves, without external aid, from this state of dependence on their superiors. Attached to the soil, weighed down by the toil of cultivation, separated from each other, and limited in their observation; ignorant from want of mutual intercourse, and yet destitute of the energy of savage life—they have every where remained, from generation to generation, unable either to combine against violence or to escape from oppression. The inhabitants of Mesopotamia, of Egypt, and of Bengal, like the serfs of Poland or the boors of Russia in recent times, have continued, from the earliest ages, in the same state of passive and laborious existence. It is by the aid of other habits, and by the influence of a different state of society, that the first rudiments of freedom have been established among mankind.

12.
The inde-
pendence of
pastoral life.

The first of these causes is to be found in the independence and solitude of pastoral life. The Arabs who followed their camels over the sands of Arabia, the Scythians who wandered over the deserts of Tartary, were subject to no oppression, because they were restrained by no necessity. If the chief of a tribe was guilty of any act of injustice, his subjects had it always in their power to depart with their families and herds; and, before a few hours had elapsed, all trace of their route had disappeared in the sand of the desert, or amidst the vegetation of the steppes. Like our first parents on leaving Paradise, the world was all before them, and wherever grass flourished, or water was to be found, they were equally ready to sojourn and increase. From this independence of the shepherd tribes, joined to the boundless extent of the plains which nature had prepared for their reception, have sprung the freedom and energy of the pastoral character; the conquests of the Arabs, and the settlements of the Scythians, have arisen from the same cause of hardihood in their native wilds; and to the roving habits of our forefathers, who spread from the centre of Asia to the shores of the Atlantic, the liberty of modern times is mainly to be ascribed, and all

the glories of European civilisation have sprung—the arts of Greece, the arms of Rome, the chivalry of France, and the navy of England.

The second great source of freedom in human affairs, is to be found in the protection and opulence of walled cities. Amidst the security which they afford, industry is excited by the desire of enjoyment, and capital accumulates from the means of employing it. With the growth of wealth succeeds a consciousness of the independence which it confers; with the extension of property, an aversion to the oppression which might endanger it. The assembly of multitudes awakens a sense of strength; community of interest engenders public feeling; proximity of residence suggests the means of common defence. Amidst the growing wealth and rapid communication of ideas which prevail in commercial cities, the spirit of freedom is awakened, hatred to oppression confirmed, and the riches capable of combating it are produced. From this source the whole liberty of antiquity took its rise; their republics were all cradled in a single town, and confined to the citizens whom it produced; and the names of a state and political body were derived from that of a town, in which alone they were found to exist.*

The last source of freedom is to be found in the sequestered situation and independent habits of mountaineers. Amid the solitude of the Alps, or the fastnesses of Affghanistaun, vigour is called forth by the necessity for exertion, and independence preserved by security from insult. A churlish soil prevents the accumulation of wealth; mountain ridges offer no facilities to commerce; a life of hardihood at once strengthens the courage and invigorates the frame. It is in the long continuance of those habits, from generation to generation, that the cause of the bold and independent character of mountaineers is found.

“No product here the barren hills afford,
But man and steel, the soldier and his sword;
No vernal blooms their torpid rocks array,
But winter, lingering, chills the lap of May.”

The oppressors of mankind pass unheeding by these cradles of intrepid courage; and, attracted by the spoils of more opulent states, leave in their native obscurity the poor and hardy inhabitants of mountainous regions. From

* Πόλις and Πολιτική.

INTRODU-
TION.

2.

13.
The security
of walled
cities.

14.
The pro-
tection of
mountain
retreats.

INTRODUC-
TION.

generation to generation, accordingly, the same free and independent habits are perpetuated in the rugged regions of the world ; and, while the vigour of conquerors melts in the plains, as Alpine snows under the warmth of a southern sun, the freedom of the mountains is preserved, like their glaciers, in virgin purity, amidst the blasts and the severity of winter.

15.
Limited ex-
tent of free-
dom in an-
cient times.

The freedom of the ancient world expired in the course of ages, from the small number of those who enjoyed its benefits. This was the chief cause of its decay ; but it arose unavoidably from the limited sources from which freedom took its rise in ancient times. Republics, such as Athens or Sparta, where the freemen did not exceed twenty thousand, while the slaves were above four hundred thousand, were not free countries ; they were cities, in which a certain portion of the inhabitants, little qualified to exercise them, had acquired exclusive privileges, while they kept the great body of their brethren in a state of servitude.* Even the philosophers of antiquity, in their speculations concerning a perfect republic, could not extend their ideas beyond a small territory, ruled by a single city, in which the great body of the people were slaves. The privileged citizens evinced, on every occasion, the strongest repugnance against any extension of their rights to others ; and in consequence were exposed, on the first reverse, to the defection of all their allies. Hence the liberty of the Grecian republics was shortlived and precarious. The ruling citizens became corrupted from the influence of prosperity, or by the seductions of wealth ; and no infusion of energy took place from the lower ranks, to renovate their strength or supply their place ; the political body depended upon the exertions of a single class, exposed in a peculiar manner to the influence of debasing causes, and with its virtue the public freedom expired. The splendour of success, or the efforts of genius, might retard the approach of disaster or conceal the growth of decay ; but the season of maturity stripped the tree of its foliage, and the trunk, fed by no perennial fountain, and invigorated by no ascending nourishment, yielded without resistance to the usual causes of mortality.¹

¹ Plutarch in Pericles. Gib. i. 53, 54, and 383. Arist. de Rep. i. 4, 5. Mitford, ix. 10, 11. Staël, Rév. Franç. i. 10, 11.

* Athens contained, at the period of its greatest prosperity, 21,000—Sparta, 39,000 citizens.—GIBBON, i. 307, Note.

With a magnanimity so extraordinary, and so contrary to the ordinary principles of human nature, that it may almost be ascribed to Divine interposition, the Romans, from the foundation of their republic, admitted all the subjects of conquered states to a share of their privileges, and they received in return the empire of the world. From the first junction of the Romans and Sabines, to the final extension, by the Emperor Antoninus, of the privileges of Roman citizenship to the whole civilized world, this policy was steadily pursued; unshaken by success, unsubdued by disaster. The Romans felt the benefit of this magnanimous conduct, in the steady adherence of their allies during the severest periods of national misfortune.* Even the defeats of the Trebia and of Thrasymene were not followed by the defection of a single ally: nothing but the overthrow of Cannæ shook their fidelity; while the first serious disaster of Carthage, which confined its privileges to its own citizens, stripped that republic of all its subsidiary forces. The steady growth, unequalled extent, and long duration of the Roman empire, prove the wisdom of their political system; but it fell a prey at length to the dreadful consequences of general slavery, joined to the ruinous effect of an unrestricted importation of grain into Italy and the heart of the empire from its remoter provinces.

These circumstances at once filled the cities with servile dependents, and stripped the country of sturdy proprietors; they turned the citizens into crouching slaves, and the smiling fields into desolate pasturage. Even in the time of Augustus they had thinned the ranks of the legions of freemen, while they filled the armies with mercenary soldiers, and left in the provinces only great proprietors. Agriculture in Italy, crushed by the unrestrained importation of grain from Africa, where it was raised cheaper, because money being less abundant was dearer, was generally abandoned, and the great estates were pastured only by herds of cattle tended by slaves. Surrounded by crowds of destitute serfs or effeminate burghers, the consuls ere-

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TION.

16.
Different
policy of the
Romans. Its
prodigious
effects.

17.
Real causes
of the decay
of the Ro-
man Em-
pire.

* The Roman citizens, in the time of Paulus Æmilius, amounted to 337,000 persons capable of bearing arms; the admission of the Italian allies by Caius Gracchus, swelled their numbers to 4,163,000 in the time of Augustus; and the extension of the franchise to the Gauls augmented them to 6,900,000. The Emperor Antoninus, by a general edict, extended the privilege to the whole empire.¹

¹ Plutarch, in Caius Gracchus, and Paulus Æmilius. Ferg. v. iii. Gib. i. 78. Tac. Ann. xi. 24.

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TION.

long found it impracticable to raise a military force in the southern parts of the empire. These causes at length undermined the strength and destroyed the vitals of the state, and left nothing to withstand the barbarians, but nobles who wanted courage to defend their property, and slaves who were destitute of property to rouse their courage. When Rome was overthrown by the Goths under Alaric, the city was inhabited by seventeen hundred and sixty great families, many of them possessing £150,000 a-year of income, who cultivated their extensive estates in Italy and Africa by means of slaves; and it appears, from an authentic record, that before one of the barbarians had set his foot across the Alps, no less than 330,000 acres in Campania alone, formerly under cultivation, had reverted to a state of nature, and were tenanted only by wild beasts, while the supplies of grain for the great cities of Italy were entirely derived from Egypt and Lybia.^{1*}

18.
First irrup-
tion of the
Northern
nations. Its
great effects.

The barbarians who overthrew the Roman empire, brought with them from their deserts the freedom and energy of savage life. Amidst the expiring embers of civilized institutions, they spread the flames of barbarian independence; on the decayed stock of urban liberty, they engrafted the vigorous shoots of pastoral freedom. From their exploits, the thrones, the monarchs, and the nobles of Europe have taken their rise; in their customs is to be found the source of the laws and institutions of modern times; in their settlements, the origin of the peculiar character by which the different European nations are distinguished. Their conquests were not, in the end, a mere change of government, or the substitution of one race of monarchs for another; but a total subversion of the property, customs, and institutions of the vanquished people. Their cities were destroyed, their temples ruined, their moveables plundered, their estates confiscated.† The daughters of the greatest among the conquered were compelled

* The slaves in the Roman empire were extremely numerous; those of a single family were ascertained, on a melancholy occasion, to amount to 400 souls; but no general enumeration or peculiar garb was allowed, lest it should be discovered how few the freemen were in comparison to the slaves.—TACITUS.

† So far was this universal system of disinheriting carried after the Norman Conquest, that by a general enactment, inserted in Domesday Book, all alienations by Saxons, subsequent to the Conquest of William, and all titles to estates not derived from him, and registered in his books, were declared null.—THIERRY, ii. p. 278.

to receive husbands from the leaders of their enemies, while those of the inferior classes were exposed to the grossest insults, or driven in despair to the protection of convents; and the youth of the other sex, born to splendid possessions, were sold as slaves, or compelled to labour as serfs on the lands which their fathers held as proprietors. To such extremes of distress were the inhabitants of the vanquished states sometimes reduced, that they voluntarily submitted to bondage as the price of life, and sought in slavery the only protection which could be obtained from the violence by which they were surrounded.¹

It was not, however, at once, or by any sudden act of violence, that this complete transfer of property from the vanquished to the victors took place. The settlements of the Northern nations in the provinces of the Roman empire, did not resemble the conquests either of the Roman legions or the armies of modern Europe, but were rather akin, though more violent, to the gradual inroad which the Irish poor have effected into the provinces of Western Britain in these times. Wave after wave succeeded, before the whole country was occupied; one province was overrun for a whole generation before another was invaded; and a more equitable division of goods between the natives and the conquerors at first took place, than could have been expected where power was at the disposal of such rude barbarians. Sometimes a half, sometimes a third, of the vanquished lands, was left in the hands of the old proprietors; and although the portion was abridged by each successive inroad of conquerors, yet it was several centuries before the transfer was completely effected; and some remnants of the ancient free, or allodial tenure, have in all the European monarchies survived the whole changes of the middle ages. Gradually, however, the work of spoliation was extended; the depressed condition and timid character of the native inhabitants rendered them incapable of resisting the inroads of their fierce neighbours; numbers surrendered their properties for the benefit of feudal protection; the daughters of the vanquished, if entitled to lands, nearly all chose their husbands, with the usual partiality of the fair sex for foreigners, from the sons of the conquerors, or were compelled to do so by the power of the sovereign.² At length the change was

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TION.

¹ Thierry, ii. 24, 96, 97, 109, 110. Sism. Hist. de France, i. 277.

19. Lamentable prostration of the vanquished.

² Guizot, Essais sur l'Hist. de France, 330, 352, 390, 401. Thierry, Essais sur l'Histoire, 87, 99.

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TION.

generally effected, and the land had almost every where passed from the Romans to the Northern proprietors. Before the 10th century, the transference was complete.

20.
Separation
thence in-
duced be-
tween the
classes of
society in
modern
times.

The lamentable state of weakness and decay into which the Roman empire had fallen in the latter ages of its existence, in consequence of the universality of slavery in all its provinces, rendered the people totally incapable of preventing this general spoliation. They submitted, almost without resistance, to every invader, and could hardly be induced to take up arms, even by the most incessant foreign and domestic aggressions. Hence arose a total separation of the higher and lower orders, and entire change in the habits, occupation, and character of the different ranks of society. From the free conquerors of the Roman provinces have sprung the noble and privileged classes of modern Europe; from their enslaved subjects, the numerous and degraded ranks of peasants and labourers. The equality and energy of pastoral life stamped a character of pride and independence on the descendants of the conquerors, which in many countries is yet unabated; the misery and degradation of the vanquished riveted chains about their necks, which were hardly loosened for a thousand years. In this original separation of the different ranks of society, consequent upon the irruption of the Franks into Gaul, is to be found the remote cause of the evils which induced the FRENCH REVOLUTION. But many ages were destined to elapse before the conflicting interests thus created came into collision; and it was by the gradual agency of several concurring causes that the energy was restored to the mass of the people, which had been lost amidst the tranquillity of Roman servitude and the violence of feudal oppression.¹

¹ Thierry, *Intro.* i. 9.
Sismondi's, *France*, i. 74, 87.

21.
Entire pro-
stration of
the van-
quished.

When the lands of the vanquished people were at length generally divided, and the military followers of the victorious invaders had completely overspread the conquered territory, the nobles despised their subjects too much to court their assistance in periods of danger. The mode of warfare then universally practised, rendered the baron independent of aid from his inferiors. Literally speaking, he held his possessions of God and his sword. Battles were decided by the gendarmerie alone, with little aid from the foot-soldiers. The steel-clad knights rode through

the unprotected spearmen, as they would have done through thickets of broom ; it was their brother knights alone who either attracted their notice, or were deemed worthy of their hostility. Shut up in castles, and surrounded by their own military retainers, they neither required the aid nor felt for the sufferings of their bondsmen. The ravages of the Normans, the cruelty of the Huns, excited but little compassion while it was wreaked only on the slaves of the country ; and the baron, secure within his walls, beheld with indifference his villages in flames, and the long files of weeping captives who were carried off from beneath his ramparts by the desolating invaders. During these long ages of feudal anarchy, the lower orders neither improved in courage nor rose in importance ; the lapse of time served only to increase their degradation, by extinguishing the remembrance of better times.¹

But the conquests of the Northern nations led to one important consequence—the establishment of representative governments in the provinces of the empire. The liberty of antiquity, cradled in single towns, was confined to the citizens who were present on the spot, and could take an active part in the public deliberations ; and though the Romans, with unexampled wisdom, extended the rights of citizenship to the conquered provinces, yet the idea of admitting them to a share of the representation never occurred to their minds ; and the more important privileges of a citizen could only be exercised by actually repairing to the metropolis. The unavoidable consequence of this was, that the populace of the capital, in all the free states of antiquity, exercised the principal powers of government ; from their passions the public measures took their rise ; and by their tumults revolutions in the state were effected. The immediate cause of the overthrow of the liberties of Rome, was the admission of all the citizens of Italy into the privileges of Roman citizens, coupled with the absence of any provision for their representation, and the consequent introduction of the armed force of the provinces to decide in the streets of Rome, under the banners of the leading generals of the Republic, the constantly recurring contest for political supremacy. Hence the violence, the anarchy, and the inconstancy by which their history was so often distinguished,² and which, though

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¹ Thierry,
i. 162, ii. 96.

22.
Total ab-
sence of re-
presentative
govern-
ments in an-
tiquity.

² Mitford's
Greece, ix.
68, 87.

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TION.

concealed amid the blaze of ancient eloquence, the searching eye of modern history has so fully illustrated.

23.
And in the Northern nations on their first establishment in Europe.

The Northern nations, on the other hand, who established themselves on the ruins of the Roman empire, were actuated by different feelings, and influenced by opposite habits. The liberty which they brought with them from their woods, or which had sprung up amidst the solitude of the desert, knew no locality, and was confined to no district. It was the liberty of the Steppe, not of the Forum: their civilisation was that of the Tribe, not the City. The conqueror had been originally free; and that freedom was equally preserved and valued in the cultivated plain as in the desert wilds. Slavery, indeed, was general, but it was the conquered people who were so prostrated; and the whole dominant race were equally haughty towards their superiors, and tyrannical to their inferiors. When the military followers of a victorious chief were settled in a province they had subdued, they still regarded their leader with somewhat of their original independence; he was distinguished from them only by the pre-eminence of his rank in actual war, and the magnitude of his allotment of the vanquished lands. The Sea-Kings who so long desolated the maritime provinces of France and England, and the Anglo-Saxons who laid the foundation of the English empire, possessed hardly any authority over their followers except during the period of actual service. The Franks who, under Clovis, established the French monarchy, acknowledged but a nominal allegiance to their chief. Elevated on the shields of their followers, their leaders owed their dignity to the voluntary choice of their fellow-warriors: and even in moments of triumph, the meanest soldiers were not afraid of reminding them of the tenure by which they held their authority.¹

¹Thierry, ii. 321. Hume, i. 264. Turner's Anglo-Saxons, i. 97. Sism. France, i. 372. Hallam, i. 153.

24.
Causes which led to representative governments in modern Europe.

It was the settlement of brave and energetic nations in rich and highly cultivated provinces, which led to the diffusion of the victors over the conquered districts, and the establishment of an independent aristocracy amidst the decaying wealth of ancient servitude. Had the country been less richly cultivated, the followers of the Northern invaders would have been debased amidst the seductions of cities, or returned, after a predatory incursion, to the soli-

tudes which protected them from pursuit. It was the discovery of opulent and fertile districts, tenanted by a skilful but unwarlike people, which encouraged the *rural* settlement of the conquerors, which rendered the protection of cities unnecessary, and provided a counterpoise to their allurements. By establishing the invaders in a permanent manner in the *country*, it long preserved their manners from corruption, and rendered the servitude of the Roman empire one remote cause of the liberty of modern Europe. On the first settlement of the victorious nations, the popular assemblies of the soldiers were an actual convocation of the military array of the kingdom. William the Conqueror summoned his whole military followers to assemble at Winchester; sixty thousand men obeyed the mandate, the poorest of whom held property adequate to the maintenance of a horseman and his attendants. The meetings of the Champs-de-Mai were less a deputation from the followers of Clovis, than an actual congregation of their numbers in one vast assembly. But in process of time, the burden of travelling from a distance was severely felt, and the prevalence of sedentary habits rendered the landed proprietors unwilling to undertake the risk, or expense, of personal attendance on the great council of the state. Hence the introduction of PARLIAMENTS, or REPRESENTATIVE LEGISLATURES, the greatest addition to the cause of liberty which modern times has afforded; which combine the energy of democratic with the caution of aristocratic rule; which temper the turbulence and allay the fervour of cities, by the slowness and tenacity of country life; and which, where the balance is duly preserved in the composition of the assembly, provide, in the variety of its interests and habits, a long enduring check upon the violence or injustice of a part of its members.¹

It is doubtful, however, whether these causes, powerful as they are, would have led to the introduction of that great and hitherto unknown change in government which the representative system introduced, had not a model existed for imitation, in which, for a series of ages, it had been fully established. The councils of the Church had, so early as the sixth century, introduced over all Christendom the most perfect system of representation: delegates,

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¹ Thierry, 286. Sism. France, i. 231.

² They are taken from the assemblies of the Church.

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from the most remote dioceses in Europe and Asia, had in them assembled to deliberate on the concerns of the faithful: and every Christian priest, however humble his station, had some share in the formation of those great assemblies, by which the general affairs of the Church were to be regulated. The formation of parliaments, under the representative system, took place in all the European states in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The industry of antiquaries may carry the Wittenagemot, or actual assembly of leading men, a few generations further back; but six centuries before the earliest periods assigned for such convocations, the councils of Nice and Antioch had exhibited perfect models of an universal system of representation, embracing a wider sphere than the whole extent of the Roman empire. There can be no doubt that it was this example, so generally known, and of such powerful authority, which determined the imitation of the other members of the community, where they had any common concerns which required deliberation; and thus, to the other blessings which civilisation owes to Christianity, are to be added those inestimable advantages which have flowed from the establishment of the representative system.¹

¹ Salvandy, *Hist. de la Pologne*, i. 105, 106. Guizot, *Essais sur l'Hist. de France*, 177, 200. Thierry, *Essais sur l'Hist. de France*, 93.

26. Are universally established in Europe.

² Hallam, i. 253; and ii. 67, 130. Villaret, 125. Hume, ii. 116, 271. Ersk. *Inst.* 1, 3. *Comines*, iv. c. 13. *Du Clerg*, 389.

In every part of Europe, accordingly, where the Northern conquerors established themselves, the rudiments of a representative government gradually appeared. In all, the barons settled in the country, and the legislative authority was vested in assemblies of persons elected by them, who, under the name of Wittenagemots, Parliaments, States-General, or Cortes, were brought together at stated periods to deliberate on the public concerns. So naturally did this institution spring from the habits and situations of the military settlers, and so little did its first founders anticipate the important consequences which have flowed from its adoption, that the right of sending representatives to Parliament was generally considered not as a privilege but as a burden; and that share in the legislature, which is now so much the object of contention and desire, was originally viewed as an oppressive duty, for which those who exercised it were entitled to indemnification from their more fortunate brethren.² The barons, however, were long animated by a strong feeling of

independence, and in every part of Europe, at their first establishment, diffused the principle of resistance to arbitrary authority. In Spain, accordingly, France, Germany, and Flanders, we find them manfully resisting the encroachments of the sovereign, and in all, the same privileges of not being taxed without their consent, and of concurring in the acts of the legislature, early established.

Many causes, doubtless, have conspired to bring about this remarkable and peculiar attachment of the feudal barons to the principles of freedom and the assertion of independence, at least so far as they themselves and their own class in society was concerned. But nothing, perhaps, contributed so powerfully to it as the right of hereditary succession, and the establishment of the rights of primogeniture, which, from causes which it is impossible now to trace, early became universal in all the Gothic nations which settled in the European portion of the Roman empire. It was this which constituted the great distinction between the structure of society in the European and Asiatic continents; in the latter of which, although the Northern conquerors settled, they never established the feudal institutions, nor engrafted hereditary succession on the original despotic governments of the Eastern world. Rotation of office, appointment for life, and the entire dependence of every functionary on the sovereign, both for his nomination and his continuance in power, is the fundamental principle of Asiatic governments, and of despotism, whether regal or democratic, all over the world. The first step in the growth of freedom in all but single cities, or mountain cantons, is to give the subordinate holder of power a durable interest in his government, and strengthen his independence by a lasting connexion between himself and the cultivators of the soil. Such a change produces the same effect on the character, both of the landholder and his dependents, as the converting the tenant-at-will into a copyholder or long leaseholder does on the dispositions of a tenantry. In no rank of life will men make efforts for independence in any situation which they may lose at a moment's notice. As durability of power in one class of society, and the hereditary transmission of land, are thus the only lasting foundation for a

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27.

Great effects of hereditary succession and primogeniture in producing this result.

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restraint on the sovereign power in a rural community,* it would appear surprising that these institutions should be so much the object of jealousy in all opulent or commercial communities, did we not recollect that human corruption makes all establishments liable to abuse, and that the very stability which renders the landed aristocracy in a great degree independent of the sovereign, gives them facilities, too often taken advantage of, for oppressing the people.

28.
Fatal de-
fects of the
feudal sys-
tem.

In all the states, accordingly, in which it was established, the feudal system was subject to the same fatal defect, that it made no provision for the interests or welfare of the inferior classes of society. Like all other institutions in which this defect existed, it contained within itself the principles of its own decay. The conquerors of the Roman empire deemed the inhabitants of the provinces in which they settled wholly unworthy of notice; and even in Magna Charta, while the privileges of the barons and the freemen were anxiously provided for, no stipulation of any importance was made for the extensive class of husbandmen or slaves, embracing at least nine-tenths of the community. The decline in the virtue of the barbarous settlers was in most instances extremely rapid, and the succeeding wave of invaders generally found the first set sunk in sloth or destroyed by luxury. In the miserable and degraded barons who deserted Roderick in his contest with the Moorish invaders of Spain, we can hardly discern a trace of resemblance to the impetuous warriors who under Adolph, brother to Alarie the terrible destroyer of Rome, had crossed the Pyrenees in 412, and penetrated into that secluded province of the Roman Empire; and the Moorish conquerors were in a few centuries reduced to the same degraded state, from the operation of the same causes. Even the genius and triumphs of Charlemagne were unequal to the herculean task of regenerating the mixture of barbarism and effeminacy of which he formed the head; and humanity never appeared in a more pusillanimous or

* America is no exception; on the contrary, it affords the strongest confirmation of these remarks. The sovereign is there the multitude, and there is no restraint on either its injustice or its excesses, as Lynch law, and the repudiating the States' debts, have amply demonstrated. Without primogeniture, to introduce a counterpoise to the power of numbers, they will never attain real freedom.

impotent form than among the Rois Fainéants, the unworthy successors of Charles Martel, and of the barons who died for the liberty of Christendom on the field of Tours. All the efforts of that great monarch for the improvement of his people were thwarted by the limited number of real citizens who existed among them. A few hundred thousand freemen were there to be found scattered among as many million of slaves; and, in his own lifetime, he had the misfortune of beholding the progress of corruption even among the troops whom he had led to victory. The same cause blasted all the beneficent efforts of Alfred for the protection and improvement of his country, and exposed the English nation, for so long a period, to desolation and ruin from a small body of Northern invaders.¹

A very simple cause may be assigned for this early corruption and rapid degeneracy of rude conquerors who have settled in the abodes of ancient opulence. They attain wealth before they have learned how to use it. Luxury breaks in upon them while yet accessible only to the gratifications of sense. Experience has now abundantly proved, that to learn the art of using wealth without abusing it, requires at least as long an apprenticeship in nations, as that of enjoying freedom without running into licentiousness, and that the rapid acquisition of either never fails to prove fatal to the people who obtain it. It is the sudden exposure to irresistible temptation which, in both cases, is the cause of ruin. The same thing may every day be observed in private life. The common sayings, that no man was ever enriched in the end by obtaining a twenty thousand pounds prize in the lottery; that the sons of rich *parvenus* are much more inclined to extravagance than those of the old families; and that it requires three generations to make a gentleman—prove how generally mankind have observed the operation of this principle on the fortunes of individuals or particular families. When an Iroquois sits down beside a cask of spirits, he often inserts a straw into a hole which he has bored in the wood, and sucks up the intoxicating draught till he drops down dead on the spot; but a gentleman who has the command of a cellar amply stored with champagne, is in no danger of perishing by a similar indulgence.

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¹ Condé,
Hist. des
Arab. i. 62;
ii. 125. Sism.
France, ii.
279, 355,
410; iii. 96,
97. Turner's
Anglo-
Saxons, ii.
66.

29.
Cause of the
early cor-
ruption of
barbarous
conquerors.

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The reason is, that he has acquired other tastes, and is familiar with other enjoyments which are inconsistent with, or prove a counterpoise to, the first seductions of sense. But these more refined tastes and inclinations are of very slow growth; they spring up only in the later stages of society. Many generations must descend to their graves before they spread generally, either in nations or in any of the classes of which they are composed. This is the true cause of the excessive proneness to the use of ardent spirits which is invariably observed to accompany high wages, arising from manufacturing prosperity in northern climates, or half-civilized states,* and which has hitherto defied all the efforts of coercion and philanthropy for its restraint; while the higher classes in the same countries and professions have at length, though only by very slow degrees, extricated themselves from its influence. It is the same with rude tribes settling, with their barbaric tastes, in the regions of ancient opulence. Sensual gratifications instantly become the object of universal pursuit. The winepress and the haram present attractions to which no one, how illiterate soever, is insensible; and the race of Northern conquerors melts away as rapidly amidst the

	No. of Gallons.	Population.	Rate per head. Decimals.
* In England, the gallons of spirits consumed in 1838, and proportion per head, was,	7,930,190	13,307,364	0.53
In Ireland,	12,296,342	8,055,771	1.32
In Scotland,	6,259,711	2,543,961	2.46
In Australia,	628,729	127,621	5.02

In Sweden, where artificial wants are few and stills many, any man, upon paying a trifling license, may purchase from Government the right of distilling spirits to any amount; there are 150,000 stills, and spirits consumed to the enormous amount of 30,000,000 gallons among 3,000,000 inhabitants, or *ten gallons* a-head. As a natural, and too probable consequence, the proportion of crime to the whole population, even in its simple agricultural population, equals that of the most corrupted cities of Great Britain, and is fully triple that of the average of the British population. In the rural districts of Sweden, the committals for serious crime are to the population as 1 in 460: in the towns, 1 in 78. For England they were, in 1841, 1 in 573 persons; in Scotland, 1 in 738.—PORTER'S *Progress of the Nation*, iii. 54, 215; and LAING'S *Sweden*, 135, 137, 138.

These facts at once explain the rapid corruption of northern conquerors when transplanted into the midst of the passions and gratifications of civilized life. If we would ascertain the secret springs of the greatest revolutions which have ever occurred among mankind, we have only to look around us at the causes which elevate particular individuals and families, and consign others to infamy and ruin. The spring of all human changes is to be found in the human heart; and it is to be read as well in a village as an empire.

wines and women of the South, as the Iroquois perishes beside the spirit-cask, or the Scotch or Swedish manufacturer amidst the riot of the spirit-cellar.

The private wars of the nobles with each other, was the first circumstance which renewed the courage and revived the energy of the feudal barons. The inconsiderate historians of modern times have stigmatized these domestic contests as things of unmixed evil, merely because they produced extensive bloodshed and suffering; but the more reflecting observer, who has traced the workings of corruption, whether on the individual or the national heart, will arrive at a different conclusion. He will recollect the necessity of suffering to individual reformation; he will reflect on the virtues which spring out of disaster. Regarding this world as not a scene of enjoyment so much as a school of improvement, he will not lightly estimate those circumstances, apparently ruinous, which extricate the human mind from the meshes of sensual gratification, which draw forth the manly virtues by the force of suffering, and elevate the character even when they embitter the life. It is to this cause, joined to the fortification of the castles, and the constant use of arms by the retainers of the landowners, that the restoration of the military courage of France is to be ascribed. The Spanish barons were trained to courage in the stern school of necessity, and regained, in the mountains of Galicia, the valour which their conquerors were losing amidst the luxuries of Cordova. The English military spirit, which had decayed from the same causes, was restored by the private wars of the nobles during the reign of Stephen; and, through all the havoc and ruin of the country, that courage was elicited which was destined to lay the foundation of British liberty in a happier age.¹

But the feudal liberty was at length destroyed by the change of manners, and the natural progress of opulence. Being confined to a limited class of society, it expired with the virtue of those who alone were interested in its defence; conferring little upon the great body of the people, it derived nothing from the talents which lay buried among them. Wealth enervated its possessors, and no inferior class existed to supply their place; the rich became corrupted, while the poor did not cease to be slaves. The

30.
Effects of
the private
wars of the
nobles.

¹ Hume, i.
296. Sism.
France, iii.
374, 451.
Condé, ii.
126, 368, 494.

31.
Causes of
the decay of
the feudal
liberty in
Spain.

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progress was different in different states, but in all the result was the same. The kingdoms both of Aragon and Castile were governed, in their early history, by more limited monarchs than the Plantagenets of England, and their nobles did not yield to the barons of Runnymede in zeal for the preservation of their privileges; but it was in vain that they extorted concessions from their sovereigns, and confirmed them on occasion of every renewal of the coronation oath. The spirit of freedom, and with it the liberties of the nation, died away upon the decay of the feudal aristocracy, from the selfishness and degradation of the great body of the people. When Charles V. had suppressed, in 1548, the formidable revolt of the *comuneros*, he excluded not the deputies of the cities and boroughs, but of the *grandees* and prelates, from the representation, and the result showed that he knew human nature well when he did so. Deprived of their natural leaders, the commons were never after able to resist the authority of government. The Cortes maintained its nominal privileges; and the "Great Privilege," the Magna Charta of Aragon, was never repealed; but the cities neglected sending representatives to its assemblies, and many suffered their right to a place in its deliberations to fall into abeyance. The nobles, cut off from political power, became attached to the splendour of a court, and, with the forms of a limited, Spain became a despotic monarchy.¹

¹ Blanca's Com. 669. Hal. Mid. Ages, ii. 38, 45, 67. Mariana, T  orie de los Cortes, 395. Sism. Sciences Sociales, i. 365.

32. Its decline in France and Germany.

² Schmidt, vi. 8. Hallam, ii. 130. Mabli. Obs. Parl. Hist. de France, s. v. c. 1. Hallam, i. 256, 270, 391.

In France, the nobility, during the period of their feudal vigour, reduced the crown to nearly the same limited sway as prevailed in England, insomuch that, for nearly half a century, it was a general opinion, confirmed by several solemn acts of the throne, that no tax could be levied without the consent of the Three Estates. But the skeleton of a free government perished with the decay of feudal manners: The influence of the crown, and the attractions of a metropolis, drew the nobility to Paris; and liberty in the country, deprived of its only supporters, speedily fell to the ground. The progress was somewhat different in Germany, although there, as elsewhere in the European monarchies, the feudal system at first established the rudiments of a free government, the illegality of taxes without the consent of the people, and the partition of the legislative sovereignty with the states of the kingdom.²

The power of the great barons rendered the empire elective, and broke down into separate states the venerable fabric of the Germanic confederacy; but their sway within their own domains, being not restrained by the vigour or intelligence of the people, gradually became unlimited, and the restraints of liberty were obliterated in the rising ambition of military power.

Notwithstanding the long and hereditary attachment of the English people to free institutions—notwithstanding the diffusion of this spirit by the establishment of trial by jury, and its preservation by the protection of insular situation—the usual causes of decline had begun to operate, and the feudal independence of the barons in the middle ages had yielded to the corrupted subservience of opulent times. The desolating wars of York and Lancaster thinned the ranks of the nobles; the increase of luxury, by changing the direction of their expenditure, sapped the foundations of their power. Under the Tudor princes, the indifference of Parliament to the liberties of the people had already commenced. Europe could not exhibit a monarch who governed his people with more absolute sway than Henry VIII., nor is any thing in modern times more instructive, than the pliant servility with which both the Parliament and the people obeyed his despotic commands. History can hardly exhibit an example of a reign in which a greater number of violent invasions were made, not only on public rights, but on private property—in which justice was more disgracefully prostituted in courts of law, liberty more completely abandoned in the proceedings of Parliament, or caprice more tyrannically exerted on the throne. Those who ascribe the freedom of England solely to the feudal institutions, would do well to consider the condition of the country, the pliancy of the Legislature, and the servility of the people, during the reign of this ferocious tyrant—who confiscated the property of one-third of the landholders of his kingdom, and executed seventy-two thousand persons in his single lifetime—or even perhaps during that of his more prudent and popular daughter.¹

33.
And in Eng-
land.

¹ Henry's
Britain, xi.
260, 372.
Hume, iii.
94, 389; iv.
275; v. 263,
363, 470.

Admirably adapted, therefore, as the feudal system was for preserving an independent spirit during the middle ages; gratefully as we must acknowledge its influence in

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34.

It was only
fitted for a
barbarous
age.

restraining the power of the Northern conquerors, and preventing the very name of Right or Privilege from being swept away, as in the Asiatic monarchies, by the desolating hand of power; fully as we must admit that tyranny would have rioted without control, if, when the people were poor and disunited, the nobles had not been brave and free; still it is obvious that it was an institution suited only to a barbarous age, and alike incapable of being moulded according to the changes which society undergoes, or of providing for the freedom of civilized times. With the institution of standing armies, the progress of luxury, the invention of gunpowder, and the rise of cities, it necessarily decayed. The liberty which was built on no other foundation than the feudal institutions, has every where long since fallen to the ground. That system was in its vigour during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. When the barons dwelt in fortified castles on their estates, surrounded by a tenantry trained to warlike exercises, and attached alike by habit and interest to the fortunes of their chief, cased in armour from head to foot, and leading on a body of warlike and devoted retainers, they were alike formidable to the throne and oppressive to the cottage. If they extorted privileges in their own favour from the sovereign, they gave none to their enslaved vassals. With a merciless hand and unsparing severity, they checked the first struggles of the people for a share of that freedom which they so strenuously asserted for themselves. The insurrections of the *Jacquerie* in France, of the peasants under Wat Tyler in England, and of the Flemings under the Brewer of Ghent, were repressed with a cruelty of which history affords few examples. The courage and enthusiasm of the multitude in vain contended for victory against steel-clad warriors, trained to arms from their earliest years. The knights broke through the ranks of the peasants with the same ease as they would have traversed an unarmed assembly; and the degraded serf, incapable of those efforts of heroism which animated the free shepherds of the Alps, sank beneath the stroke of fate with the resignation of a martyr rather than the spirit of a warrior.¹

¹ Hume, iii.
5, 7. Hal.
i. 321. Sism.
x. 533, 540;
xi. 434, 435.

But the power of the nobles, incapable of being subverted by force, was undermined by opulence; and the

emancipation of the people, for which so many thousands had perished in vain, arose at length through the desires and follies of their oppressors. The baron was formidable when his life was spent in arms, and when he headed the feudal array which had grown up under the shadow of his castle walls : when his years were wasted in the frivolities of a court, his ambition centred in the smiles of a sovereign, and his fortune squandered in the luxuries of a metropolis, he became contemptible. His tenantry ceased either to venerate or follow a chief whom they seldom beheld : the seductions of cities became omnipotent to those who no longer valued their rural dependents ; the desires of wealth insatiable among persons who had the glittering prospect of a court before their eyes. The natural progress of opulence, by withdrawing the nobles from the seat at once of their usefulness and their influence, proved fatal to a power which made no provision for general felicity ; and the wisdom of nature rendered the follies of the great the means of destroying the power which they had rendered the instrument of oppression, instead of the bulwark of freedom.

While this was the fate of the liberty which the barbarian conquerors of the Roman empire brought with them from their native wilds, the progress of events was different in the south of Europe, where the ancient traces of Roman civilisation had never been wholly extirpated, and the wild shoots of Gothic freedom had never fully expanded. The liberty of modern Italy did not spring from the independence of the landed proprietors, but the free spirit of the inhabitants of towns ; its cradle was the workshop, not the tent ; the centre of its power the turbulent forum, not the baronial hall. While the great landowners were engaged in projects of mutual slaughter, and issued only from their fastnesses in the Apennines to ravage the plains below, the inhabitants of the towns flourished under the protection of their native ramparts, and revived on their ancient hearths the decaying embers of urban liberty. At a time when the Transalpine states were still immersed in barbarism, and industry was beginning only to spring in sheltered situations under the shadow of the castle wall, the Italian republics were already far advanced in opulence, and the arts had struck

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TION.

35.
Opulence
undermined
the power of
the nobles.

36.
Progress of
freedom in
the south of
Europe.

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deep root amidst the monuments of ancient splendour. The age of Edward I. of England, when the nobles of that country were still living in rustic plenty on their estates, when rushes were spread on the floors instead of carpets, and few of the barons could sign their name, was contemporary with that of Dante in Italy, with the conceptions of Bramante, and the fancy of Boccaccio. The genius of Raphael and the thoughts of Machiavelli were not far removed in point of time from the frightful devastations of the English bands in France, and the unutterable horrors of the *Jacquerie* Rebellion. When Charles VIII., at the head of the brave but barbarous nobility of France, burst into Italy at the close of the fifteenth century, he found himself in the midst of an opulent and highly civilized people, far advanced in the career of improvement, and abounding in merchants who numbered all the sovereigns of Europe among their debtors. When the feudal chieftain threatened to blow his trumpets within the walls of Florence, her citizens declared they would sound the tocsin, and the monarch of the greatest military kingdom of Europe shrank from a contest with the burghers of a pacific republic.¹

¹ Sism. Rep. Ital. iii. 157; v. 365; xii. 168. Hume, ii. 349.

Nor were the civil virtues of this period of Italian greatness less remarkable than its opulence and splendour. So early as the twelfth century, the Emperor of Germany was defeated by a coalition of the republics of Lombardy, and the virtues of the Grecian states were rivalled by the patriotism of modern freedom. History has to record with pride, that, when the inhuman cruelty of the German soldiery placed the children of the citizens of Crema before the walls of the city, to deter the besieged from discharging their weapons, their parents wept aloud, but did not cease to combat for their liberties; and that, when eleven thousand of the first citizens of Pisa were confined in the prisons of Genoa, they sent an unanimous request to the senate, not to purchase their freedom by the surrender of one fortress in the hands of the republic. The naval wars of Genoa and Venice want only historians as graphic as Livy or Thucydides to render them as celebrated in story, as they were as fertile in heroic actions, as those of Athens and Sparta, of Rome and Carthage. We speak with exultation of the efforts made by the British empire during the late war;² but how great soever, they

37.

Rapid rise of the urban civilisation of Italy. Great and patriotic efforts of these states.

² Sism. Rep. Ital. iii. 90; iv. 22, 29.

must yield in comparison with the exertions of Italian patriotism, which manned the rival fleets of Genoa and Pisa with as many sailors, at the battle of La Meloria, as served the navies of England and France at Trafalgar.

But the republics of Italy yielded to the influence of the same causes which had proved so pernicious to the Grecian commonwealths, and destroyed the feudal independence of the north of Europe. They made no provision for the liberties or interests of the great body of the people. The states of Florence, Venice, Genoa, and Pisa, were not in reality free: They were communities in which a few individuals had usurped the rights, and disposed of the fortunes of the great bulk of their fellow-citizens, whom they governed as subjects, or insulted as slaves. During the most flourishing period of their history, the citizens of all the Italian republics did not amount to 20,000; and these privileged classes held as many millions in subjection. The citizens of Venice were 2500—those of Genoa, 4500—those of Pisa, Sienna, Lucca, and Florence, taken together, not above 6000. The right of citizenship, thus limited, descended in a few families, and was as carefully guarded from invasion as the private estates of the nobility. To the conquered provinces no privileges were extended; to the republics in alliance no rights communicated. A rigid system at once of political and mercantile exclusion directed their whole policy. The privileged classes in the dominant state anxiously retained the whole rights of government in their own hands, and the jealous spirit of mercantile monopoly ruled the fortunes of the state as much as it cramped the industrial energies of the subject territory. From freedom thus confined, no general benefit could be expected; on a basis thus narrowed, no structure of permanent duration erected. Even during their greatest prosperity, these states were disgraced by perpetual discord springing from so unjust and arbitrary an exclusion; and the massy architecture of Florence still attests the period when every noble family was prepared to stand a siege in its own palace, in defence of the rights which they sternly denied to their fellow-citizens.¹ The rapid progress and splendid history of these aristocratic republics, may teach us the animating influence of freedom, even upon a limited class of society; their sudden decline, and speedy loss of

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TION.

38.
Causes of
their de-
cline.

¹ Sism. Rep.
Ital. xii. 12,
16, 18, 21.

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public spirit, the inevitable consequence of confining to a few the rights which should be shared by a larger circle, and governing in the narrow spirit of mercantile monopoly, not in the enlarged views of equal administration.

39.
General de-
fection of
the subject
states on dis-
aster.

Republics thus constituted were unable either to withstand the shocks of adverse, or resist the silent decay consequent upon prosperous fortune. The first great disaster stripped the selfish state of all its allies, and reduced it to the forces that were to be found within its own walls. The Venetian oligarchy gave no rights to the conquered provinces in the Trevisan March, though the senate announced, that in sending them the standard of St Marc it restored their liberties ; and accordingly in one day Venice was stripped of all its possessions, and reduced to its original limits within the lagunæ of the capital. When Florence reduced the rival republic of Pisa, she received no addition of strength because she gave no community of advantages ; and the troops employed to keep the conquered state in subjection, were so much lost to the victorious power. The dissolution of the Athenian Confederacy after the defeat before Syracuse, of the Lacedæmonian power after the battle of Leuctra, of the Theban supremacy after the death of Epaminondas, have all their counterparts in the history of modern Italy, when, on any serious reverse to Venice, Florence, or Genoa, the cities of which they formed the head broke off from a subjection which they hated, and joined the arms of any invader, to destroy that invidious authority in which they were not permitted to bear a part. Without the disasters of fortune, the silent operation of time brought the weakness of age upon communities which depended only on the energies of the higher classes. The families in whose hands the sovereign power was vested, became extinct from age, or enfeebled by opulence, and no infusion of vigour from the inferior orders took place to restore their energy ; the number of citizens continually declined, while the discontents of those subjected to their influence incessantly increased. The experienced evils arising from such a form of government led to a very general dislike to its continuance ; and, to avoid the ruinous contests of factions, as many of the Italian republics made a voluntary surrender of their liberties as lost them from the invasion of foreign power.¹

¹ Sism. xii.
16, 18, 21 ;
Machiavelli,
iii. c. 27.

The industry and wealth of Flanders early nourished a free spirit, and the utmost efforts were long made by the inhabitants of its cities for the maintenance of their liberties. The effects of these efforts were immense; they converted arid sands into fertile fields, and overspread the land with numerous and opulent cities; they rendered Brabant the garden of Europe, the object alike of monarchs' envy and of nations' ambition. But its freedom was confined to the burghers of the towns: the peasantry of the country joined their feudal leaders, in combating the rising influence of the manufacturing classes; and the jealousies of rival industry generally prevented them from joining in any common measure for the defence of their independence. Once only an unhopèd-for victory roused the whole country to arms, and a leader of greater military experience might have established their freedom on a durable basis; but the burghers of Ghent had not the firmness of the shepherds of Underwalden, and the victory of Resebecque crushed for centuries the rising independence of commercial industry under the barbarous yoke of feudal power.¹

Experience, therefore, had demonstrated that the freedom which rose from the independence of the desert, equally with that which was nursed in the bosom of cities, was liable to decay, and that political wisdom was incapable of forming a community in which the seeds of that decline were not perceptible, which seemed the common lot of earthly things. It became in consequence a generally received opinion, that nations, like individuals, had a certain length of life allotted to them, which it was impossible, by any means, to extend beyond the destined period; and that a season of activity and vigour was necessarily followed by one of lassitude and corruption. "The image," says Mr. Ferguson, "of youth and old age was applied to nations; and communities, like single men, were supposed to have a period of life, and a length of thread, which was spun by the Fates, in one part uniform and strong, in another weakened and shattered by use, to be cut when the destined era is come, and to make way for a renewal of the emblem in the case of those who rose in succession."—"Carthage," says Polybius, "being so much older than Rome, had felt her decay so much the sooner."² and the survivor too, he foresaw, carried in her

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TION.40.
Decline of
Flemish
freedom.1 Barante, i.
42, 43. Sism.
France, xi.
249.41.
Common
conclusions
as to the
tendency to
decay in all
communi-
ties.2 Civil So-
ciety, 340.

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TION.

bosom the seeds of mortality. But while such was imagined, from former experience, to be the unavoidable fate of freedom wherever established, a variety of causes were silently operating, which communicated an unknown energy to the social system, and infused into modern states, even in periods of apparent decline, a large intermixture of the undecaying youth of the human race.

I. The first of these was the CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

42.
Causes
which re-
stored liber-
ty. Influence
of Christia-
nity.

Slavery had been the ruin of all the states of antiquity. The influence of wealth corrupted the higher orders; and the lower, separated by a sullen line of demarcation from their superiors, furnished no accession of strength to revive their energies. But the influence of a religion which proclaimed the universal equality of mankind in the sight of Heaven, and addressed its revelations in an especial manner to the poor, destroyed this ruinous distinction. In many states slavery gradually yielded to the rising influence of Christianity; the religious houses were the first who emancipated their vassals; their exhortations were unceasingly directed to extort the same concession from the feudal barons. They were often unsuccessful during life, but more frequently succeeded on the approach of death: human selfishness was more willing to purchase eternal salvation by imposing a loss on others than by bearing it itself. On the ecclesiastical estates themselves the first shoots of industrious freedom began to spring. While the vassals of the military proprietors were sunk in slavery, or lost in the sloth which follows so degraded a state, industry was reviving under the shadow of the monastic walls, and the free vassals of the religious establishments were flourishing in the comparative security of their protection. Modern historians, living in an age when the shield of superstition was no longer required, and its influence unfelt, have erred immensely in their estimate of its importance at an earlier and in a more unhappy period. They forgot that when reason is in its infancy, passion predominant, and ignorance universal, it is by images addressed to the senses alone that violence can be restrained, innocence protected, or the supremacy of mental over physical strength asserted. But if we go back in imagination to the sanguinary passions and universal bloodshed of the dark ages, we shall feel the value of any influences, how

strange soever, in the eyes of enlightened reason, which restrained the excesses of power when no other means of coercing it existed, which made the baron tremble before spiritual, and therefore unseen power, even in the midst of his armed bands, and secured that protection to industry under the shadow of the monastery's cross, which it would have sought in vain beneath the shelter of the castle-wall.

The clearest proof of the truth of these principles, and of the incalculable influence which the superstitions, wisely inculcated in a barbarous age by the Romish Church, had in checking the devastation of northern conquest, and putting a curb on the violence of power when no other means of checking its excesses existed, is to be found in the wide difference between the settlement of the northern conquerors in Asia and Europe. Philosophers are never weary of expatiating on the extraordinary difference between the civilisation in these two quarters of the globe—on the restraints on tyranny which exist in the latter, while they are unknown in the former, and the vast development of mental power and social happiness which has taken place amidst European freedom, compared to what obtains under Eastern despotism. They would do well to consider to what cause this remarkable difference is really to be ascribed. The race of conquerors which overran both was originally sprung from the same root. The Cumri, who first planted their race in the British isles, and who have given their lasting appellation to the western mountain ranges of Britain,* were a branch of the same horde as the Κιμμεριοί whom Herodotus mentions as appearing with the first dawn of history on the shores of the Bosphorus,† and a part of whose descendants afterwards perished under the sword of Marius. The Gauls spread themselves over France, Britain, Lombardy, and Greece; their conquering arms gave a lasting appellation to a province of Asia;‡ and it was their swords, more even than the Numidian horse, which so long enabled Hannibal, without aid from Carthage, to make head against the Roman legions.¶ The Goths and Huns, whose

43.
Difference
of European
and Asiatic
northern
conquest

* Cumberland and Cumbria, or Wales; and the Cumraes in the Firth of Clyde in Scotland.

† Herodotus, l. iv. 11, 12.

‡ Galatia.

¶ See this subject amply discussed in Thierry, *Histoire des Gaulois*, vol. i. pp. 30—279; a most interesting work, by a brother of the historian of the settlement of the Normans in England, and his rival at once in industry and genius.

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descendants have formed the most powerful nations of modern times, originally migrated from the wilds of Tartary; and the first impulse was given to the wave of barbarians which overthrew the Roman empire, by the defeats which the Scythians had sustained on the frontiers of China.* The climate of Europe does not differ from that of a similar latitude in Asia, except in the greater heat in summer, and cold in winter, arising from the difference between an inland and maritime situation.

44.
Causes to
which it is
to be as-
cribed.

How then has it happened that the same conquerors, subduing and settling in substantially the same physical circumstances, should have given birth to nations so essentially and diametrically opposite as those of Europe and Asia? Why have freedom and knowledge been sheltered from the lances of the one, and both invariably perished, from the earliest times, under the sabres of the other? And whence is it that the same corruption, which has so speedily in every age consumed or enfeebled the descendants of Asiatic conquest, has, after the lapse of a thousand years, still made comparatively little impression on the offspring of Gothic invasion? Simply, because the religion of the two quarters of the globe in which the same conquerors settled was different: because polygamy has not in Europe spread its jealousies, nor the haram its seductions; because superstitious belief, in barbarous times, restrained power by imaginary terrors, and Christian charity, in civilized, assuaged suffering by real blessings; because slavery has gradually disappeared before the proclaimed equality of men, and a perpetual renovation been thus provided to the richer classes; because war has been softened by the humanity breathed into its conflicts; because learning, sheltered under the sanctity of the monastery, has survived the devastation of ignorance, and freedom, nursed by devotion, has acquired a strength superior to all the forces of despotism.

45.
Great influ-
ence of re-
ligious en-
thusiasm on
human af-
fairs.

It was not only by the equality which it proclaimed, and the security from violence which it afforded, that the influence of religion favoured the growth of freedom. By the enthusiasm which it awakened, from the universal interests which it addressed, the mass of the people were called into political activity; thousands, to whom the

* See Gibbon, cap. xxvi. vol. iii. 371—575.

blessings of liberty were unknown, and whose torpor no temporal concerns could dispel, were roused by the voice of religious fervour. The freedom of Greece, the discipline of Macedonia, produced only a transient impression on human affairs; but the fanaticism of Mahomet convulsed the globe. The ardour of chivalry led the nobles into action; the ambition of monarchs brought the feudal retainers into the field; but the enthusiasm of the Crusades awakened the dormant strength of the Western world. With the growth of religious zeal, therefore, the basis of freedom was immensely extended; into its ranks were brought, not the transient ebullitions of popular excitement, but the stern valour of fanaticism; and that lasting support which neither the ardour of the city, nor the independence of the desert, could afford, was at length drawn from the fervour of the cottage.¹

1 Tytler's
Scotland
Hume's
England.
Abbé
Mann's
Flanders.

II. While the minds of men were thus warmed by the religious enthusiasm which was awakened, first by the Crusades, and subsequently by the Reformation, the Art of PRINTING, destined to change the face of the moral world, perpetuated the impressions thus created, and widened the circle over which they extended. The spirit of religious freedom was no longer nourished only from the exhortations of the pulpit, or developed in the fervour of secluded congregations; it breathed into the permanent exertions of human thought, and spread with the increasing wealth and enlarged desires of an opulent state of society. The discoveries of science, the charms of genius, may attract a few in every age; but it is by religious emotion that the great body of mankind are chiefly to be moved: and it was by the diffusion of its enthusiasm, accordingly, that the greatest efforts of European liberty have been sustained. But the diffusion of knowledge by means of the press, is not destined to awake mere transient bursts of popular feeling. By imbuing the minds of those master-spirits who direct human thought, it produces lasting impressions on society, and is perpetually renewed in the successive generations who inhale, during the ardour of youth, the maxims and the spirit of classical freedom. The whole face of society has been modified by this mighty discovery; the causes of ancient decay seem counteracted in a powerful manner, by new princi-

46.
Art of
Printing.
Its advan-
tages.

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TION.

ples of vitality, derived from the multitudes whose talents are brought to bear on the fortunes of the state; and the influence of despotic power shaken, by the infusion of independent principles even into the armies which are destined to enforce its authority.

47.
And dan-
gers.

But it is not unmixed good which has arisen from the diffusion of knowledge. If the principles of improvement have acquired a hardier growth, those of evil have been more generally disseminated; the contests of society have grown in magnitude and increased in violence, and the passions of nations been brought into collision, instead of the ambition of individuals. Vice has here, as elsewhere in human affairs, mingled in large and often overwhelming proportions with the stream of time, and continued in the most advanced ages that struggle between virtue and sin, which has been the lot of man from the beginning of the world. The visions of inexperience, the dreams of philanthropy, at first anticipated the entire extirpation of evil from the extension of knowledge, and an unbroken progress of improvement from the spread of education; forgetting that the heart is the fountain from which the issues of life, the direction given to the acquisitions of science, flow; and that unless it is purified, it is of little moment what is put into the hand. In the midst of these entrancing prospects, human iniquity mingled with the current; the new powers thus acquired were too often applied to the basest purposes, crime and corruption increased with the extension of desires, and vice multiplied with the enlarged means of compassing its ends which instruction had afforded.

48.
Ultimate
benefits of
knowledge.

It is to a general appreciation of this bitter but wholesome truth that mankind are at length awakening, after the enchanting dream followed by the dreadful nightmare of the French Revolution. Yet, while experience has now demonstrated the utter fallacy of all expectation of increased individual virtue, or augmented social felicity, from mere intellectual cultivation, it is far from discouraging more cheering prospects of the ultimate effect of moral elevation and spiritual enjoyment on the race of man. Vice is generally victorious over virtue in the outset, but it is as often vanquished by it in the end. The pleasures of sin are at first fearfully alluring, its passions

vehement, its gratifications intense. But both lead to disappointment and satiety; the beautiful image of the poet—"a moment white, then lost for ever," is true, not merely of sensual but of all merely worldly enjoyment. Nothing permanently floats down the stream of time but what is buoyant from its elevating tendency. In the progress of ages the most injurious elements in human affairs are gradually extinguished, while the causes of improvement are lasting in their effects. The contests of the Greek republics, the cruelty of the Athenian democracy, have long ceased to trouble the world; but the maxims of Grecian virtue, the works of Grecian genius, the charms of Grecian art, will permanently continue to elevate mankind. The turbulence, the insecurity, the convulsions to which the extension of knowledge to the lower orders has hitherto given rise, will in time be forgotten; but the improved fabric of society which it has induced, the increased vigour which it has communicated, may ultimately compensate all its evils, and permanently bless and improve the species.¹

1 Hume, vi.
100. Mign.
Rév. Franc.
i. 32.

III. But it would have been in vain that the influence of religion weakened the bonds of slavery, and the extension of knowledge enlarged the capacity of freemen, had no change occurred in the ARMS by which the different classes of society combat each other. While the aristocracy of the country were permanently trained to combats, and the robber chivalry were incessantly occupied in devastation, the peaceable inhabitants of cities, the rude labourers of the fields, were unable to resist their attacks. With the exception of the shepherds of the Alps, whose hardy habits early gave their infantry the firmness and discipline of veteran soldiers, the tumultuary levies of the people were, during the middle ages, every where crushed by the steel-clad bands of the feudal nobility. The insurrections of the commons in France, of the peasants in the time of Richard II., in England, of the citizens of Ghent and Liege in Flanders, and of the serfs in Germany, were all suppressed by the superior arms and steadier discipline of the rural chivalry. But with the discovery of GUNPOWDER, this decisive supremacy was destroyed. The feudal array, invincible to the spears or halberds of the peasantry, yielded to the terrible powers of artillery; defensive armour was abandoned, from a sense of its insufficiency.

49.
Discovery of
gunpowder
destroyed
the power
of the nobi-
lity.

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TION.

against this invisible assailant; and the weight of the aristocracy was destroyed, by the experienced inability of its forces to combat the discipline which laborious industry could bring into the field. The wealth of Flanders in vain contended with the lances of France on the field of Resebecque; but the armies of Charles V. were baffled by the artillery of the United Provinces. The barons of Richard easily dispersed the rabble who followed the standard of Wat Tyler; but the musketry of the English yeomanry overthrew the squadrons of the Norman nobility at Marston Moor. Fire-arms are the greatest of all levellers; like the hand of death, they prostrate equally the ranks of the poor and the array of princes. Wealth soon became essential to the prosecution of war, from the costly implements which were brought into the field; industry indispensable to success, from the rapid consumption of the instruments of destruction which attended the continuance of the contest. By this momentous change new elements were brought into action, which completely altered the relative situations of the contending parties: industry ceased to be defenceless, because it could purchase the means of protection; violence lost its ascendancy, because it withered the sinews by which its forces were to be maintained.¹

¹ Planta's
Switzer-
land, i. 297.
Sism. Fran
x. 533, 543.
Hume, iii.
10. Bar. i.
295. Hal.
ii. 131.

50.
Increase of
luxury tend-
ed to the
same effect.

IV. The introduction of ARTIFICIAL WANTS, and the progress of luxury, completed the destruction of the feudal power. When the elegancies of life were comparatively unknown, and the barons lived in rural magnificence on their estates, the distribution of their wealth kept a multitude of retainers round their castles, who were always ready to support the authority from which they derived their subsistence. But by degrees the progress of opulence brought the nobility to the metropolis, while the increase of luxury augmented their expenses. From that moment their ascendancy was at an end. When the landed proprietor squandered his wealth in the indulgence of artificial desires, and seldom visited the halls of his ancestors but to practise extortion upon his tenantry, his means of maintaining war were dissipated, and the influence he possessed over his people destroyed. Interest ceased to be a bond of union, when no reciprocity of mutual services existed; affection gradually expired, from the absence

of the objects on which it was to be exerted. Debt contracted to satisfy the cravings of urban desires, became overwhelming. Embarrassments either led to the alienation of estates, or the insolvency of their possessors. The new purchasers had no historic names or ancient influence to back their fortunes. Newly transplanted into the soil, they required several generations to overshadow it by their expansion. Such recent proprietors form an important element in the balance of political power; and as they speedily imbibe the feelings, from being actuated by the interests, of the landed aristocracy, they are of great consequence in steadying the movements of the social body; but they are scarcely ever formidable to general liberty. The old families are too jealous of their wealth, to permit of any formidable union being formed between them: the mass of the people have not been so long trained to respect, as now to fear them. The power of the feudal nobility was long the object of apprehension, from the remembrance of its terrors in former times, after its real influence had been dissolved. The importance of this change, like that of all others introduced by nature, was not perceived till its effects were manifested. The aristocracy of France was still the object of antiquated dread, when it stood on the brink of destruction; and the people were doubtful of their ability to resist its power, when it sunk without a struggle before the violence of its enemies.¹

¹ Wealth of Nations, i. 345.

From the revival of letters in the commencement of the sixteenth century, and the dawn of the Reformation, these causes had been silently operating; and Time, the greatest of all innovators, was gradually changing the face of the moral world. The stubborn valour of the reformed religion had emancipated an industrious people from the yoke of Spain, and the stern fanaticism of the English Puritans had overthrown the power of the Norman nobility. The extension of knowledge had shaken the foundations of arbitrary power, and public opinion, even in the least enlightened countries, moderated the force of despotic sway. The worst governed states in Europe were constitutional monarchies compared to the dynasties of the East; and the oppression even of Russian severity was light in comparison of the cruelties of the Roman emperors. But it was not till the commencement of the French Revo-

51. Combination of these causes in inducing the French Revolution.

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TION.

lution that the extent of the changes which had occurred was perceived, and the weakness of the arms of despotism felt, when brought in collision with the efforts of freedom. Standing armies had been considered as the most fatal discovery of sovereigns, and the history of former ages appealed to as illustrating their tendency to establish despotic authority; but the changes of time were wresting from the hands of tyranny even this dreaded weapon, and, in the next convulsion, it destroyed the power which had created it. The sagacity of the French monarchs had trained up these formidable bands as a counterpoise to the power of the aristocracy, and they had rendered the crown independent of the control of the feudal barons; but a greater Wisdom than that of Richelieu was preparing, in their power and discipline, the means of a total change of society. In vain the unfortunate Louis summoned his armies to the capital, and appealed to their chivalrous feelings against the violence of the people; the spirit of democracy had penetrated even the ranks of the veteran soldiers, and, with the revolt of the guards, the French monarchy was destroyed.¹

¹ Robert-
son's Char.
V., i. 120.
Comines, i.
384. Lac.
Hist. de
France, v.
32. Mign. i.
14.

52.
Vast effect
of the revolt
of armies on
the cause of
democracy.

It is this circumstance which has created so important a distinction between the progress of popular power in recent, and its fate in ancient times. Tyranny has every where prevailed in former times, by arming one portion of the people against the other; and its chief reliance has hitherto been placed on the troops, whose interests were identified with its support. But the progress of information has destroyed, in the countries where it is fully established, the security of despotism, by dividing the affections of the armies on which it depends; and the sovereigns of the military monarchies in Europe have now often more to fear from the troops whom they have formed to be the instruments of their will, than from the citizens whom they regard as the objects of apprehension. The translation of the sword from the nobility to the throne, so long the subject of regret to the friends of freedom, has thus become an important step in the emancipation of mankind: War, amidst all its horrors, has contributed to the communication of knowledge and the dispelling of prejudice; and power has ceased to be unassailable, because it has been transferred from a body whose interests are

permanent, to one whose attachments yield to the changes of society. Yet is this last and greatest shake given to the powers of despotism not unaccompanied with evil: on the contrary, it often produces calamities greater even than those it was intended to remove. Military caprice becomes irresistible when military subordination is overthrown: the foundations of government are laid in the quicksands of the soldier's favour; the Prætorian bands of the capital become the rulers of the state. It is but a poor exchange which a nation makes which throws off the regular government of hereditary property, to incur the arbitrary rule of the sword: the soldiers who betray their oaths to induce the change, are the worst pioneers of despotism.

The former history of the world is chiefly occupied with the struggles of freedom against bondage; the efforts of laborious industry to emancipate itself from the yoke of aristocratic power. Our sympathies are all with the oppressed, our fears lest the pristine servitude of the species should be re-established. But with the rise of the French Revolution, a new set of perils have been developed, and the historian finds himself overwhelmed with the constant survey of the terrible evils of democratic oppression. The causes which have been mentioned, have at length given such an extraordinary and irresistible weight to the popular party, that the danger now sets in from another quarter, and the tyranny which is to be apprehended, is often not that of the few over the many, but of the many over the few. The obvious risk now is, in all states with a popular form of government, that the influence of knowledge, virtue, and worth, will be overwhelmed in the vehemence of popular ambition, or lost in the turbulence of democratic power. This evil is of a far more acute and terrible kind than the severity of regal, or the weight of aristocratic oppression. In a few years, when fully developed, it destroys the whole frame of society, and extinguishes the very elements of freedom, by annihilating the classes whose intermixture is essential to its existence. It is beneath this fiery torrent that the civilized world is now passing; and all the efforts of philosophy are therefore required to observe its course and mitigate its devastation. Happy, if the historian can find, in the record of past suffering, aught

53.
Danger
from popu-
lar license
which now
threatens
society.

INTRODUC-
TION.

54.
Slow growth
of durable
freedom.

to justify future hope, or in the errors of former inexperience the lessons of subsequent wisdom.

It is by slow degrees, and imperceptible additions, that all the great changes of nature are accomplished. Vegetation, commencing with lichens, swells to the riches and luxuriance of the forest ; continents, the seat of empires, and the abode of millions, are formed from the deposits of innumerable rills ; animal life, springing from the torpid vitality of shell-fish, rises to the energy and power of man. It is by similar steps, and as slow a progress, that the great fabric of society is formed. Regulated liberty, the greatest of human blessings, the chief spring of human improvement, is of the most tardy development ; ages elapse before it acquires consistency ; nations disappear during the contest for its establishment. The continued observation of this important truth is fitted both to inspire hope and encourage moderation : hope, by showing how unceasing has been the progress of improvement through all the revolutions of the world ; moderation, by demonstrating how vain and dangerous are all attempts to outstrip the march of nature, or confer upon one age the institutions or habits of another. The annals of the great French Revolution, more than any other event in human affairs, are calculated to demonstrate these important truths ; and by evincing in equally striking colours the irresistible growth of liberty, and the terrible evils of precipitate innovation, to impress moderation upon the rulers, and caution upon the agitators of mankind, and thus sever from the future progress of Freedom those bloody triumphs by which its past history has been stained.

CHAPTER I.

COMPARATIVE PROGRESS OF FREEDOM IN FRANCE
AND ENGLAND

No events in history are more commonly considered parallel than the Great Rebellion in England and the French Revolution. None, with certain striking points of resemblance, are in reality more dissimilar to each other. In both, the crown was engaged in a contest with the people, which terminated fatally for the royal family. In both, the reigning monarch was brought to the scaffold, and the legislative authority overturned by military force. In both, the leader of the army mounted the throne, and a brief period of military despotism was succeeded by the restoration of the legitimate monarchs. So far the parallel holds good—in every other particular it fails. In England the contest was carried on for many years, and with various success, between the crown and a large portion of the gentry on the one hand, and the cities and popular party on the other. In the single troop of dragoons commanded by Lord Barnard Stuart, on the royal side, in 1643, was to be found a greater body of landed proprietors than among the whole of the republican party, in both Houses of Parliament, who voted at the commencement of the war. In France the monarch yielded, almost without a struggle, to the encroachments of the people; and the only blood which was shed in civil war arose from the enthusiasm of the peasants in La Vendée, or the loyalty of the towns in the south of France, after the leaders of the royal party had withdrawn from the struggle. The great landholders and privileged classes, to the number in the end

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1.
Parallel
between the
French and
English Re-
volutions.

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¹ Lac, Pr. Hist. i. 246. Id. Hist. de France, ix. 230. Huume, vi. 505.

of an hundred and twenty thousand,* abandoned their country; and the crown was ultimately overturned, and the monarch brought to the scaffold, by a faction in Paris, which a few thousand resolute men could at first have easily overcome, and which subsequently became irresistible only from its having been permitted to excite, through revolutionary measures, the cupidity of the lower orders throughout the monarchy.¹

2. Moderation in England, and violence in France, after victory.

In proportion to the magnitude of the resistance opposed in England to the encroachments of the people by the crown, the nobility, and the higher classes of the landed proprietors, was the moderation displayed by both sides in the use of victory, and the small quantity of blood which was shed upon the scaffold. With the exception of the monarch and a few of the leading characters in the aristocratic party, no individual during the great rebellion perished by the hands of the executioner; no proscriptions or massacres took place; the victors and the vanquished, after the termination of their strife, lived peaceably together under the republican government. In France, scarce any resistance was offered by the government to the popular party. The sovereign was more pacifically inclined than any man in his dominions, and entertained a superstitious dread for the shedding of blood; the democrats triumphed, with the loss only of fifty men, over the throne, the church, and the landed proprietors;† and yet their successes, from the very first, were stained by a degree of cruelty of which the previous history of the world affords no example.²

² Lac. vi. 132. Hume, vii. 76. Lingard, xi. 8. Toul. i. 145. Th. i. 30.

3. Great influence of religion in England, and of infidel principles in France.

RELIGION, in the English Revolution, was the great instrument for moving mankind. Even in the reign of James I. the Puritans were the only sect who were zealously attached to freedom; and in every commotion which followed, the civil contests between the contending parties were considered as altogether subordinate to their religious differences, not only by the actors on the scene, but by the historians who recorded their proceedings. The pulpit was the fulcrum on which the whole efforts of the

* They were altogether 123,318. See PRUDHOMME'S *Crimes de la Révolution*, vi. Table.

† *Vide infra*, chap. iv. § 109, for the loss sustained in the attack on the Bastile, which overturned the monarchy.

popular leaders rested, and the once venerable fabric of the English monarchy, to which so large a portion of its influential classes have in every age of its history been attached, yielded at last to the force of fanatical frenzy. In France, the influence of religion was all exerted on the other side: The peasants of La Vendée followed their pastors to battle, and deemed themselves secure of salvation when combating for the Cross; while the Jacobins of Paris founded their influence on the ridicule of every species of devotion, and erected the altar of Reason on the ruins of the Christian faith. Nor was this "irreligious fanaticism," as Carnot has well styled it, confined to the citizens of the metropolis: it pervaded equally every department of France where the republican principles were embraced, and every class of men who were attached to its fortunes. Every where the churches, during the Reign of Terror, were closed: the professors of Christianity dispossessed, and their rights overturned: and the first step toward the restoration of a regular government, was the re-opening of the temples which the whirlwind of anarchy had closed, and the revival of the faith which its fury had extinguished.¹

The civil war in England was a contest between one portion of the community and the other; but a large part of the adherents of the republican party were drawn from the higher classes of society, and the sons of the yeomanry filled the ranks of the iron and disciplined bands of Cromwell. No massacres or proscriptions took place; few manor-houses were burned by the populace, save in the fury of actual assault: none of the odious features of a servile war were to be seen. Notwithstanding the dangers run and the hardships suffered on both sides, the moderation of the victorious party was such as to call forth the commendation of the royal historian; and with the exceptions of the death of the King, of Strafford, and Laud, few acts of unnecessary cruelty stained the triumph of the republican arms. In France, the storming of the Bastille was the signal for the general dissolution of the bands of authority, and an universal invasion of private property; the peasantry on almost every estate, from the Channel to the Pyrenees, rose against their landlords, burned their houses, and plundered their effects; and the higher ranks

¹ Laroche-jaquelin, 74. Scott's Napoleon, ii. 241. Carnot's Mémoires, 200. Rév. Mém. xxxvii. Lac. Pr. Hist. i. 467.

4. Moderation displayed in the English civil wars, and cruelty in France.

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in every part of the country, excepting La Vendée and the royalist districts in its vicinity, were subjected to the most revolting cruelties. The French Revolution was not a contest between such of the rich and poor as maintained republican principles, and such of them as espoused the cause of the monarchy, but an universal insurrection of the lower orders against the higher. It was sufficient to put a man's life in danger, to expose his estate to confiscation, and his family to banishment, that he was, *from any cause*, elevated above the populace. The gifts of nature, destined to please or bless mankind, the splendour of genius, the powers of thought, the graces of beauty, were as fatal to their possessors as the adventitious advantages of fortune or the invidious distinctions of rank. "Liberty and Equality" was the universal cry of the revolutionary party. Their liberty consisted in the general spoliation of the opulent classes; their equality in the destruction of all who outshone them in talent, or excelled them in acquirement.¹

¹ Hume, v. 127, and vii. 76. Ling. xi. 8. Clarendon, vi. 551. Rivarol, 95, 96.

5.

Vast difference as regards the subsequent law in the two countries.

The English Revolution terminated in the establishment of the rights for which the popular party had contended, but the great features of the constitution remained unchanged; the law was administered on the old precedents even during the usurpation of Cromwell, and the majority of the people scarcely felt, at least in their private concerns, or in their intercourse with each other, the important alteration which had been made in the government of the country. In France, the triumph of the popular party was followed by an immediate change of institutions, private rights, and laws; the nobility in a single night surrendered the whole privileges which they had inherited from their ancestors; the descent of property was turned into a different channel by the abolition of the right of primogeniture; and the administration of justice between man and man, founded on a new code destined to survive the perishable empire of its author. Every thing in England remained the same after the Revolution, with the exception of the privileges which were confirmed to the people, and the pretensions which were abandoned by the crown. Every thing in France was altered, without the exception even of the dynasty that ultimately obtained the throne.²

² Ling. xi. 6. Rivarol, 139.

The great estates of England were little affected by the Revolution. The nobles, the landowners, and the yeomanry, alike retained their possessions, and, under the new form of government, the influence of property remained unchanged. With the exception of the lands belonging to the dignitaries of the church, which were put under a temporary sequestration, and of the estates of a few obnoxious cavaliers, who lost them by abandoning their country, no material alterations in property took place; and after the Restoration a compromise almost universally ensued, and the ancient landholders, by the payment of a moderate composition, regained their possessions. In France, on the other hand, the whole landed property of the church, and the greater part of that of the nobility, was confiscated during the Revolution; and such was the influence of the new proprietors, that the Bourbons were compelled, as the fundamental condition of their restoration, to guarantee the security of the revolutionary estates. The effects of this difference have been in the highest degree important. The whole proprietors, who live on the fruits of the soil in Great Britain and Ireland, at this moment, notwithstanding the prodigious increase of wealth which has since taken place, probably do not amount to 300,000, while above 5,000,000 heads of families, and 17,000,000 of persons, dependent on their labour, subsist on the wages they receive. In France, on the other hand, there are at least 6,000,000 of separate proprietors, most of them in a state of great indigence, and nearly 20,000,000 of souls, constituting their families, independent, in great part at least, of the wages of labour, being a greater number than the whole remainder of the community. In France, the proprietors are twice as numerous as the other members of the state; in England, they hardly amount to a tenth part of their number.^{1*}

The political influence of England since the Restoration has mainly rested in the great families. A majority in the House of Commons was long appointed by a certain number of the House of Lords, and experience has proved that, excepting in periods of uncommon national excite-

* The number of separate properties in France, by the last survey, was 10,868,000; but at least a third of these, though rated separately in the Government books, are held by proprietors of other properties.—*Stat. de la France*, 1839.

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6.

And as regards the distribution of property.

¹ Baron de Staël, 54. Ling. xii. 20, 21. Mign. ii. 403. Colquhoun, 106, 107. Ganilh. 166, 208. Mémoires du Duc de Gaeta, ii. 334.

7.

Political weight in France since the Revolution, compared with England.

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I.

ment, the ruling power in the state is still to be found in the hands of the principal landed proprietors. In France, the Upper House is comparatively insignificant ; a great proportion of its members derive their subsistence from the bounty of the crown ; and the whole, either directly or indirectly, do not possess any serious weight in the constitution. The struggle bequeathed by the Revolution to succeeding ages, has from this cause become different in the two countries. In Britain, as in ancient Rome, it is between the patricians and the plebeians ; in France, as in the dynasties of the East, between the crown and the people. This is the natural consequence of the maintenance of the aristocracy in the one country, and its destruction in the other ; political weight, in the end, always centres where the greater part of the national property is to be found.

The military and naval power of England was not materially changed by the great rebellion. A greater degree of discipline, indeed, was established in its armies, and a more decided tone adopted by the government in its intercourse with foreign states ; but the external relations of the monarchy remained the same ; no permanent conquests were effected, and no alteration in the balance of European power resulted from its success. Within a few years after the Restoration, the English waged a doubtful maritime war with the smallest state in Europe, and the future mistress of the seas was compelled to submit to humiliation from the fleets of an inconsiderable republic. In France, on the other hand, the first burst of popular fury was immediately followed by an ardent and universal passion for arms ; the neighbouring states soon yielded to the vigour of the revolutionary forces, and Europe was shaken to its foundations by the conquests which they achieved. The ancient balance of power has been permanently destroyed by the consequences of their exertions ; at first by the overwhelming influence which they gave to the arms of the conquering republic, at last by the ascendancy acquired by the powers who subdued them.

Discrepancies so great, consequences so various, cannot be explained by any reference to the distinctions of national character, or of the circumstances under which liberty arose in the two countries. There is certainly a material difference between the character of the French

8.
And on the
military and
naval power
of the two
countries.

and that of the English, but not such a difference as to render the one revolution bloodless save in the field, the other bloody with all but the sovereign ; the one destructive to feudal power, the other confirmative of aristocratic ascendancy ; the one subversive of order and religion, the other dependant on the attachments which they had created. There is a difference between the circumstances of the two countries at the period when their respective revolutions took place, but not such as to make the contest in the one the foundation of a new distribution of property, and a different balance of power—that in the other the chief means of maintaining the subsisting interests of society, and the existing equilibrium in the world.

The insurrection of slaves is the most dreadful of all commotions : the West India negroes exterminate by fire and sword the property and lives of their masters. Universally the strength of the reaction is proportioned to the oppression of the weight which is thrown off ; the recoil is most to be feared when the bow has been furthest bent from its natural form. Fear is the chief source of cruelty ; men massacre others because they are apprehensive of death themselves. Property is set at nought where the aggressors have nothing to lose ; it is respected when the gaining party have grown up under the influence of its attachments. Revolutions are comparatively bloodless when the influential classes guide the movements of the people, and sedulously abstain from exciting their passions ; they are the most terrible of all contests, when property is arrayed on the one side and numbers on the other. The slaves of St Domingo exceeded the atrocities of the Parisian populace ; the American revolt differed but little from the usages of civilized war. These principles are universally recognised ; the difficulty consists in discovering what causes brought the one set to operate in the English, the other in the French Revolution.

These causes are to be found in the former history of the two countries ; and a rapid survey of their different circumstances will best show the different character which was stamped upon the two contests by the acquisitions or losses of preceding ages.

The vast extent of the Roman empire gave centuries of repose to the inhabitants of its central provinces. Wars

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9.
These diversities must have been owing to some general cause

10.
What that cause was.

CHAP.

I.

11.

Degraded
state of the
inhabitants
of both Gaul
and Britain
under the
Romans.

were carried on on the frontier alone; and the defensive forces, chiefly recruited by mercenary bands drawn from the semi-barbarous states on the verge of the Imperial dominions, presented scarcely any resemblance to the legions which had given to the republic the empire of the world. The later emperors, departing from the generous maxims of the republican government, which admitted the conquered states to the privileges of Roman citizens, oppressed the subject provinces by the most arbitrary exactions, and acted on the ruinous Eastern system of making the inhabitants of each district responsible for the whole amount of its taxes, whatever the diminution in their number might be. The people of the provinces, long inured to protection, and unaccustomed to the use of arms, shrunk from the very idea of a contest with the ruthless barbarians of the North. The inhabitants of Italy and Gaul first sought an exemption from foot service, upon the ground that they could not bear the weight of armour, and at length obtained a practical liberation from military duties of every description. The empire was defended entirely by hiring one body of barbarians to combat another. The ignorance which universally prevailed among the working classes was almost as great as that of England in the time of Alfred, when not a clergyman to the south of the Thames could read. From the long continuance of these circumstances during many successive generations, the spirit of the people throughout the whole Roman empire was totally extinguished, and they became alike incapable of combating for their lives with the enemies of their country, or of contending for their liberties with the despots on the throne. The pusillanimity with which its inhabitants, during a series of ages, submitted to the spoliation of barbarous enemies, and the exactions of unbridled tyrants, would appear incredible, were it not only supported by the concurring testimony of all historians, but found by experience to be the uniform result of a continued state of pacific enjoyment.¹

The Britons and the Gauls, at the period of the overthrow of the empire, were alike sunk in this state of political degradation. The provinces to the south of the wall of Severus were speedily overrun, upon the removal of the Roman legions, by the savages issuing from

¹ Gibbon, iii. 66, 67.
Turner's Anglo-Sax. i. 184, 188, and ii. 6, 8.
Sism. Fran. i. 74, 77.
Hume, i. 72.

the recesses of Caledonia, and the British leaders bewailed in pathetic strains their inability to contend with an artless and contemptible enemy. Notwithstanding the extraordinary military talents of Aetius, the Gauls were soon subdued by their barbarous neighbours; and a small tribe, emerging from the centre of Germany, became permanent masters of the plains of France. The Anglo-Saxons gradually vanquished the helpless Britons, and gave its lasting appellation to the future mistress of the waves. These conquests in both countries were, as already noticed,* attended in the end by a complete and violent change of landed property, and an immediate prostration of a considerable part of the vanquished people to the rank of slaves on the estates of their forefathers. This last and greatest humiliation, consequent upon a long train of political and military oppressions, completed the apathy and dejection of the great body of the people, and might have finally extinguished, as in the dynasties of the East, all desire of independence in their descendants, had not misfortunes arisen with their invigorating influence, and mankind regained in the school of adversity the spirit which they had lost in prosperous ages.¹

The long and obstinate conflicts which the Anglo-Saxons had to maintain, first with the natives, and afterwards with each other, were the first circumstances which in the British isles revived the energy of the people. These wars were not the transient result of ambition or the strife of kings, conducted by regular armies, but the fierce contests of one race with another, struggling for all that man holds dear—their lives, their religion, their language, and their possessions. For five long centuries the fields of England were incessantly drenched with blood; every county was in its turn the scene of mortal strife, and every tribe was successively driven by despair to manly exertion; until at length the effeminate character of the natives was completely changed, while their conquerors were, by their very misfortunes, prevented from sinking into the corruption which in general rapidly follows success in barbarous times. The small divisions of the Saxon kingdoms, by producing incessant domestic

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I.

12. Total prostration of the Britons and Gauls after the fall of Rome.

¹ Thierry, ii. 27. Turner's Anglo-Saxons, i. 37. Hume, i. 25, 29, 67. Sism. Hist. de France, i. 201.

13. Effects of Anglo-Saxon conquests.

* Ante, Introd. § 19.

CHAP.
I.

¹ Hume, i.
42, 97. Sism.
France, i.
400, 401.

14.
Effect of
the insular
situation of
Britain.

warfare, and bringing home the necessity for courage to every cottager, eminently contributed in this way to the formation of the national character. Milton has said that the wars of the Heptarchy were not more deserving of being recorded than the skirmishes of crows and kites. He would have been nearer the truth if he had said that they laid the foundation of the intrepid English character.¹

In this particular, as in many others, the insular situation of Britain eminently contributed to the formation of the national character. The other provinces of the Roman empire were overrun *at once*, because a vast and irresistible horde suddenly broke in upon them, which they had no means of resisting. The settlement of the Franks in Gaul, of the Visigoths in Spain, of the Vandals in Africa, and of the Goths, and afterwards the Lombards, in Italy, all took place in a single generation. But the seagirt shores of England could not be assailed by such a sudden and irresistible irruption of enemies. It was impossible in those times to find ships adequate for the sudden transportation of so great a number as was required to effect an immediate conquest. "The blue-eyed myriads from the Baltic coast" arrived by slow degrees, in squadrons and small fleets, none of which appear to have conveyed, at one time, above six or eight thousand men, most of them only one thousand or fifteen hundred. These inconsiderable detachments could not at once conquer a whole country. Their devastation, equally with their power, was confined to a small district, seldom extending at first beyond the limits of a modern county. The people were encouraged to resist, by the inconsiderable number of enemies which made their appearance on any one occasion; and although fresh invaders incessantly appeared, yet they generally assailed different districts, in the hope of discovering hitherto untouched fields of plunder. The spirit of the nation was thus every where called forth, both by the variety of points which were assailed, and the encouragement to local resistance which arose from the prospect, and frequently the achievement of success:² and the northern inundation, instead of being a flood which at once overwhelmed the vanquished people, and for centuries extinguished their energy, produced rather a per-

² Mackintosh's Eng-
land, i. 30.

petual strife, in the course of which the warlike virtues were regained which had been lost amidst the tranquillity of the Roman empire.

The exposure of the English to the piratical incursions of the Danes perpetuated this martial spirit, after the union of the country into one monarchy might otherwise have threatened its extinction; and, by compelling the government for many generations to put arms into the hands of the great body of the people, whether Saxons or Britons, spread an independent feeling over the whole population. To resist these merciless invaders, the whole strength of the kingdom was trained to the use of arms, and the earls of the counties summoned to their support every man within their bounds capable of wielding a halberd. By an ordinance of Alfred, a regular militia was established throughout the realm; and it was enacted, that the entire male population should be registered and armed. That great monarch fought no less than fifty-six battles in person with the invaders, and established at the same time the great rudiments of the English constitution, by the institution of courts of justice, trial by jury, and regular meetings of parliament. The natural consequence of these circumstances was the formation of a bold and independent character, not only among the landed proprietors but the peasantry, upon whose support they daily depended for defence against a roving but indefatigable enemy. Accordingly, from the earliest times, the free tenants bore an important part among the Anglo-Saxons, and were considered as the companions, rather than the followers, of their chieftains. Like the *comites* among the ancient Germans, they were the attendants of their leaders in peace, and their strength and protection in war. The infantry, in which the chiefs and their followers fought together, was, even before the Conquest, the chief strength of the English armies; while the cavalry, in whose ranks the nobles alone appeared, constituted the pride of the continental forces; and this difference was so material, that it appears to this day in the language of these different states. In all the states of the Continent, the word *chevalier* is derived from and means a *horseman*;¹ while in England the corresponding word *knight*, has no reference to any distinction in the mode of fighting,

CHAP.
I.

15.
And of the
piratical in-
cursions of
the Danes.

¹ Hume, 95, 96, 102, 107. Thier. i. 182; ii. 180. Tac. Mor. Germ. c. 21, 14.

CHAP. but comes from the German *enchicht*, a young man or com-
 I. panion.

16.
 Cause which
 was begin-
 ning to
 prove fatal
 to freedom.

But notwithstanding the strong principles of freedom which the Saxons brought with them from their original seats in Germany, the causes which have proved fatal to its existence in so many other states were here in full operation, and would have destroyed all liberty in England, but for the occurrence which is usually considered as the most calamitous in its history. The Saxons imported from the Continent the usual distinction between freemen and slaves, and the number of the latter class augmented to a most fearful degree during the long wars of the Heptarchy, in which the prisoners were almost universally reduced to slavery. At the time of the Conquest, in consequence, the greater part of the land in the kingdom was cultivated by serfs, who constituted by far the most numerous class in the community; and the free tenants were extremely few in comparison. These slaves, in process of time, would have constituted the whole lower orders of the state; and the descendants of the freemen gradually dwindled into an aristocratic order. The greatest increase of mankind is always found in the lowest class of society; because it is in them that the principle of population is least restrained by prudential considerations. The higher orders, so far from multiplying, are never able, from the extraordinary influence of the preventive check among them, without additions from below, to maintain their own numbers. This is the fundamental principle which has rendered the maintenance of liberty for any long period so extremely difficult in all ages of the world. The descendants of the poor are ever increasing, except in circumstances so disastrous as to put an entire stop to the growth of population, while those of the middle or higher orders, if not aided by recruits from below, are uniformly diminishing. The humblest class, having least political weight, are overlooked in the first struggles for freedom; the free citizens, who have acquired privileges, resist the extension of them to their inferiors; the descendants of the people in one age become the privileged order in the next; and on the basis of pristine liberty, the oppression of oligarchy is ultimately established.¹

¹ Hume, i.
 213, 216.
 Brady, Pref.
 7, 9.

This change had already begun to take place in this island;

the descendants of the first Anglo-Saxon settlers had already become a distinct class of nobles; the unhappy race of slaves had immensely multiplied; and, notwithstanding its original principles of freedom, the Anglo-Saxon constitution had become extremely aristocratic. No middle class was recognised in society; the peasants were all enrolled, for the sake of protection, under some chieftain whom they were bound to obey in preference even to the sovereign; and the industrious classes were so extremely scanty, that York, the second city in the kingdom, contained only fourteen hundred families. The freedom of the Anglo-Saxons, therefore, was fast running into oligarchy: and their descendants, like the hidalgos of Spain, or the nobility of France, might have been left in the enjoyment of ruinous exclusive privileges, when the current of events was altered, and they were forcibly blended with their inferiors by one of those catastrophes which seem destined by Providence to arrest the course of human degradation.—This event was the **NORMAN CONQUEST**.¹

As this was the last of the great settlements which have taken place in modern Europe, so it was by far the most violent and oppressive. The first settlers in the provinces of the Roman empire, being ignorant of the use of wealth, and totally unacquainted with the luxuries of life, deemed themselves fortunately established when they obtained a part of the vanquished lands. But the needy adventurers who followed the standard of William, had already acquired expensive habits, their desires were insatiable, and to gratify their demands, almost the whole landed property of England was in a few years confiscated. Hardly any conquest since the fall of Rome has been so violent, or attended with such spoliation, contumely, and insult. The ancient Saxon proprietor was frequently reduced to the rank of a serf on his paternal estate, and nourished, in the meanest employments, an inextinguishable hatred of his oppressor: maidens of the highest rank were compelled to take the veil, in order to preserve their persons from Norman violence, or were glad to secure a legal title to protection by marrying the Norman nobles, and conveying to them the estates they had inherited from their fathers: tortures of the most cruel kind were invented, to extort from the miser-

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1.

17.

Consequent
aristocratic
tendency
of society
among the
Anglo-
Saxons.

¹ Hume, i.
210, 219.

Brady, 10.

18.

Great effects
of the Nor-
man con-
quest.

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able people their hidden treasures. In the suppression of the great rebellion in the north of England, the most savage measures were put in force. A tract, eighty miles broad to the north of the Humber, was laid waste, and above a hundred thousand persons in consequence perished of famine; while in Hampshire, a district of country thirty miles in extent was depopulated, and the inhabitants expelled without any compensation, to form a forest for the royal pleasure. Nor were these grievances merely the temporary effusion of hostile revenge; they formed, on the contrary, the settled maxims by which the government for centuries was regulated, and from which the successors of the Conqueror were driven by necessity alone. For several reigns it was an invariable rule to admit no native of the island to any office of importance, ecclesiastical, civil, or military. In the reign of Henry I. all places of trust were still in the hands of the Normans; and so late as the beginning of the 12th century, the same arbitrary system of exclusion seems to have been rigidly enforced. The dispossessed proprietors sought in vain to regain their estates. An array of sixty thousand Norman horsemen was always ready to support the pretensions of the intruding barons. The throne is still filled by the descendants of the Conqueror, and the greatest families in the realm date their origin from the battle of Hastings.¹

¹ Hume, i.
260, 279, 283,
284, 318.
Thierry, ii.
24, 27, 96, 97,
286, 303, 304,
368.
Guizot,
Hist. Eur.
ch. ii.

19.
It gave origin to the yeomanry of England.

The English antiquarians, alarmed at the consequences which might be deduced from this violent usurpation, have endeavoured to soften its features, and to represent the Norman as reigning rather by the consent than the subjugation of the Saxon inhabitants. In truth, however, it was the severity and continued weight of this conquest which was the real cause of the refractory spirit of the English people. The principles of liberty spread their roots the deeper, just because they were prevented from rising to the surface of society. The Saxon proprietors having been almost dispossessed of their properties, were necessarily cast down into the lower stations of life. A foundation was thus laid for a middle rank in society, totally different from what obtained in any other state in Europe. It was not the native inhabitants, the pusillanimous subjects of the Roman empire, who from that period composed the lower orders of the state, but the descendants of the free Anglo-

Saxon and Danish settlers, who had acquired independent habits from the enjoyment of centuries of freedom, and courageous feelings from the recollections of a long series of successes. One defeat could not extinguish the recollection of a hundred victories. Habits, the growth of ages, survived the oppression of transient sovereigns. The power of the Normans prevented the dispossessed proprietors or their descendants from rising into the higher stations in society; the slaves already filled the lowest walks of life. Between the two they formed a sturdy and powerful body, which neither was cast down in the contests of feudal power, nor perished in the obscurity of ignoble bondage. It was from these causes that the *yeomanry of England* took their rise.¹

¹ Blackst.
i. 27.

Had the kingdom of England been but an appendage to a monarchy of greater extent, the discontents of this middle class would probably have been treated with contempt, or have been repressed by the stern hand of military power; and the Norman barons, residing in their castles in France, might have safely disregarded the impotent clamour of their English tenantry. But, by a fortunate combination of circumstances, this was rendered impossible. The military chieftans who followed the Conqueror, were either possessed of no estates on the other side of the Channel, or their recent acquisitions greatly exceeded the value of their continental possessions. The kingdom of England was too powerful to be treated as an appendage of a Norman duchy, and the English tenantry too formidable to be resigned to the oppressive government of an absent nobility. Hence, both the sovereign and his nobles made England their principal residence; and the Norman nobility, who at first had flattered themselves that they had gained an appendage to their duchy, soon found, like the Scotch upon the accession of their monarchs to the English throne, that they had changed places with their supposed subjects, and that the province was become the ruling power. The effects of this necessity soon appeared in the measures of government. At the accession of each successive monarch, and in every crisis of national danger, it was deemed indispensable to make some sacrifice to the popular wishes, and abate a little of the wonted severity of the Norman rule, to secure the fidelity of their English subjects. When Henry I. came to the throne, his first step

20.
Vast effect
of the insu-
lar situation
of England
on the con-
quering
race.

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was to grant the famous charter, which was long referred to as the foundation of English liberties, in order to secure the support of his insular subjects against the preferable claims of his brother Robert ; and, in consequence, he was enabled to lead a victorious army into Normandy, and revenge, on the field of Tenchebray, the slaughter and the calamities of Hastings. When Stephen seized the sceptre, he instantly passed a charter confirming the grants of Henry, and promising to remit the Danish tax, and restore the laws of Edward the Confessor. Henry II. deemed it prudent, in the most solemn manner, to ratify the same instrument. The pusillanimity and disasters of John led to the extortion of *Magna Charta*, by which the old charter of Henry I. was again confirmed, and the rights of all classes of freemen were enlarged and established ; and the great charter itself was ratified no less than two-and-thirty different times in the succeeding reigns, on occasion of every extraordinary grant from the subjects, or an unusual weakness of the crown.¹

¹ Eadmer, 90. Hume, i. 329, 351 ; ii. 74, 81. W. Malmesbury, 1:9. M. Paris, 38, 272. Hallam, i. 152.

21.
And on the early struggles for freedom.

The effects of these circumstances on the character and objects of the English struggles for freedom have been in the highest degree important. From perpetually recurring to the past, the habit was acquired of regarding liberty, not as a boon to be gained, but as a right to be vindicated ; not as an invasion of the constitution, but a restoration of its pristine purity. The love of freedom came thus to be inseparably blended with the veneration for antiquity ; the privileges of the people were sought for, not in the violation of present, but in the restitution of ancient right ; not by the work of destruction, but by that of preservation. The passion for liberty was thus divested of its most dangerous consequences, by being separated from the desire for innovation. The progress of the constitution was marked not by successive changes, but repeated confirmations of subsisting rights ; and the efforts of freedom in England, instead of being directed, as in most other countries, to procure an expansion of the rights of the people in proportion to the progress of society, have been almost entirely confined to an unceasing endeavour to prevent their contraction by the arbitrary disposition of successive monarchs. The same circumstances produced a remarkable effect on the current of public feeling in England, and the

objects which were regarded as the subjects of national anxiety by the great body of the people. They mingled the recollection of their ancient laws with the days of their national independence, and looked back to the reign of Edward the Confessor as the happy era when their rights and properties were secure, and they had not yet tasted of the severity of foreign domination. Hence the struggles of freedom in England acquired a definite and practicable object; and, instead of being wasted in aspirations after visionary schemes, settled down into a strong and extinguishable desire for the restoration of an order of things once actually established, and of which the experienced benefits were still engraved on the recollections of the people. For several centuries, accordingly, the continued effort of the English people was to obtain the restitution of their Saxon privileges;—they were solemnly recognised in *Magna Charta*, and ratified in the different confirmations of that important instrument; and they are still, after the lapse of a thousand years, looked back to with interest by historians, as the original foundations of English liberty.¹

The effects of the same causes appeared in the most striking manner in the wars of the English for several centuries after the Norman conquest. Their neighbours, the French and the Scotch, brought into the field only the chivalry of the barons, and the spearmen of their serfs. No middle order was to be found superior to the common billman, or foot-soldier, but inferior to the mounted knight. But, in addition to these, the Plantagenet monarchs appeared at the head of a vast and skilful body of archers—a force peculiar to England, because it alone possessed the class from whom it could be formed. It was the Saxon outlaws, driven by despair into the numerous forests with which the country abounded, who first from necessity obtained a perfect mastery of this weapon. And accordingly, the graphic Novelist, with historic truth, makes Norman Richard the leader of English chivalry, and Robin Hood, the prince of Saxon outlaws, the first of British marksmen.* It was their descendants who swelled the ranks of the English yeomanry, and constituted a powerful body

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I

¹ Hallam, i.
451, 452.
M. Paris,
272.

22.
And on the
national
wars of the
English.

* Sir Walter Scott in *Ivanhoe*.—It is a curious circumstance, that Thierry mentions that it was this incomparable Novel which first suggested to him the idea of writing a history of the Norman Conquest, since realized in his admirable history of that event.

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in war, formidable from their skill, their numbers, and their independent spirit. The bow continued for ages to be the favourite national weapon of the Saxons. They practised the art incessantly in their amusements, and regained, by its importance in the field of battle, their due weight in the government of their country. Not the Norman nobility, not the feudal retainers, as Hallam observes, gained the victories of Cressy and Poitiers, for they were fully matched in the ranks of France; but the yeomen who drew the bow with strong and steady arms, accustomed to its use in their native fields, and rendered fearless by personal competence and civil freedom.¹

¹ Hallam, i. 75. Froissart, i. 16. Tytler's Scotland, ii. 439, 440. Sism. France, xii. 51.

23.

Total want of archery as a force in France and Scotland.

The Scotch government, whose armies had suffered so often from the English archers, in vain passed repeated acts to compel the formation of a similar force in their own country. All these measures proved ineffectual, because the yeomanry were wanting who filled the ranks of the bowmen in the English armies. The French kings endeavoured, by mercenary troops drawn from the mountains of Genoa, to provide a match for the English archers; but the jealousy of their government, which prevented the middle orders from being allowed the use of arms, rendered all such attempts nugatory; and the Plantagenet kings, in consequence, twice vanquished their greatest armies, and marched boldly through the country, at the head of the Saxon yeomanry. Even after the cessation of hostilities between the two monarchies, the terrible English bands ravaged with impunity the provinces of France; nor did they ever experience any considerable check till they approached the Swiss mountains, and encountered, at the cemetery of Bâle, peasants as free, as sturdy, and as courageous as themselves.²

² Planta's Switzerland, ii. 321. Tytler's Scot. ii. 439. Sism. France, xii. 51. Barante, i. 80. Preface.

24.

Peculiar combination which produced these results in England

It was a singular combination of circumstances which rendered the middle ranks under the Norman princes so powerful, both in the military array of the state, and in the maintenance of their civil rights. The Norman conquest had laid the foundation of such a class, by dispossessing the numerous body of Saxon proprietors; but it was the subsequent necessities of the sovereigns and the nobles, arising from their insular situation and their frequent contests with each other, which compelled them to foster the Saxon troops, and avail themselves of that powerful

force which they found existing in such perfection among their native forests. Cut off by the ocean from their feudal brethren on the Continent, surrounded by a numerous and warlike people, the barons perceived that, without the support of their yeomanry, they could neither maintain their struggles with the sovereign, nor insure the possession of their estates. The privileges, therefore, of this class were anxiously attended to in all the renewals of the great charter; and their strength was carefully fostered as the main security both of the crown and the barons in their extensive and unsettled insular possessions. It is considered by William of Malmesbury as an especial work of Providence, that so great a people as the English should have given up all for lost after the destruction of so small an army as that which fought at Hastings; but it was precisely the magnitude of this disproportion which perpetuated and extended the freedom of the country. Had the Normans not succeeded, the free Saxons would have dwindled into a feudal aristocracy, and the peasantry of England been similar in their condition to the serfs of France; had an overwhelming power conquered, it would have utterly crushed the vanquished people, the Norman conquest been similar in its effects to the subjugation of the neighbouring island, and the fields of England been now choked by the crowds and the wretchedness of Ireland. It was the conquest of the country by a force which, though formidable at first, became soon disproportioned to the strength of the subdued realm, which both created a middle class and secured its privileges; and by blending the interests of the victor with those of the vanquished, at length engrafted the vigour of Norman enterprise on the steady spirit of English freedom.¹*

¹ William of Malmesbury, 53. Hall. i. 449.

In this view, the loss of the continental provinces in the reign of King John, and the subsequent long wars between France and England under the Plantagenet princes, contri-

* Long after these pages were written, I had the high satisfaction of finding that, unknown to myself, M. Guizot had about the same time adopted a similar view of the effects of the Norman conquest, and illustrated it with the philosophical spirit and extensive research for which his historical works are so justly celebrated.—See GUIZOT, *Essais sur l'Histoire de France*, p. 373-400. It is singular how frequently, about the same period, the same ideas are suggested to different writers, in situations remote from each other, which never before occurred to those who have treated of the subject. It would appear that political seasons bring forth the same fruits in different parts of the world at the same time.

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25.

Important effect of the loss of the English possessions in France.

buted strongly to the preservation of English liberty, by severing all connexion between the barons and their kinsmen on the Continent, and throwing both the sovereigns and the nobility for their chief support upon the tenantry of their estates. From the commencement of these contests, accordingly, the distinction between Norman and English disappeared; the ancient prejudices and pride of the former yielded to the stronger feeling of antipathy at their common enemies; English became the ordinary language both of the higher and lower orders, and the English institutions the object of veneration to the descendants of the very conquerors who had overturned them. The continual want of money, which the long duration of this desperate struggle occasioned to the crown, strengthened the growth of English freedom; each successive grant by the barons was accompanied by a confirmation of ancient rights; the commons, from the frequent use of arms, came to feel their own weight, and to assert their ancient privileges; and at length England, under the Plantagenet reigns, regained as much liberty as it had ever enjoyed under the rule of its Saxon monarchs.¹

¹ Hume, ii. 487, 488, 492; iii. 4, 78, 79.

Three circumstances connected with the Norman conquest, contributed in a remarkable manner to the preservation of a free spirit among the barons and commons of England.

26.

Power of the crown under the Norman kings.

I. The first of these was the great weight which the crown acquired, from the ample share of the conquered lands which were allotted to the sovereign at the conquest. William received no less than fourteen hundred and twenty-two manors for his proportion; a patrimony far greater than was enjoyed by any sovereign of Europe at the same period. The consequence was, that the turbulent spirit of the barons was far more effectually checked in this island than in the continental states; the monarch could generally crush by his sentence any obnoxious nobleman; his courts of justice extended their jurisdiction into every part of the kingdom; and the essential prerogatives of the crown, those of coining money and repressing private wars, were never, except in reigns of unusual weakness, usurped by the subjects. For a century and a half after the conquest, the authority of the Norman sovereigns was incomparably more extensive than that of any of the

other monarchs who had settled on the ruins of the Roman empire. The industry and wealth of the commons was thus more completely protected in England than in the neighbouring kingdoms, where feudal violence, private wars, and incessant bloodshed, crushed the first efforts of laborious freedom; and the middle ranks, comparatively free from oppression, gradually grew in importance with the extension of their numbers, and the insensible increase of their opulence.¹

II. The second was the insular situation of the country, and its consequent exemption from the horrors of actual warfare. With the exception of a few incursions of the Scottish monarchs into the northern counties, which were transient in their duration and partial in their effects, England has hardly ever been the seat of foreign war since the conquest; and the southern counties, by far the most important both in riches and population, have not seen the fires of an enemy's camp for eight hundred years. Securely cradled in the waves, her industry has scarcely ever felt the devastating influence of foreign conquest; her arms have often carried war into foreign states, but she has never suffered from its havoc in her own. Periods of foreign hostility have been known to her inhabitants only from the increased excitation of national feeling, or the quickened encouragement of domestic industry. The effects of this happy exemption from the devastation of foreign invasion have been incalculable. It is during the dangers and the exigencies of war that military violence acquires its fatal ascendancy; that industry is blighted by the destruction of its produce; labour deadened by the forfeiture of its hopes; pacific virtues extinguished by the insults which they suffer; warlike qualities developed by the eminence to which they lead. In every age the principles of liberty expand during the protection of peace, and are withered by the whirl and the agitation of war. If this truth has been experienced in our own times, when military devastation is comparatively limited, and industry universally diffused, what must have been its importance in a barbarous age, when the infant shoots of freedom were first beginning to appear, and could expand only under the shelter of baronial or monastic power? It is accordingly observed by all our historians, that the feudal

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I.

¹ Hume, i. 353, 369, 371; ii. 73, 74. Hal. ii. 427. Lyttleton, ii. 288.

27.

Insular situation.

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institutions of England were far less military than those which obtained in the continental monarchies ; that private wars were comparatively unknown, and that the armies of the kings were for the most part composed of levied troops, whose unbroken experience soon acquired a decided superiority over the feudal militia of their enemies.¹

¹ Hallam, i.
479.

28.
Anglo-Saxon institutions.

III. The third circumstance was the fortunate limitation of the privileges of nobility to the eldest son of the family. This was owing to the weight of the commons in the constitution, which arose from the number and opulence of the Saxon proprietors, who had been dispossessed by the Normans. It prevented the formation of a privileged class, and suffered the prerogatives of nobility to exist only in that member of the family who inherited the paternal estate ; and there is no single circumstance which has contributed more to confer its long permanence, its regular improvement, and its inherent vigour on the English constitution. The descendants of the nobles were thus prevented from forming a caste, to whom, as in the continental monarchies, the exclusive right of filling certain situations might be limited. The younger branches of the aristocracy, after a few generations, relapsed into the rank, and became identified with the interests of the commons ; and that pernicious separation of noble and plebeian, which has been the principal cause of the destruction of freedom in all the European states, was from the earliest times softened in this country. The nobility in the actual possession of their estates, were too few in number to form an obnoxious body. Their relations possessing no privileges above the commoners, ceased, after a few generations, either to be objects of envy to their inferiors or to be identified in interest with the class from which they sprang. Thus the different ranks of society were blended together, by a link descending from the higher, and ultimately resting on the lower orders.²

² Hallam, i.
478.

29.
Entire want of protection to the rural labourers.

But this freedom, though firmly established by the feudal constitutions, was limited to the classes for whose interest alone these constitutions appear to have been intended. The villains or slaves, who still constituted the great body of the labouring population, were almost wholly unprotected. Even in Magna Charta, while the

personal freedom of every free subject was provided for, the more numerous body of slaves, that is the whole rural labourers, probably nine-tenths of the working classes in the kingdom, were left to the mercy of their landlords, with the single stipulation that they should not be deprived of their implements of husbandry. Their emancipation, far from being the work of the barons, was accomplished by the efforts of the clergy and the progress of humanity in a subsequent age. General liberty, in our sense of the word, was unknown in England till after the Great Rebellion.¹

¹ Hume, iii. 301, 305.
Hall. i. 447.
Hume, ii. 83. Tytler, ii. 260.

In the reign of Richard II., the gradual progress of wealth, and the extraordinary excitation awakened among all ranks by the military glories and lucrative wars of Edward III., produced the first effervescence of the real democratic spirit. The insurrection of Wat Tyler, which was contemporaneous with the efforts of the Flemish burghers to emancipate their country from feudal tyranny, was a general movement of the lower classes; and, accordingly, it was directed not against the power of the crown, but against the exclusive privileges of the nobility.

30.
Democratic spirit in the time of Richard II.

“When Adam delved and Eve span,
Where was then the gentleman?”

was the maxim on which they rested; a distich pointing to a struggle of a totally different kind from any previously known in modern Europe, and corresponding very nearly to the principles which, four centuries after, produced the French Revolution. But all the great changes of nature are gradual in their progress: the effects of sudden convulsions are as transient as the effervescence from which they spring. The insurrection of the peasants in England met with the same fate as did that of the Flemish democracy at Resebecque: the feudal array of the barons easily dispersed a rabble imperfectly armed and wholly undisciplined. Their victory was fortunate for the progress of real liberty;—the triumph of the peasants must have been shortlived, and would have exhibited the horrors of a negro revolt. Ignorant, disunited men, drawn from humble employments, unaccustomed to the exercise of political rights, can never long remain at the head of affairs. After the fervour of the moment is over,

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they necessarily fall under the dominion, if not of their former masters, at least of tyrants of their own creating, and their ultimate condition is worse than the first. Centuries of peace and increasing wealth—the unceasing operation of a beneficent religion—the influence of printing and diffused knowledge—a more general distribution of property—a change in the implements of human destruction, were all required before a part even of the levelling principles then diffused among the English peasantry could be safely carried into practice.¹

¹ Barante, i. 74. Pref. Hume, iii. 10, 11.

31

Wars of the Roses.

The power of the feudal aristocracy received a final blow from the wars of York and Lancaster. Those bloody dissensions destroyed the fabric of Gothic power—they watered the English plains with blood, but it was blood from which has arisen a harvest of glory. From causes which it is difficult now to trace, they early assumed a character of extraordinary ferocity. Prisoners even of the highest rank, on both sides, were, from the very commencement, massacred in cold blood; and at length the exasperation of the two parties became so excessive, that quarter was refused by common consent on the field of battle, and thirty-six thousand Britons fell by mutual slaughter in a single engagement. The chasm occasioned by these losses was soon repaired by the lower orders; but to the feudal nobility they proved completely fatal. Eighty princes of the blood, and almost the whole ancient barons, perished in these disastrous wars; and upon the termination of hostilities, the House of Peers could only muster forty members. The influence of those who remained was immensely weakened. In the different forfeitures which had been inflicted with so unsparing a hand by the factions who alternately prevailed, the estates of almost all the nobility in the kingdom had been included; and the feudal tenants, accustomed to a rapid change of masters in the general confusion, lost great part of their ancient veneration for their superiors. The nobles became divided among each other: the survivors of the Norman conquerors viewed with undisguised jealousy the upstart families who had risen in the midst of the public distress; and these regarded with equal horror the remnant of ferocious barons, ever ready to exterminate them to regain their properties.² Weakened in numbers, dis-

² Hallam, iii. 294, 295. Hume, iii. 203, 212, 215, 237.

united among themselves, and severed from the affections of the people, the ancient nobility of England were never again formidable to the liberties of their country.

The ultimate effects of this destruction of the feudal aristocracy were eminently favourable to public freedom ; but its immediate consequence was a great and most perilous augmentation of the power of the monarch. The ancient barrier had been swept away, and the new one was not yet erected. By the forfeited estates which accrued to the victorious monarch, a fifth of the whole land of the kingdom was annexed to the crown ; and notwithstanding the liberal grants to the nobles of his party, the hereditary revenue which Edward left to his successors was very great. The influence of the nobles being in abeyance, and the people having neither acquired nor become capable of exerting any share of power but through the medium of their superiors, nothing remained to resist the power of the sovereign. The inevitable consequence was the destruction of the freedom which had been won by the struggles of the barons. Hence the tyranny of the Tudor princes. Nothing, accordingly, is more remarkable than the pliant servility of Parliament, and the slavish submission of the people, during the reigns of the successors of Henry VII. Civil war appears to have worn out their energies, and extinguished their ancient passion for freedom ; the Houses of Peers and Commons vied with each other in acts of adulation to the reigning monarch : it seemed as if the Barons of Runnymede had been succeeded by the senate of Tiberius. Even the commons had almost totally lost their former spirit : the most arbitrary taxation, the most repeated violations of their liberties, produced no popular convulsion ; mandates issued from court were universally obeyed in the election of members of Parliament ; and the most violent changes of which history makes mention, the destruction of the national religion, the seizure of one-third of the national property, the execution of seventy-two thousand persons in a single reign, produced no commotions among the people.¹

This was the critical period of English liberty ; the country had reached that crisis which in all the great continental monarchies had proved fatal to public freedom. Notwithstanding her insular situation ; notwithstanding

32.
Decline of
feudal li-
berty.

¹ Hume, iv.
244, 375, 358,
399. Hallam,
iii. 298.

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33.

Revived by
spirit of re-
ligious free-
dom and the
Reforma-
tion.

the independent spirit of her Saxon ancestry ; notwithstanding the efforts of her feudal nobility, the liberty of England was all but extinct, when the enthusiasm of the REFORMATION fanned the dying spark, and kept alive, in a sect which soon became predominant, the declining flame of liberty. The Puritans were early distinguished by their zeal in the cause of freedom ; during the imperious reign of Elizabeth they maintained in silence their inflexible spirit, and so well was her government aware of the dangerous tendency of their principles, that they never were permitted during the reign of that sagacious princess to have the smallest share in state affairs. In the time of James I. their number became greater, and their exertions in the cause of freedom more apparent. The first serious attacks on government were made through the pulpit ; and the only persons in this, as in other countries at the same period, who made any exertions in favour of their liberties, were those who were animated with religious zeal. During the reign of Charles I. an universal frenzy seized the nation ; an enthusiasm almost as general, and far more lasting than that of the Crusades, pervaded the middle and a large proportion of the higher ranks ; and, but for the strength of that feeling, the Long Parliament would never have been able to withstand the exertions, which, with their characteristic loyalty, the English gentlemen at that period made in defence of their sovereign. " From whatever cause," says Cromwell, " the civil war began, if religion was not the original source of discord, yet God soon brought it to that issue ;" and he constantly affirmed, that, amidst the strife of battle, and the dangers of war, the reward to which he and his followers looked forward was freedom of conscience. It is of little moment whether the future Protector and his military chieftains were or were not sincere in these professions. It is sufficient that such was the temper of the times, that by no other means could they rouse the energies of the great body of the people. The effects of this spirit were not confined to this island or the period in which it arose ; they extended to another hemisphere and a distant age ; and from the emigrants whom religious oppression drove to the forests of America, have sprung those powerful states, who have tried, amidst Transatlantic plenty, the doubtful experiment of democratic freedom.¹

¹ Hume, v.
455, 483 ; vi.
48, 100, 117,
387, 345.
Ling. xi.
360.

But while the current of popular feeling was thus violent in favour of republican principles, the effect of ancient and fondly cherished national institutions strongly appeared, and the English reaped the benefit of the long struggle maintained through the feudal ages by their ancestors in the cause of freedom. Though the substance of liberty had fled during the arbitrary reigns of the Tudor princes, her shadow still remained; the popular attachment to ancient rights was still undecayed; the venerable forms of the constitution were yet unchanged, and on that foundation the new and broader liberties of the country were reared. But for this happy circumstance, the spirit of freedom which the Reformation awakened might have wasted itself, as in Scotland, in visionary and impracticable schemes, until the nation, worn out with speculations from which no real benefit could accrue, willingly returned to its pristine servitude. Whereas, by the course of events which had preceded it, the stream of liberty naturally returned, when strengthened, into its wonted though now almost neglected channels, and, without breaking its former bounds, or overwhelming the ancient landmarks, extended its fertilizing influence over a wider surface.

“It is remarkable,” says Turgot, “that while England is the country in the world where public freedom has longest subsisted, and political institutions are most the subject of discussion, it is at the same time the one in which innovations are with most difficulty introduced, and where the most obstinate resistance is made to undoubted improvements. You might alter the whole political frame of government in France with more facility than you could introduce the most insignificant change into the customs or fashions of England.”¹ The principle here alluded to is at once the consequence and the reward of free institutions. Universally it will be found, that the attachment of men to the customs and usages of their forefathers is greatest, where they have had a considerable share in the establishment or enjoyment of them; and that the danger of innovation is most to be feared where the exercise of rights has been longest unknown to the people. The dynasties of the East are of ephemeral duration, the monarchies of Europe are modified or changed by the progress of society; but the customs of the Swiss democracies seem as immovable as

34.
Modified by
the regard
to ancient
rights in
England.

35.
Which is the
result of
long-esta-
blished
popular in-
stitutions.

¹ Turgot,
ii. 32.

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the mountains in which they were cradled.* The same principles have, in every age, formed the distinguishing characteristic of the English people. During the severities and oppression of the Norman rule, it was to the equal laws of the Saxon reigns that they looked back with a fond affection, which neither the uncertainty of oral tradition, nor the intensity of present suffering, had been able to destroy. When the barons assembled in open rebellion at Runnymede, it was not any imaginary system of government which they established, but the old and consuetudinary laws of Edward the Confessor, which they moulded into a new form, and established on a firmer basis in the great Charter; tempering even in a moment of revolutionary triumph the ardour of liberty and the pride of descent by their hereditary attachment to old institutions. The memorable reply of the barons to the proposal of the prelates at Mertoun, *Nolumus leges Angliæ mutare*, has passed into a fixed maxim, to which the preservation of the constitution through all the convulsions of later times is mainly to be ascribed. In the petition of right drawn by Selden, and the greatest lawyers of his day, the Parliament said to the king, "Your subjects have *inherited* this freedom;" and in the preamble of the Declaration of Rights, the states do not pretend any right to frame a government for themselves, but strive only to secure the religion, laws, and liberties, long possessed, and lately endangered; and their prayer is only, "That it may be declared and enacted, that all and singular the rights and liberties asserted and declared, are the true, ancient, and indubitable rights and liberties of the people of this kingdom."¹ "By adhering in this manner," says Burke, "to our forefathers, we are guided, not by the superstition of antiquarians, but the spirit of philosophic analogy. In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame of

¹ 1 William and Mary, c. i.

* The French Directory, in the ardour of their innovations, proposed to the peasants of Uri and Underwalden a change in their constitution, and made the offer of fraternization, which had seduced the allegiance of so many other states. But these sturdy mountaineers replied, "Words cannot express, citizen directors, the profound grief which the proposal to accede to the new Helvetic league has occasioned in these valleys. Other people may have different inclinations; but we, the descendants of William Tell, who have preserved without the slightest alteration the constitution which he has left us, have but one unanimous wish, that of living under the government which Providence and the courage of our ancestors have left us."—LACRETTELLE, *Rév. Franç.* iii. 162.

policy the image of a relation in blood, binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties, adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections; keeping inseparable, and cherishing with the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities, our state, our hearths, our sepulchres, and our altars."¹

These principles have not been abandoned by the descendants of England in their Transatlantic possessions. When the Americans threw off the yoke of Britain, they retained its laws, its religion, its institutions, with the exceptions of the monarchical and aristocratic part; no massacres or proscriptions, no confiscations or exiles, disgraced the rise of their liberty; no oblivion of the past was made the foundation of their hopes for the future. The English church is still the prevailing religion of the land, at least in the higher classes; the English decisions yet regulate their courts of justice; and English institutions form the basis on which their national prosperity has been reared. Amidst the exasperations of a civil war, they have deviated less than others engaged in revolution from the usages of civilized life. Alone of all foreigners, an Englishman still feels at home when he crosses the Atlantic; and the first efforts of American eloquence have been exerted in painting the feelings of an ingenuous inhabitant of that country, when he first visited the land of his fathers.² It is the distinctive mark of the growth, not of the free but the democratic spirit, that the majority of the inhabitants of the United States, in later times, have departed from this reverence for antiquity, and imbibed, with jealousy of England, and partiality for French alliance, a progressive disregard of the institutions and good faith to which their former greatness has been owing. When this spirit becomes universal, it is not going too far to affirm that the last hour of American freedom is at hand.

As the best proof that the Revolution of England owed its distinctive character to the circumstances which preceded it, and to the large share enjoyed by previous generations in the government of the country, it is sufficient to refer to what took place at the same period in the sister kingdoms. Ireland, conquered by Henry II., was retained

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¹ Planta's
Switzerland,
ii. 137.
Hume, ii.
89, 141, 223.
Burke, vi.
76, 80.

^{36.}
And which
extends to
America.

² Washing-
ton Irving's
Sketch-
Book, i. 19.

^{37.}
Savage cha-
racter of the
civil wars in
Ireland.

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1.

for four centuries in a state of feudal subjection to Britain ; none of the privileges of English subjects had been communicated to her inhabitants ; they had neither tasted of the severity of Saxon conquest, nor the blessings of Saxon freedom. Feudal aristocracy, in its worst form, accompanied by national exasperation, and an absent nobility, there prevailed ; and what was the consequence ? Instead of the moderate reforms, the humane conquests, and the security to property, which distinguished the English Rebellion, there appeared the most terrible horrors of popular licentiousness, and the last severities of military execution—general massacres, the burning of families, torrents of blood, both in the field and on the scaffold, the storming of cities, and the desolation of provinces. English revenge, though grievously provoked, was still more terrible. Cromwell seriously endeavoured to extirpate the native Irish Catholics, though they were eight times as numerous as the Protestants ; forty thousand men were sent as soldiers to foreign states, and their wives and children hurried off to the plantations ; the most severe and arbitrary laws were enforced against those who remained in the country ; the estates of all who had borne arms against the Parliament were forfeited, and one-third of their possessions cut off from all those proprietors who had not served in the popular ranks. A large portion of the people were removed from one part of the country to another, and any transplanted Irishman, found out of his district, might be put to death by the first person who met him. Such was the effect of these measures, that nearly one-half of the whole land in the country, amounting to above seven millions of acres, was forfeited, and bestowed on the revolutionary soldiers ; even after the restoration of Charles, two-thirds of these immense possessions were left in the hands of the recent acquirers, and though the remainder was nominally restored to the Catholics, none of it returned to the dispossessed proprietors.¹

In Scotland, also, at the same period, the struggle for freedom was marked by all the horrors of popular licentiousness. In that remote state, neither the Saxon institutions, nor the principles of freedom, had in early times obtained any solid footing ; and, in consequence, the nobles and peasantry, without either the intervention of

¹ Lingard, xi. 136 ; xii. 74. Hume, i. 379. Laing's Scotland, iii. 218, 219.

38.
And Scotland.

a middle rank or the moderating influence of previous privileges, were brought into fierce collision at the Reformation. As might have been expected, the proceedings of the Revolutionists were from the very first characterised by the utmost violence and injustice. The whole property of the church, amounting to about a third of the kingdom, was confiscated, and bestowed on the barons of the popular party; blood flowed in torrents on the scaffold; quarter was almost invariably refused in the field; and the proceedings of the adverse parties resembled rather the sanguinary vengeance of savages than the conduct of men contending for important civil privileges. The mild and humane conduct of the Civil War in England, forms the most striking contrast to the cruelty of the Royalists or the severity of the Covenanters in Scotland. The horrors of the La Vendée insurrection were anticipated in the massacres of Montrose's followers; and the *Noyades* of the Loire are not without a parallel in the atrocious revenge of the popular faction.^{1*}

Nor was it any peculiarity in the national character which stamped its singular and honourable features on the English Rebellion. The civil wars of York and Lancaster, not a century and a half before, had been distinguished by a degree of ferocious cruelty, to which a parallel is hardly to be found even in the terrific annals of the French Revolution. Prisoners of every rank were uniformly massacred in cold blood after the action was over; a leader of one of the factions did not scruple to murder, with his own hands, the youthful prince whom fortune had placed in his power; and the savage orders to give no quarter, which the French revolutionary government issued to their armies, but the humanity of its commanders refused to execute, were deliberately acted upon for a course of years, by bodies of Englishmen against each other.²

The humane and temperate spirit of the English Rebellion must, therefore, be ascribed to the circumstances

¹ Chambers' *Revolutions*, 1642, ii. p. 137. Laing, iii. 329, 330, 355, 448. Napier's *Life of Montrose*, 268.

39.
Cruelty of the civil wars of York and Lancaster.

² Lac. Pr. Hist. ii. 58. Hume, iii. 203, 210. Laing, iii. 355.

* The whole Irish prisoners belonging to Montrose's army, taken in various parts of Scotland, were put to death in cold blood after the battle of Philiphaugh by the victorious Covenanters; and the children of those taken in West Lothian were dropped from the bridge of Linlithgow into the river Avon; while bands of the ferocious Republicans stood by the side of the stream further down, with halberds in their hands to massacre such of the drowning innocents as might be thrown ashore.—NAPIER'S *Life of Montrose*, 268; and CHAMBERS'S *Revolutions*, 1648, ii. 137.

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40.

Causes of the humanity of the Great Rebellion.

under which the contest began in that country—the rights previously acquired, the privileges long exercised, the attachments descending from a remote age, the moderation flowing from the possession of freedom. It was disgraced by no violent innovations, because it arose among a people attached by long habit to old institutions. It was followed by no proscriptions, because it was headed by the greater part of the intelligence of the state, and not abandoned to the undirected passions of the populace. It was distinguished by singular moderation in the use of power, because it was conducted by men to whom its exercise had long been habitual; it was attended by little confiscation of property, because among its ranks were to be found a large portion of the wealth of the kingdom. The remarkable moderation of public opinion, which has ever since distinguished this country from the neighbouring states, and attracted equal attention among foreigners¹ as ourselves,² has arisen from the continued operation of the same circumstances.

The importance of these circumstances will best be appreciated, and their application to the French Revolution understood, by reviewing the past history of that country.

Like the other provinces of the Roman empire, Gaul, upon the irruption of the barbarous nations, was sunk to the lowest stage of effeminacy and degradation. So early as the time of Tacitus, the decay in the military courage of the people had become conspicuous; and before the fall of the empire, it was found to be impossible to recruit the legions among its enervated inhabitants. Slavery, like a cancer, had consumed the vitals of the state; patrician wealth had absorbed or extinguished plebeian industry; the race of independent freemen had disappeared, and in their room had sprung up a swarm of ignoble dependents upon absent proprietors. These miserable inhabitants were oppressed to the greatest degree by the Roman governors; they were rigidly excluded from every office of trust, civil or military. The whole freemen in the province only amounted to five hundred thousand men; and the capita-tion-tax, in the time of Constantine, is said to have reached the enormous sum of nine pounds sterling for each free

¹ Lac. Hist. de France, vii. 39.

² Robert-son's Scotland, iii. 182. Burke, vi. 80.

41.

State of the Gauls in the decline of the Roman Empire.

citizen. Under this iron despotism, population in the provinces rapidly declined; the slaves went willingly off with every invader, and swelled the ranks of the northern conquerors; and while the numbers of the people steadily increased among the free inhabitants of the German forests, the human race was fast disappearing in the opulent provinces of the Roman empire. National character, as might easily have been anticipated, ere long declined under the combined influence of these degrading circumstances. The inhabitants of Gaul were considered by the northern nations, in the sixth century, as combining all the vices of human nature—the cruelty of barbarism with the cowardice of opulence—the cringing of slaves with the arrogance of tyrants—the falsehood of civilized with the brutality of savage life. They could apply no stronger epithet of contumely to an enemy than to call him a Roman.¹

When the barbarians, at the close of the fourth century, broke in on all sides upon the Western empire, they found the whole land in the hands of a few great families, who cultivated their ample possessions by means of slaves. The province of Gaul was no exception to this deplorable state, the natural and miserable issue of corrupted opulence. Their barbarian conquerors, however, did not at once seize the whole of the vanquished lands: The Burgundians and Visigoths took two-thirds of their respective conquests; and although the proportion seized by the Franks is not distinctly mentioned, it is evident that they occupied the largest portion of the lands of Gaul. The estates left in the hands of the Roman proprietors were termed *allodial*, which, for a considerable time, were distinguishable from the military estates by which they were surrounded; but the depressed condition of the ancient inhabitants is abundantly proved by the fact, that the fine for the death of a common Frank was fixed at 200 solidi, and that of a Roman proprietor at 100. By degrees the distinction between barbarian and Roman became still more marked; the allodial properties were gradually either seized by the military chieftains in their neighbourhood, or ranked, for the sake of security, under their protection;² the feeble inhabitants of the corrupted empire yielded to the energetic efforts of barbarian inde-

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¹ Tac. Vit. Agric. c. ii. Gib. i. 82, 83; iii. 65, 66. Turner, i. 188, Anglo-Saxons. Sism. i. 69, 74, 77, 84, 89, 108. Luitprand, ii. 481. Gib. bon, ix. 143.

42.
Their conquest by the Franks.

² Hallam, i. 144, 147, 149, 168. Leges Salicæ, c. 58. Sism. France, i. 82, 83. Gib. v. 263. Guizot, Hist. de France, 72, 100.

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pendence, and by the eleventh century the revolution in the landed property was complete, except in the southern provinces, and the name of Gaul merged in that of France.

43.
Independent
spirit of the
Franks.

The military followers of Clovis, like all the other German tribes, were strongly attached to the principles of freedom. They respected the military talents of their great leader, and willingly followed his victorious standard; but they considered themselves as his equals rather than his subjects, and were not afraid to dare his resentment when the period of military command was over. When the spoil of the neighbouring Roman provinces was divided at Soissons, Clovis begged that a particular vase might be set aside for his use. The army having expressed their acquiescence, a single soldier exclaimed, "You shall have nothing here but what falls to your share by lot," and struck the precious vessel to pieces with his battle-axe. The conquest of Gaul spread these independent warriors, who did not exceed many thousands in number, over the ample provinces of that extensive country; and their annual assemblies in spring gave rise to the celebrated meetings of the Champs-de-Mai, long revered as the rudiments of French liberty. But the difficulty of collecting a body so widely dispersed was soon severely felt; the new proprietors early became occupied by the interests of their separate estates, and disliked the burdensome attendance at the convocations; the monarchs ceased to summon their unwilling followers; and the successors of Clovis gradually freed themselves from all dependence on the ancient founders of their monarchy.¹

¹ Du Bos,
Hist. Critiq.
ii. 301. Hal-
lam, i. 153,
155.

44.
Rois Fainé-
ants, and
early cor-
ruption of
the empire
of Charle-
magne.

The power of the monarch, however, in barbarous ages, can be rendered permanent only by the possession of great military qualities: the ease and luxury of a court rapidly extinguish the vigour which is requisite for its maintenance. The premature enjoyments of luxury debased the minds of the early French monarchs, while they enervated their bodies; and the kings of the Merovingian race dwindled into a succession of full-grown children, scarce one of whom was five feet high. By degrees the mayors of the palace usurped the royal authority; and a succession of sovereigns, distinguished by the emphatic name of Rois Fainéants, rendered the crown contemptible even in the eyes of a degenerate people. The victories of Charles

Martel, the genius of Charlemagne, for a time averted the degradation of the throne ; but with the termination of their rule the royal authority declined ; the great proprietors every where usurped the prerogatives of the crown, and France was divided into a number of separate principalities, each in a great measure independent of its neighbour, and waging war and administering justice on its own authority. Nothing is more remarkable than the rapid and early degeneracy of conquering savage or pastoral states. No sooner are they settled on the vanquished lands, than they adopt the vices and sink into the effeminacy of their subjects ; the energy of the barbarian character is lost with the necessity which created it ; and the descendants of the conquerors cannot, in a few generations, be distinguished from those of the vanquished people. The human mind requires several generations to bear, even with tolerable equanimity, the seductions of riches. At once thrown into a rude and illiterate people, they prove, like ardent spirits to the Red man of America, utterly fatal. This truth was signally exemplified in the early history of the French monarchy. Even during the reign of Charlemagne, the inherent weakness of a barbarous age was perceptible : all the splendour of his talents, all the experience of his armies, could only throw a temporary lustre over his empire : the efforts of a few thousand freemen were lost amidst the degradation of many millions of slaves ; and the conqueror of the Western World had the mortification, before his death, of perceiving in rapid progress the decay which was so soon destined to prostrate his empire. It is public freedom and general intelligence alone which can enable the human race to withstand the influence of too rapid prosperity ; which can long continue in ages of civilisation the energy and courage of barbarous times ; and, by providing for the incessant elevation of those classes who have been trained under the discipline of adversity, furnish a more durable antidote to the growing depravity of prosperous times.¹

¹ Sism.
France, i.
400, 401 ; ii.
279. Condé,
ii. 125.
Hallam, i.
31, 156.

The weakness of the empire at once appeared upon the death of the victorious monarch. Instantly, as if by enchantment, the fabric fell to pieces ; separated into detached dominions, all means of mutual support were lost, and pusillanimous millions yielded almost without a struggle

45.
Its dissolution

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to the ravages of a few thousand hardy and rapacious enemies. The Normans, the Huns, the Saracens, assailed the different frontiers; a swarm of savage barbarians overspread the plains of Germany, and threatened the total extirpation of the inhabitants; the Northmen ascended every navigable stream, and from their light boats spread flames and devastation through the interior of France. Rich and poor were alike incapable of exerting themselves to avert the common calamity; villages were burned, captives carried off, castles destroyed in every province, without the slightest effort at resistance: and while the unconquered tribes of Germany boldly united, under Otho, to drive back the terrible scourge of the Hungarian horse, the degenerate inhabitants of the Roman provinces were unable to repel the detached inroads of the Northern pirates.¹

¹ Hallam,
25. Sism.
iii. 96, 97,
123, 168, 170,
255, 276.

46.

Courage of the inhabitants first restored by the private wars of the nobles.

The first circumstance which restored the military courage of the inhabitants of France, after the decline of the dynasty of Charlemagne, was the private wars of the nobles, and the consequent universal fortification of the castles, a result of the weakness of the throne. It is thus that the greatest human evils correct themselves, and that the excess of misery ultimately induces its alleviation. Deprived of any thing like support from the government, and driven to their own resources for protection, the landed proprietors were compelled to arm their followers, and strengthen their castles, now become their only refuge. Military skill was restored with the use of arms, rendered necessary from the universality of the danger; courage revived from confidence in its defences; a race of men arose inured to war from their infancy, and strong in the consciousness of superior prowess. In the interior of the castles, arms were the only employment, and the recounting of military exploits the sole amusement of the age; the words *chivalry* and *courtesy* still attest the virtues which were learned by the mounted knights, and which were considered peculiar to those who had been bred up in the *courts* of the barons. The wretchedness and suffering of those ages have produced the most dignified features of modern manners. From the degraded followers of the Carlovingian kings, have sprung the heroic nobility of France; from centuries of war and rapine, the

generous courage of modern warfare; from the dissolution of regal authority, the pride and independence of feudal nobility. But it was only the nobles or landed proprietors who were renovated by these intestine divisions; the serfs who cultivated the ground, the burgesses who frequented the towns, were retained in the most degraded and abject state. The Franks lived in their castles, surrounded by their armed followers, in solitary independence; the Gauls, unarmed and unprotected, toiled in the fields, alike exposed to rapine and incapable of resistance. The jealousy of their superiors denied them the use of arms; the fatal superiority of the knights, in actual warfare, rendered revolt hopeless. Frequently, during the eleventh century, the miseries of the peasantry drove them to extremities, and led to bloody contests with the nobles; but in no one instance were they successful, and they returned to their ploughs, depressed by suffering, and disheartened by defeat.¹

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¹ Thierry, i. 161, 169, 170.
Sism.
France, iii. 375, 451.

The first ray which broke in upon the gloom of the middle ages, on the continent of Europe, came from the boroughs,—“an execrable institution,” says the old historian, “by which slaves are encouraged to become free, and forget the allegiance they owe to their masters.” The first corporation in France arose about half a century after the English conquest, and these institutions were brought into general use by Louis the Fat, to serve as a counterpoise to the power of the nobles. Rouen and Falaise, the first incorporated boroughs of Normandy, enjoyed their privileges by a charter from Philip Augustus, granted in the year 1267. Prior to that time the states of the duchy were composed entirely of nobles and clergy. The kings, however, early sensible of the importance of these communities as a bulwark against the encroachments of the nobles, procured a law, by which, if a slave escaped from his master, and bought a house in a borough, and lived there a year without being reclaimed, he gained his freedom—a custom which seems to have prevailed equally in France, Scotland, and England. From this cause, joined to the natural influence of mutual protection and extended intercourse, boroughs every where became the cradles of freedom:² although the nobles still looked upon them with such contempt, that, by the feudal law, the superior was debarred from marry-

^{47.}
Rise of the
boroughs.

² Hume, ii. 111, 112.
Hollingshed, iii. 15. Du-
cange, *voce*
Commune.
Houard,
Loix des
Français, i. 238. Tytler,
ii. 301.
M'Pherson,
i. 367.

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ing his female ward to a *burgess* or *villain*. But, notwithstanding their growing importance, the boroughs were, for many ages, incapable of offering any effectual resistance to the power of the nobles, from the want of skill of their inhabitants in the use of arms, to which their superiors were habituated—a distinction of incalculable importance in an age when violence was universal, and nothing but the military profession held in any esteem.

The two circumstances which had mainly fostered the spirit of freedom in England, were the extraordinary power of the sovereign, and the independent spirit of the commons, both the immediate consequence of the Norman conquest. In France, the reverse of both these peculiarities took place; the dignity of the throne was lost in the ascendancy of the nobles, and the spirit of the people extinguished by the inordinate privileges which they enjoyed. For a series of ages the monarchy of France was held together by the feeblest tenure: The Dukes of Normandy, the Counts of Toulouse, the Dukes of Burgundy and Bretagne, resembled rather independent sovereigns than feudal vassals, and the real dominion of the throne, before the time of Louis VI., seldom extended beyond the capital, and twenty miles around it. It was a mere chance at that time that these great feudatories did not become formally, as well as practically, independent, and the duchies of France split asunder the monarchy of Clovis, in the same manner as the electorates of Germany broke up the empire of Otho. In moments of danger, when the great vassals assembled their retainers, the king of France could still muster a mighty host: but with the transitory alarm the forces of the monarchy melted away; the military vassals retired after the period of their service was expired; and the late leader of a hundred thousand men was frequently baffled, after a campaign of a few weeks, by the garrison of an insignificant fortress.¹

But the circumstance of all others the most prejudicial to the liberty of France, was the exclusive use of arms by the higher orders, and the total absence of that middle class in the armies, who constituted not less the strength of the English forces than the support of the English monarchy. Before the time of Charles VI., the jealousy of the nobles had never allowed the peasants to be instructed in the use of arms; in consequence of which they had no

×
48.
Great feudatories.

¹ Sism. vii.
112. Bar.
Intro. 42.

49.
Fatal effects
of want of
yeomanry.

archers, or disciplined infantry, to oppose to their enemies, and were obliged to seek in the mountains of Genoa for cross-bowmen, to withstand the terrible yeomanry of England. The defeats of Cressy and Poitiers, of Morat and Granson, were the result of this inferiority. Not that the natives of France were inferior in natural bravery to the English or the Swiss; but that their armies, being composed entirely of the military tenants, had no force to oppose to the steady and experienced infantry, which in every age has formed the peculiar strength of a free people. Warned by these disasters, the French Government, by an ordinance in 1394, ordered the peasantry throughout the whole country to be instructed in the use of the bow, and the pernicious practice of games of hazard to be exchanged for matches at archery. They made rapid progress in the new exercises, and would soon have rivalled the English bowmen; but the jealousy of the nobles took the alarm at the increasing energy of the lower orders. Martial exercises were prohibited, games of hazard re-established, the people lost their courage from want of confidence in themselves, and the defeat of Azincour was the consequence.¹

¹ Sism. xii.
51. Bar. i.
79; ii. 217.

The circumstances which first awakened the genuine democratic spirit in France, were the misery and anarchy arising from the English wars. During these disastrous contests, in which the French armies were so frequently worsted, and military license, with all its horrors, for above a century wasted the heart of the country, the power of the nobles was for a time destroyed, and the extremities of distress roused the courage of the peasantry. Abandoned by their natural protectors, pillaged by bands of licentious soldiers, driven to desperation by suffering, and excited by the prospect of general plunder, the populace every where flew to arms, and the insurrection of the *Jacquerie* anticipated the horrors of the French Revolution. The effect of the despotic government of preceding ages became then conspicuous. Unlike the moderate reformers among the English barons, who themselves contended for freedom, and headed the advance of the commons, the French peasantry, abandoned entirely to the guidance of their own chiefs, fell at once into the horrors of popular licentiousness. The features, the well-known features of servile war appeared. The gentry, hated for their tyranny, were every where

50.
Misery arising from the English wars, and its effects.

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I.

exposed to the violence of popular rage ; and instead of meeting with the regard due to their past dignity, became on that account only the object of more wanton insult to the peasantry. They were hunted like wild beasts, and put to the sword without mercy ; their castles consumed by fire ; their wives and daughters ravished or murdered ; and the savages proceeded so far as, in many instances, to impale their enemies, and roast them alive over a slow fire. But these efforts were in the end as unavailing as they were ferocious. The nobles, roused by necessity, at length combined for their common defence ; the peasantry, unacquainted with arms, and destitute of discipline, could not withstand the shock of the feudal cavalry ; and the licentiousness of the people was repressed, after one half of the population of France had fallen a prey to the sword, or the pestilence which followed the wars of Edward the Third. The misery occasioned by these contests, however, excited a spirit which long survived the disasters in which it originated. Nations, like individuals, are frequently improved in the school of adversity ; and if the causes of the greatest advances in our social condition are accurately investigated, they may often be traced back to those long periods of difficulty, when energy has risen out of the extremity of disaster. Before the death of Edward the Third, the soldiers of France, from constant practice, had become superior to those of England ; and the courage of the nation, debased by centuries of Roman servitude, was restored amidst the agonies of internal warfare. The spirit of freedom was communicated to the boroughs, the only refuge from insult, which had greatly swelled in importance during the devastation of the country, and its lofty aspirations emanating from the opulent cities of Flanders, threatened the aristocracy both of France and England with destruction.¹

The liberty of France and Flanders, to use a military expression, advanced with an oblique front ; the wealthy cities of the Netherlands took the lead ; Paris, Rouen, and Lyons, were next brought into action ; and all the boroughs of the south of France were ready, at the first success, to join the bands of the confederates. The firmness of Ghent, and the victory of Bruges, roused the democratic spirit through all the adjoining kingdoms ; the nobility of all Europe took the alarm, and the invasion of Flanders by

¹ Froissart, viii. 124, c. 182, 184. Sism. x. 543, 548, 549. Bar: i. 74. Hume, ii. 463.

51.
Rise of the democratic spirit in France.

the chivalry of France, was conducted on the same principles, and for the same object, as the inroad into France by the Allies in 1793. But the period had not yet arrived when the citizens of towns could successfully contend with the forces of the aristocracy. In vain the burghers of Flanders routed their own barons, and with a force of sixty thousand men besieged the nobles of their territory in Oudenarde. The steel-clad squadrons of the French gendarmerie pierced their serried bands, and the victory of Resebecque crushed the liberties of France as well as those of Flanders, for four centuries. The French municipal bodies, among whom the ferment had already begun, lost all hope when the burghers of Flanders were overthrown, and resigned themselves, without a struggle, to a fate which, in the circumstances of the world, appeared inevitable. Twenty thousand armed citizens awaited the return of the victorious monarch into Paris; but the display of the burgher force came too late to protect public freedom; their leaders were imprisoned and executed; and the erection of the Bastile, in 1389, marked the commencement of a long period of servitude, which its destruction in 1789 was expected to terminate.¹

¹ Bar. i. 74,
295. Sism.
xi. 397, 400.
407.

The struggles of the people in France, in the reign of Charles VI., like the Revolution four centuries after, were totally distinct, both in character and object, from the efforts of the English in support of their liberties. The Norman barons extorted the great charter at Runnymede: the French peasantry formed the insurrection of the Jacquerie; the French boroughs alone supported the confederacy of Ghent. In the one case the barons marched at the head of the popular class, and stipulated for themselves and their inferiors the privileges of freedom; in the other the nobles generally joined the throne, and combined to suppress a spirit which threatened their exclusive privileges. Moderation and humanity distinguished the first; cruelty and exasperation disgraced the last. So early in the history of the two countries were their popular commotions marked by the character which has ever since distinguished them, and so strongly has the force of external circumstances impressed the same stamp upon the efforts of the people in the most remote ages.² Various circumstances conspired after this period to check the growth of public freedom, and to

52.
Contrast of
the French
and English
contests for
freedom.

² Bar. i. 74,
295.

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I.

preserve those high powers of the aristocracy in France which ultimately led to the Revolution.

53.
Great feudatories.
Their pernicious effect.

I. The French monarchy, during the feudal ages, was rather a confederacy of separate states than a single government. The great vassals exercised all the real powers of sovereignty independent of any foreign control, those of coining money, waging private war, and judging exclusively in civil causes. They were exempt from public tribute except the feudal aids, and subject to no general legislative control. The consequences of this independence were in the highest degree important. No general necessity, the dread of no national enemy, compelled the great vassals to court the popular assistance, or arm their tenantry against the throne. The vast power which the Conquest gave to the crown in England at once curbed the turbulence of the barons, established one general law throughout the realm, and induced the nobles, for their own support, to arm the yeomanry. The weakness of the throne in France enabled the great vassals to usurp the powers of sovereignty, broke down into separate and provincial customs the general law of the country, and confined the use of arms to the landed gentlemen and their military retainers. Separate interests, endless contentions, and domestic warfare, occupied the whole attention of the nobility. No common concerns, the preservation of no common privileges, no general danger, cemented the united body. The monarchy grew gray with years, without its subjects having experienced the feelings, or been actuated by the interests, or wielded the power, of a united people.¹

¹ Hallam, i. 227. Hume, ii. 115.

54.
Effect of the English wars.

II. The long and bloody wars with England, which lasted, with hardly any intermission, for one hundred and twenty years, were fatal to the growth of commercial or manufacturing industry in France, and to the independent spirit which naturally arises from it. The influence of war was chiefly felt in England by the increased demand for domestic industry, the prospects of plunder which continental expeditions afforded, and the high wages which were offered to rouse the energy of the yeomanry.* The English invasions

* It appears from Rymer that the Earl of Salisbury gave a shilling a-day for every man-at-arms, and sixpence for each archer; sums equivalent to fifteen shillings, and seven and sixpence of our money.—RYMER, i. 10, 392; MONSTRELET, i. 303.

were contemplated in France with very different feelings: as bringing defeat and disgrace to the nobles; plunder and devastation to the burghers; misery and starvation to the peasantry. After the feudal nobility were destroyed in the field of Azincour, the whole bonds of society were loosened; every castle or stronghold was fortified, and became the residence of a partisan, generally as formidable to his countrymen as his enemies; warfare and rapine universally prevailed: and the miserable peasants, driven into walled towns for protection, could only venture into the fields to cultivate the ground with scouts stationed on the tops of the steeples to warn them of the approach of danger. The consequences of this insecurity may still be seen in the total absence of cottages in all the north and east of France, as contrasted with the humble but comfortable dwellings which every where rise among the green fields and wooded landscape of England. Commercial opulence, the best nursery of freedom in civilized times, was extinguished during these disastrous contests; industry annihilated by the destruction of its produce, and the total insecurity of its reward: violence became universal, because it alone led to distinction. It was by high pecuniary sacrifices that mercenaries were obtained from foreign states; it was the Scottish auxiliaries who stemmed the progress of disaster at Crevant and Verneuil; and the great military monarchy of France was compelled to seek for protection from the arms of a barbarous people. During such public calamities the growth of freedom was effectually stopped; and the wretched inhabitants, driven to struggle, year after year, for their existence with foreign and domestic enemies, had neither leisure to contemplate the blessings of liberty, nor means to acquire the wealth which could render it of value.¹

¹ Hallam, i. 108. Villaret, xiv. 302. Sism. France, x. 543, 548.

III. When the enthusiasm of the Maid of Orleans, the valour of the nobles, and the domestic dissensions of England, had driven these hated invaders from their shores, the numerous bands of armed men in every part of the kingdom exposed the people to incessant depredation, and imperiously called for some vigorous exercise of the royal authority. From this necessity arose the Companies of Ordonnance of Charles VII., the first example in modern Europe of a **STANDING ARMY**. These companies, which at first consisted only of sixteen thousand infantry and nine

55.
Effect of the standing armies of the Crown on public freedom.

CHAP.
I.

thousand cavalry, soon gave the crown a decisive superiority over the feudal militia ; and being always embodied and ready for action, proved more than a match in the end for the slow and desultory armaments of the nobles. From this period the influence of the crown in France steadily increased ; a series of fortunate accidents united the principal fiefs to the monarchy ; and neither among the feudal barons, nor the burgher forces, could any counterpoise be found to its authority. The tumultuary array of feudal power, which is only occasionally called out, and very imperfectly disciplined, can never maintain a contest of any duration with a small force of regular soldiers who are constantly kept embodied, have acquired skill in the use of arms, and adhere to their colours equally through adverse as prosperous fortune. But to this inherent weakness in the feudal forces, was superadded in France the total want of any popular support to the nobles. The burghers, depressed and insulted by the privileged classes, could not be expected to join in their support ; the peasants, unaccustomed to the use of arms, and galled by the recollection of rapine and injury, were both unable to combine against the throne, and unwilling to humble a power from which they themselves stood in need of protection. Hence, in a short time, the crown acquired despotic authority ; and Louis XI., with a regular force of only twenty-four thousand infantry and fifteen thousand cavalry, was absolute master of his dominions.¹

¹ Robert.
Charles V.
i. 121, 123.
Monstrelet,
part ii. § 139.
Hall, i. 117,
118. Philip
de Comines,
i. 384.

56.
Military spirit of the
nation.

IV. The peculiar situation of France, in the midst of the great military monarchies of Europe, led to the constant maintenance of a large standing army, and perpetuated the preponderance thus acquired by the throne. Upon the decay of feudal manners, consequent on the progress of luxury, and the destruction of the influence of the nobles which resulted from the introduction of fire-arms, no power remained in the state capable of withstanding the regular forces of the monarchy. The nobles flocked to Paris to share in the splendour of the court, or join in the pleasures of the metropolis ; the peasantry, undisciplined and depressed by their superiors, and buried in ignorance, lost the remembrance even of the name of freedom. The wars with England, however, had revived the military spirit, not only among the nobles, but among the

common people; the political events which followed, gave this spirit its natural direction; the physical resources of the country aided its development; and France speedily appeared as a conquering power. The courage and energy of the nation rapidly followed this new line of ambition; the sovereign was permitted to increase the forces, which led the van in so brilliant a career; and the people, intoxicated by the conquests of Charles VIII. and Francis I., forgot both the disasters which followed their transient success, and the decisive ascendancy which they gave to the government. The desire of military glory, fed by repeated triumphs, became the prevailing passion of the nation; the States-general, which, for half a century, had nearly acquired the authority of the English Parliaments, gradually fell into desuetude, and were abandoned, after their last assembly in 1614, not so much from the encroachments of the crown as the neglect of the people. For nearly two hundred years before the commencement of the Revolution, they had never once been assembled; and the nation, dazzled by the pageant of military success, silently resigned to the crown the whole real powers of government.¹

V. From the earliest times, the distinction between patrician and plebeian, between noble and base-born, had been established in France; and, by an unhappy custom, this privilege descended to all the children, instead of being confined, as in England, to the eldest son. The consequence was, a complete separation of the higher and lower orders, and the establishment of a line of demarcation, which neither talent, enterprise, nor success, was able to pass. "It is a terrible thing," says Pascal, "to reflect on the effect of rank: it gives to a child, newly born, a degree of consideration, which half a century of labour and virtue could not procure." Of all the circumstances in the early history of France, there was none which had a more powerful effect than this, in determining the character of the Revolution. It unavoidably created a privileged class at variance with, and an object of jealousy to, the whole remainder of the community. What was still more fatal, it deprived this class, when the contest commenced, of all sympathy or support, save in a peculiar district, from the rest of the community. But the influ-

¹ Hallam, i.
256. Mably;
Villiers, ii.
128.

57.

Privileges of
the nobility.
Their pernicious ef-
fect.

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I.

ence of despotism in modern times cannot permanently extinguish the light of reason. The press has provided in the end an antidote to the worst species of government, except, perhaps, that which arises from its own abuse; its influence on every other oppression may be slow, but it is progressive, and ultimately irresistible. In vain the monarchs of France studiously degraded the lower orders; in vain they veiled the corruption of despotism beneath the splendour of military glory; in vain they encouraged science, and rewarded art, and sought to turn the flood of genius into the narrow channels of regulated ambition: the vigour of thought outstripped the fetters of power; the energy of civilisation broke the bonds of slavery. The middle ranks, in the progress of time, awoke to a consciousness of their importance; the restrictions of feudal manners revolting to men enlightened by the progress of knowledge; the chains of ancient servitude insupportable to those who felt the rising ambition of freedom. Not the embarrassment of the finances, not the corruption of the court, not the sufferings of the peasantry, brought about the great convulsion of the nineteenth century, for they are to be found matched in many countries disturbed by no convulsions; but the hateful pride of the aristocracy, based on centuries of exclusive power, and galling to an age of ascending ambition.¹

¹ Rivarol,
92, 93.

58.
Great effects of
Richelieu's
system of govern-
ment.

VI. But the circumstance of all others which had the greatest influence in inducing that state of society in France, which ultimately brought about a contest between the government and the country, was the success with which Cardinal Richelieu succeeded in destroying the rural influence of the French nobility, by attracting them to Paris. This great man was one of the master-spirits of mankind, who, for good or evil, communicate their impress to successive generations. He possessed, in the highest degree, that great quality, without which no ability can effect any lasting influence on human affairs; with which, hardly any thing is impossible to genius and activity—moral courage and unflinching determination. He was thoroughly in earnest; and his grand object was to elevate the throne at the expense of the nobles, the church by the overthrow of the Huguenots. Deeply impressed with the weakness which had been communicated to the Monarchy,

on one side of France by the independence and privileges of the great feudatories, and the divisions which had torn England on the other from the indomitable spirit of Puritan fervour, he saw in the extinction of these great causes of discord which had divided Germany and Britain, the only certain means of elevating the throne and consolidating the monarchy in his own country. Yet was he not a courtier, nor a slavish minister. It was to raise his country that he laboured: the king was the object of his devotion, because, as Louis XIV. said, he was himself the state; he loved France better than the monarchy.* The anarchy of feudal weakness was the great evil which then afflicted society, and it was to remedy it that he so strenuously laboured. His prophetic mind foresaw for his country, in success the glories of Louis XIV., in failure a prostration like that of Poland.¹

¹ Sismondi's Hist. de France, xxiv. 127. Smyth's French Revolution, i. 7.

To effect these objects required the persevering efforts of a vast genius, firmly supported by the executive, and in no small degree favoured by circumstances; but in all these respects Richelieu was peculiarly fortunate. He dislodged the Huguenots from Rochelle, the great asylum of the disaffected, from which they could communicate at pleasure with the rival Government and sympathizing Protestants of England. He humbled Austria, the most formidable rival at that period to France on the Continent; and to accomplish that the more effectually, being indifferent to religious controversies when they interfered with political designs, he supported the Protestants in Germany, while he crushed them in France. He favoured commerce and trade, as affording the best counterpoise to the feudal nobility; and gave greater security to justice, and more impartial regularity to law, as the only means of restraining their excesses. Though imperfectly versed in literature himself, he had discernment enough to see its importance, especially as a means of embellishment to the capital, and an engine in the hand of the monarch; and to him France is indebted for the Academy, which concentrated its genius in one focus at Paris, where it might be brought directly under

59.
His measures to carry these designs into effect.

* After receiving extreme unction, on deathbed, he exclaimed: "O mon Juge! condamnez-moi si j'ai eu d'autres intentions que de servir le roi et l'état." These words were sincere, and depict his real character; but, like other statesmen of his age, he deemed all means justifiable which led to these ends. —See SOULAVIE, *Règne de Louis XIV.*, iv. 248.

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the rays of royal favour. Aware that the only practical security for independence on the part of the crown is to be found in the flourishing state of the finances, he exerted incredible diligence in augmenting the public revenue, and bequeathed a vast accumulated treasure, and an admirably arranged system of finance, to that throne which he had found the weakest and the poorest in Christendom. But the master-stroke of his policy was sweeping away all appointments for life, whether to the government of castles or the direction of provinces, and rendering all offices under the crown of such brief tenure, that they were effectually under the control of Government, and could only be obtained by sedulous attendance in the antechambers of the sovereign.¹

¹ Sismondi, xxiv. Hist. de France, 100, 124.

60.
Prodigious effects of these changes.

It may readily be supposed that changes so vast, inducing as they did a total alteration in the powers of government, the structure of society, and the future destinies of the country, could not have been brought about without strenuous resistance on the part of the present repositories of authority, and the persons benefited by the existing regime. The administration of Richelieu, accordingly, is little more than a series of constant and often evenly balanced contests with the princes of the blood, the nobles, the parliament, the queen-consort, the queen-mother, and sometimes even the very king himself. But such was the ascendancy of his genius, the fertility of his resources, and the daring of his courage, that he triumphed over them all. Little scrupulous in the means he employed to compass his designs, he imprisoned, ruined, exiled, or brought to the scaffold, every person of influence who, in the course of his long administration, opposed his projects; and their entire success appeared in the transformation of France, in a single lifetime, from a feudal confederacy, with a nominal liege-lord at Paris, to a compact and absolute monarchy, with the real powers vested in the sovereign. Peter the Great, when he visited France, embraced his statue in admiration; he was the tamer of the Strelitzes of the monarchy of Clovis.²

² Smyth, French Rev. i. 7, 8.

The secret of this success, however, as of all similar changes when brought about apparently by individual agency, is to be found in deeper and more general causes than Richelieu's abilities, great as they undoubtedly were.

It was the coincidence of his genius with the natural tendency of the times, which was the real cause of the prodigy. The military power of the nobles was declining, from the change of manners and the introduction of standing armies, and he substituted the authority of the monarch in the room of theirs; the progress of wealth and growth of luxury had already induced in them a taste for the enjoyments of the capital, and he threw open the antechambers of the palace to their amusements, the influence and offices of France to their ambition. Hence the change, like that generally desired in France when Napoleon turned the fervour of the Revolution into the career of foreign conquest, was immediate and universal. In a few years the provincial chateaus were deserted, the rural interests forgotten—France was centred in Paris—Paris in Versailles. Before the middle of the reign of Louis XIV., the transition was complete. But this change proved fatal to the power of the nobles. Degraded in character by the frivolities of a court, drowned in debt by its expenses, retained in subservience by the prizes it held out to them, they were alike destitute of the spirit to undertake, or the resources to sustain a contest for the public liberties. They had neither an armed force at their command, nor any constitutional mode of resisting the royal authority. They had lost all influence over the peasantry on their estates. The attachment of the feudal vassals had died away with the cessation of all intercourse between them and their lords. Dismantled chateaus, untilled fields, squalid serfs, along the Seine and the Loire, told how entirely the rays of aristocratic favour had been averted from rural life; while Paris, flourishing, splendid, and fascinating, proved the irresistible magnet which attracted all that was great and all that was fair in France to the precincts of the court.¹

VII. The peculiar character and dazzling reign of the succeeding sovereign, contributed powerfully to strengthen and consolidate the French monarchy. Richelieu laid the foundations, and constructed the whole supports of the edifice; but it was Louis XIV. who embellished the exterior, and erected the entablatures of the Corinthian columns which fascinated the beholder on his approach. A contemporary writer has left the following dazzling description of the reign of this celebrated monarch:—

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61.

Real causes
which
brought it
about.

¹ Smyth, i.
8. Sism.
xxiv. 124,
186.

62.

Splendour of
the reign of
Louis XIV.

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“Turenne and Luxembourg were his generals ; Colbert, Louvois, Torey his statesmen ; Vauban was his engineer ; Perault constructed his palaces ; they were adorned by Poussin and Le Brun ; Le Notre laid out his gardens ; Corneille and Racine wrote his tragedies, Molière his comedies ; Boileau was his poet ; Bossuet, Fénelon, Bourdaloue, and Massillon were his preachers. It is in this august assembly of men, whose fame can never die, that this monarch, whom they acknowledged as their patron and protector, presents himself to the admiration of posterity.” There is enough here to arrest the attention of the most inconsiderate, and awaken reflection in the most thoughtful of observers. The annals of literary fame have no parallel constellation of intellectual greatness of which to boast ; even the glories of Napoleon and of the revolutionary armies sink into the shade in comparison. These were less varied and less durable ; they were attended with greater waste of national strength, and wider spread of national suffering ; they achieved triumphs over physical strength, they did not shine forth in the unaided majesty of intellectual power. The greatest of modern French authors, Chateaubriand, has admitted, that if we would find the classical era of French literature, we must look for it in the age of Louis XIV. In proportion as the fervour of revolutionary passion, the barbarism of revolutionary taste, are swept away, or yield to the returning sense of mankind, these ancient luminaries shine from afar in unapproachable splendour, as the heavenly bodies reappear in their pristine lustre when the clouds and vapours which for a time obscure them from the view are dispelled. Perhaps they are never again destined to be equalled in French history ; and future ages will be obliged to confess, that France affords another to the proofs of Montesquieu’s observation, that no nation ever yet attained to durable greatness but by institutions in harmony with its spirit.¹

¹ Chateaubriand, *Génie du Christianisme*, ii. 170, 222. Smyth’s *French Revolution*, i. 40.

63. Despotism nature of his government.

It would have been well for France if the characteristics of the government of Louis XIV. had terminated here, and to the historian had only fallen, in tracing the annals of his reign, the pleasing task of recounting the triumphs of art encouraged and science enlarged—of genius transcendent and eloquence unequalled. But his measures went a great deal further ; and his policy, outstripping the sagacity of

Richelieu, conferred on the French government not merely the firmness of a compact, but the debasing influence of an absolute monarchy. His favourite maxim, "L'état—c'est moi," expressed the whole ideas of government by which he was regulated. He not only brought the nobility to Paris, but he nullified them when there: he not only excluded the people from all share in the administration of affairs, but he rendered them insensible to that exclusion. His great qualities, and he had many, contributed to this result, and were in the end more pernicious to France than meaner dispositions might have been; for they dazzled the eyes of the people, and, by furnishing abundant gratification to the ruling national passion for glory, blinded them to the strength of the fetters by which they were held in subjection. Such was the lustre of Versailles under his magnificent and splendid government, that he had no need of any acts of severity towards the nobles to enforce his authority, or deeds of cruelty among the people to insure obedience. The mere exclusion from court, banishment from his presence, were sufficient to humble the proudest of the aristocratic order, and not a thought existed among the *Tiers Etat* of resistance to his command. During the long continuance of a reign founded on such a basis, the whole administration of affairs in every department became centred in the court: the antechambers of Versailles were daily besieged by crowds of titled yet needy suppliants, who eagerly sought employment, favour, or distinction from the King's ministers or his mistresses; and mandates issuing from them were obeyed without a murmur from Calais to the Pyrenees.¹

VIII. The REFORMATION, so important in its consequences in other states, failed of producing any material effects in France, from the scanty numbers of the class who were fitted to receive its doctrines. In the maritime and commercial cities on the west coast, it struck its roots; but the peasantry of the country were too ignorant, the nobles of the metropolis too profligate, to embrace its precepts. The contest between the contending parties was disgraced by the most inhuman atrocities: the massacre of St Bartholomew was unparalleled in horror till the Revolution arose, and forty thousand persons were murdered in different parts of France, in pursuance of

¹ Sismondi.
Smyth, i.
40, 41.

64.
Failure of
the Reform-
ation in
France.

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the perfidious orders of the court. Nor were the proceedings of the Huguenots more distinguished by moderation or forbearance: their early insurrections were attended by a general destruction of houses, property, and human life; and the hideous features of a servile war disgraced the first efforts of religious freedom. But it was in vain that the talents of Coligni, the generosity of Henry, the wisdom of Sully, supported their cause; the party which they formed in the nation was too small, their influence on the public mind too inconsiderable, to furnish the means of lasting success; and the monarch who had reached the throne by the efforts of the Protestants, was obliged to consolidate his power by embracing the faith of his adversaries. France was not enslaved because she remained Catholic; but she remained Catholic because she was enslaved: the seeds of religious freedom were sown with no sparing hand, and profusely watered by the blood of martyrs; but the soil was not fitted for their reception, and the shoots, though fair at first, were soon withered by the blasts of despotism. The history of her Reformation, like the annals of its suppression in Spain, exhibits the fruitless struggles of partial freedom with general servitude; of local intelligence with public ignorance; of the energy of advanced civilisation with the force of long-established despotism. The contest arose too soon for the interests of freedom, and too late for the reformation of power; the last spark of liberty expired in France with the capture of Rochelle; and two centuries of unrelenting oppression were required to awaken the people generally to a sense of the value of those blessings which their ancestors had forcibly torn from their Huguenot brethren.¹

¹Lac. Guerr-
es de Reli-
gion, ii. 50,
200, 359,
360. Sully,
v. 123.

65.
Revocation
of the Edict
of Nantes.

IX. The long enjoyment of this absolute power, coupled with the bigoted principles in religion which so often, in Roman Catholic countries, accompany individual indulgence and sensual excess, led Louis XIV. at length into a hideous act of despotism, which at once doubled the strength of his external enemies, paralysed his internal resources, tarnished the glories of his reign, induced unheard-of disasters upon the country, and revealed the real decrepitude and internal weakness of the monarchy. The Romish hierarchy had long regarded with jealous

eye the privileges conceded to the Protestants by the generous toleration of Henry IV.; and the Edict of Nantes, by which his wisdom had settled the religious disputes of the sixteenth century, was to them in an especial manner the object of disquietude. The old Chancellor Tellier, at the age of eighty-three, requested the King to afford him the consolation before he died of signing the recall of that hateful edict; and, so great was the influence of the violent Romish party, that his desire was soon accomplished. On the 2d October 1685 the fatal revocation appeared, and the whole Huguenots of the kingdom were abandoned at once to persecution, violence, and military execution. Such was the fanaticism of the age among those in high places, that the dying Chancellor, on signing the edict, repeated the beautiful song of Simeon on the advent of the gospel of peace to mankind;* and a perfidious act of despotism, which in its ultimate consequences induced the ruin of the Christian religion in France, and brought the great-grandson of the reigning monarch to the scaffold, was celebrated by the ablest divines of the Romish Church as the greatest triumph to the true faith which had occurred since the first proclaiming of revelation to mankind.¹ †

2d October
1685.

¹ Sism. Hist.
des Fran-
çais, xxv.
514, 515.

The revocation of the Edict of Nantes ordained the immediate destruction of the temples for the Huguenot worship which still remained; it prohibited over the

66.
Its extreme
severity.

* "Le Chancelier Tellier, âgé de quatre-vingt-trois ans, malade, et qui se sentoît près de mourir, demanda au Roi de lui accorder la consolation de signer avant de mourir un édit qui porteroit revocation de l'Edit de Nantes: il le signa en effet le 2 Octobre 1685; et avec un fanatisme qui fait frémir, il récita le Cantique de Simeon, appliquant à cet acte farouche les félicitations qui, dans la bouche du vieillard Hébreu, se rapportoient au Salut du genre humain."—SISMOND, *Histoire des Français*, xxv. 514.

† "Dieu lui reservoit l'accomplissement du grand ouvrage de la religion, et qu'il dit en scellant la révocation du fameux Edit de Nantes, qu'après ce triomphe de la foi, et un si brave monument de la piété du roi, il ne se soucioit plus de finir ses jours. Nos pères n'avoient pas vu, comme nous, une hérésie invétérée tomber tout-à-coup; les troupeaux revenir en foule, et nos églises trop étroites pour les recevoir; leurs faux pasteurs les abandonner, sans même en attendre l'ordre, et heureux d'avoir à leur assigner leur bannissement pour excuse: tout calme dans un si grand mouvement, l'univers étonné de voir dans un événement si nouveau, la marque la plus assurée, comme *le plus bel usage de l'autorité*, et le mérite du prince plus reconnu et plus révééré que son autorité même.—BOSSUET, *Oraison Funèbre de Michel le Tellier*, 25 Jan. 1686; see also FLECHIER, *Oraison Funèbre de M. le Tellier*, 29 Mai 1686, p. 354. Eight years after these Io Pæans were sung by the Romish hierarchy, an obscure individual was born at Chatenay, near Sceaux, who shook to its foundation the Roman Catholic faith in France, and derived his chief weapons from this atrocious act of perfidy.—VOLTAIRE.

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whole kingdom, a few trifling bailliages alone excepted, the exercise of the reformed faith: it banished, under pain of being *sent to the galleys*, all unconverted ministers of the reformed faith, and gave them but fifteen days to leave the kingdom. All the reformed schools were shut up; all the children ordered to be re-baptized according to the Romish ritual. Four months only were allowed to the refugees to re-enter the kingdom, and make their abjuration; at the expiration of that period, their property of every sort was confiscated; and any attempt subsequently to leave the country, was to be punished with the galleys. The means taken to enforce this decree were, if possible, still more atrocious than the decree itself. The generals, commanders of provinces, received orders to persecute the refractory with the last severities of military execution.* In consequence of these rigorous injunctions, troops were spread over Normandy, Brittany, Anjou, the Orleanois, Languedoc, and Provence; and the severities which they committed on the miserable Protestants would exceed belief, if not supported by the concurring testimony of contemporary and impartial annalists.† It is affirmed, that in Languedoc alone above one hundred thousand persons were put to death, of whom a tenth part suffered by the frightful torments of the stake or the wheel.¹ The most

¹ Boulainvilliers, *Etat de la France*, ii. 257.

* Louvois, the king's minister, sent them a circular:—"Sa majesté veut qu'on fasse sentir les *dernières rigueurs* à ceux qui ne voudront pas se faire Catholiques; et ceux qui auront la sottise de vouloir être les derniers, doivent être poussés jusqu'à la *dernière extrémité*."—SISMONDI, *Histoire des Français*, xxvi. 519.

† "By this edict," says St Simon, "without the slightest pretext, without the slightest necessity, was one-fourth of the kingdom depopulated, its trade ruined, the whole country abandoned to the avowed and public pillage of dragoons: the innocent of both sexes were devoted to punishment and torture, and that by thousands; families were stripped of their possessions, relations armed against each other, our manufactures transferred to the stranger; the world saw crowds of their fellow creatures proscribed, naked, fugitive, guilty of no crimes and yet seeking an asylum in foreign lands, not in their own country, which was in the mean time subjecting to the lash and the galleys the noble, the affluent, the aged, the delicate, and the weak, often distinguished not less by their rank than by their piety and virtue—and all these on no other account than that of religion. Still further to increase the horror of these proceedings, every province was filled with sacrilegious or perjured men, who were either forced, or feigned to conform, and who sacrificed their consciences to their worldly interests and repose. In truth, such were the horrors produced by the combined operation of cruelty and obsequiousness, that within twenty-four hours men were frequently conducted from tortures to adjuration, from adjuration to the communion-table, attended in both in general by the common executioner."—These are the words of an eyewitness, a courtier of Louis XIV.—the Duc de St Simon.—See ST SIMON'S *Mémoires*, vol. xiii. p. 113, and SMYTH'S *French Revolution*, i. 30.

moderate computation makes the number of individuals who left the kingdom four hundred thousand ; while an equal number perished in going into exile, of famine or fatigue, in prison, in the galleys, and on the scaffold ; and a million besides, seemingly converted, maintained in secret, amidst tears and desolation, the faith of their fathers. The rental of heritable property belonging to the Huguenots confiscated to the crown, amounted to 17,000,000 francs (L.680,000) a-year ; and lands producing a still larger sum annually, torn from the Protestants, were bestowed on the Catholic relations of the exiles, or the courtiers of Versailles.¹

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¹ Capefigue, Louis XIV. ii. 258. ch. 2. Rhulieres, c. 16, p. 549. Sismondi, xxvi. 522.

The immediate effects of this atrocious iniquity, as often happens with great but energetic and vigorous deeds of violence, were eminently favourable to the cause of persecution. Bossuet, Flechier, and the Roman hierarchy, were in raptures at the daily accounts of conversions which were received. Six thousand abjured in one place, ten thousand in another ; the churches could not hold the converts : never had the true faith achieved such a triumph since the days when, represented in Constantine, it mounted the imperial throne. But it is not thus that the real conversion of mankind is effected, or a lasting impression created ; dragoons and stripes will not, in an age of intelligence, permanently enchain the human mind. It was by enduring, and not inflicting tortures that the apostles established Christianity on an imperishable foundation. The tears of the innocent Huguenots were registered in the Book of Fate : they brought down an awful visitation on the third and fourth generations. From the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, is to be dated the commencement of a series of causes and effects which closed the reign of Louis XIV. in mourning, induced weakness and disgrace on the French monarchy, spread the fatal poison of irreligion among its inhabitants, and finally overthrew that throne and that church which had made such an infamous use of their power. The reaction of mankind against violence, of genius against oppression, proved stronger than the power of the Grande Monarque.¹

67.
Dreadful ultimate retribution to which it led

¹ Smyth, i. 31. Sism. Hist. des Français, xxvi. 520, 556.

The exiled Huguenots were received with generous sympathy in Germany, Holland, and England : far and wide they spread the tale of their wrongs and of their sufferings :

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I.

68.

Manner in which this retribution was brought about.

they roused the indomitable spirit of the heroic William : they cemented the bonds of the Grand Alliance ; they sharpened the swords of Eugene and Marlborough. Diffusing through the British isles their industry, their arts, and their knowledge, they gave as great an impulse to the manufactures of this country as that which they withdrew from those of France ; and thus contributed to that disproportion between the riches of the two rival states, which, as much as the energy of its people, brought England in triumph through the dreadful crisis of the revolutionary war. More than all, this atrocious cruelty fixed a lasting and hopeless malady in the French nation ; for it at once inspired the passion for liberty and took away the power to bear its excitements. By severing the cause of freedom from that of religion, it removed the possibility of ruling the people by any other restraint than that of force ; by preventing the growth of any habits of self-government or free discussion among them, it rendered the nation, when passionately desirous of self-government, destitute of all the habits essential for the safe exercise of its power. Thence it was that philosophy, confounding religion with the enormities perpetrated in its name, became imbued with scepticism, and the cause of human emancipation synonymous in general opinion with that of the overthrow of Christianity ; thence it was that the remnant of the persecuted sect nourished in secret the bitterest rancour against their oppressors, which appeared with fatal effect in the severest crisis of the Revolution. Thence it was that the victorious Church, weakened by victory, paralysed by success, slumbered in fancied security on the very edge of perdition, and perished, without a struggle, before the infidel spirit which the comparatively guiltless Church of England had so often shaken off as the lion shakes the dewdrops from his mane.

69.

Causes of the savage character of the French Revolution.

The extraordinary character of the French Revolution, therefore, arose, not from any peculiarities in the disposition of the people, or any faults exclusively chargeable on the government at the time it broke out, but from the weight of the despotism which had preceded it, the magnitude of the changes which were to follow it, and the vices of the age which conducted it. It was distinguished by violence, and stained with blood, because it originated chiefly with the

labouring classes, and partook of the savage features of a servile revolt: it totally subverted the institutions of the country, because it condensed within a few years the changes which should have been diffused over as many centuries; it speedily fell under direction of the most depraved of the people, because its guidance was early abandoned by the higher to the lower orders; it led to a general spoliation of property, because it was founded on an universal insurrection of the poor against the rich, and not combated by any adequate spirit and unanimity among the aristocracy of the country. It was distinguished from the first by the fatal characteristic of irreligion, because the abuses and oppression of the Romish Church had ranged every independent and generous spirit against their continuance. France would have done less at the Revolution, if she had done more before it; she would not have so unmercifully unsheathed the sword to govern, if she had not so long been governed by the sword; she would not have remained prostrate for years under the guillotine of the populace, if she had not groaned for centuries under the fetters of the nobility.

It is in periods of apparent disaster, during the suffering of whole generations, that the greatest improvements on human character have been effected, and a foundation laid for those changes which ultimately prove most beneficial to the species. The wars of the Heptarchy, the Norman Conquest, the Contests of the Roses, the Great Rebellion, are apparently the most disastrous periods of our annals; those in which civil discord was most furious, and public suffering most universal. Yet these are precisely the periods in which its peculiar temper was given to the English character, and the greatest addition made to the causes of English prosperity; in which courage arose out of the extremity of misfortune, national union out of foreign oppression; public emancipation out of aristocratic dissension, general freedom out of regal ambition. The national character which we now possess, the public benefits we now enjoy, the freedom by which we are distinguished, the energy by which we are sustained, are in a great measure owing to the renovating storms which have, in former ages, passed over our country. The darkest periods of the French annals, in like manner, those of the reigns of the successors of Charlemagne, of the English wars, of the contests of reli-

70.
Beneficial
effects of
periods of
suffering.

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I.

gion, of the despotism of the Bourbons, are probably the ones which have formed the most honourable features of the French character ; which have engrafted on the slavish habits of Roman servitude the generous courage of modern chivalry ; on the passive submission of feudal ignorance the impetuous valour of victorious patriotism ; which have extricated from the collision of opinion the powers of thought ; and nursed, amidst the corruption of despotism, the seeds of liberty. Through all the horrors of the Revolution, the same beneficial law of Nature may be discerned in operation ; and the annals of its career will not be thrown away, if, amidst the greatest calamities, they teach confidence in the Wisdom which governs, and inspire hatred at the vices which desolate the world.

71.
Slow growth
and invaluable
inheritance of
real freedom.

What a lesson does this retrospect teach us as to the slow growth of habits of freedom, and the lengthened period during which a nation must undergo the training necessary to bear its excitements ! Not years, but centuries must elapse during the apprenticeship to liberty : the robust strength requisite for its exercise is not to be acquired but by the continued struggles of many successive generations. During the fervour of the Revolution, the French thought a few days sufficient to prepare any people for democratic powers ; during the fervour of Reform, the English deemed a few years enough to enable the Negroes safely to make the transition from slavery to freedom.* But it is not thus that the great and durable changes of nature are worked out ; it is not with the rapidity of the mushroom's growth that the solidity of the oak is acquired. Nothing is lasting in the material or moral world but what is tardy of formation ; but a minute may destroy what ages have produced. History tells us that the liberties of Rome grew during the contests of six centuries ; that the freedom of England began with the laws of Edward the Confessor, and gradually enlarged during the subsequent struggles of a thousand years ; that predial servitude, universal in Europe during the middle ages, wore out so imperceptibly and safely in the countries where it has disappeared, that

* They fixed the period of apprenticeship, by the Emancipation Act of 1834, at *seven* years—deeming it as easy to make a slave a freeman as to make a freeman an artisan. Even this, however, was thought too slow by the fervent spirit which then ruled the nation. Complete emancipation followed in *five* years.

no man can say when it ceased to exist ; but that the sudden abolition of slavery in St Domingo involved that flourishing island in unutterable calamities—in the British West Indies, consigned those noble colonies to hopeless ruin. Taught by these examples, the enlightened observer will augur little of a revolution which proposed at once to elevate a whole nation, without any previous preparation, from political nullity to the exercise of the highest and most perilous political powers ; he will think lightly of the wisdom of those who thought they could make a child fit for the duties of maturity by merely putting on the dress of manhood. But he will form a clear opinion on the guilt of all who would endanger, by undue extension of political powers, so noble and enduring a fabric as that of the British constitution. He will recollect that it was from that cause that Carthage perished—from it that Rome fell under the tyranny of the emperors ; and he will class with the most depraved of the human race, those, of whatever rank or station, who, with such examples before their eyes, for their own selfish elevation shake a structure which it has required so many ages to raise, and which, when once cast down, can never be rebuilt.

CHAPTER II.

GENERAL STATE OF FRANCE, AND CAUSES WHICH
PREDISPOSED ITS PEOPLE TO REVOLUTION.

CHAP. MORE favourably situated than any monarchy in Europe,
 II. both as regards maritime strength and internal resources,
 FRANCE has received from the bounty of nature gifts
 which qualify her to take the lead in the career both of
 1. pacific improvement and military greatness. Her terri-
 Vast physi- cal re- tory, spacious, fertile, and compact, is capable of main-
 sources of France. taining an incredible number of inhabitants, and at once
 stimulates activity by the necessity for exertion, and re-
 wards industry by the riches which it obtains. Extensive
 sea-coasts, washed by the stormy waves of the Bay of
 Biscay and the ceaseless surges of the Channel, furnish the
 capabilities, and induce the hardihood, which lead to
 maritime greatness ; while a happy climate, midway be-
 tween the rigour of northern and the amenity of southern
 latitudes, at once rouses effort by necessity, and softens
 manners by enjoyment. Almost all the agricultural pro-
 ductions and materials for manufacture, which are neces-
 sary to the subsistence, the comfort, and the luxury of man,
 are to be met with in the different parts of this favoured
 region. Extensive corn-fields and boundless pastures in
 the north, furnish inexhaustible agricultural resources for
 the maintenance of the immense population to which
 its coal-fields are fitted to afford employment : in the
 middle provinces, the vine and the maize announce to
 the northern traveller his approach to the regions of the
 sun ; while vast seams of iron along the banks of the Loire,
 afford materials for a great and now rapidly increasing
 manufacture of hardware. In the south, the sunny banks

of the Garonne, and the rocky slopes of the Rhone, yield delicious fruits and wines of the richest flavour; beet-root almost rivals the cane of the West Indies for the production of sugar; while the smiling shores of the Mediterranean sea are covered with olives, which rival those of Greece and Tuscany in vigour and luxuriance.

That lucrative traffic, the greatest and most lasting which can exist in a civilized community, between the wealth created by northern industry and the profusion of southern luxuries, to most other states a foreign, is to France a *home* trade. Her inhabitants reap exclusively the profits of production at both ends of the chain, and of transit along its whole extent: a vast network of internal canals, and the broad external highway of the ocean, furnish, in every quarter, ample facilities for transport; and the rapidity of returns, alike prized by the practical trader and the enlightened economist, is perpetually experienced in the most important branches of commerce, which increasing wealth can require for its inhabitants. Its coal is, indeed, inferior to that of Great Britain, and only exists, at least in considerable quantities, in the northern provinces; but the industry of the inhabitants has found a compensation in the extensive woods, periodically cut down, with which the face of the country is every where diversified, and which constitute not the least lucrative part of its agricultural productions; while the benignity of the climate, which permits the vine, the peach, and the olive to be reared on rocky slopes, which in England would be abandoned to furze and broom, renders almost every part of the country competent to reward the industry of the husbandman.¹

2.
Its advantages for inland trade.

1 Personal observation.
Arthur Young, i. 97, 142, 256.

France, including Corsica, contains 26,739 square nautical leagues, or 156,000 square geographical miles; about two-thirds more than Great Britain, which embraces 91,000. It is in its greatest extent, from Dunkirk to the Pyrenees, 215 leagues, or about 600 miles long; and 206 leagues, or 565 broad, measuring from Cape Finisterre to the Lower Rhone. Its extent of sea-coast is no less than 490 leagues, or nearly 1400 miles; a length nearly as great as the entire circumference of Great Britain. The population in 1789, when the Revolution broke out, was somewhat above 25,000,000; in 1814, when it closed, 28,500,000; and in 1827, when the losses of the revolutionary wars had been

3.
Statistics of the country.

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II.

nearly supplied, it contained 31,820,000 inhabitants, being at the rate, on an average of the whole kingdom, of 1137 inhabitants to a square league, or about 150 to the square mile. Malte Brun has justly observed, that if the whole kingdom were peopled in the same proportion as the departments of the north, it would contain 85,000,000 of inhabitants, or considerably more than triple what were to be found in it when the Revolution broke out.¹ Vast as this number may appear, a little reflection must be sufficient to demonstrate that it is much within what the agricultural resources of the country could furnish subsistence for in comfort and affluence; and that, without pressing upon the limits assigned by the physical extent of its natural capabilities to the increase of man, a hundred and twenty millions might be maintained with ease and comfort on the French territory.* This calculation will excite surprise, and by many be deemed incredible: let those who are of this opinion examine and point out what

¹ Malte
Brun, iii.
198.

* The division of France, according to the nature of the employments of its soil, is, as we learn from Chateaubieux, one of the latest and best authorities, as follows:—

	Hectares,	or English Acres.
Total superficies	53,702,871	132,646,091
Of which—		
Sterile and waste,	3,702,871	9,146,091
Vineyards and plantations,	2,000,000	4,940,000
Forests,	6,842,623	16,901,279
Pasture,	1,157,377	2,858,721
Meadows,	5,000,000	12,350,000
Artificial Grasses,	4,000,000	9,880,000
Arable,	31,000,000	76,570,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	53,702,871	132,646,091

—CHATEAUVIEUX, 74.

Now, to show the capability of the soil of a country of this description to maintain an increase of inhabitants, let us consider merely what may be raised from 40,000,000 of arable acres, little more than one-half of its arable ground, and considerably less than a third of its total superficies. The average produce of arable land in all the counties of England is two quarters and five bushels to an acre.—(M'CULLOCH'S *Statistical Account of England*, i. 476.) Take it as two quarters only in France, to be within the mark, and we shall have 40,000,000 acres yielding 80,000,000 quarters, which would feed 80,000,000 souls—a quarter of grain being the average consumption of a human being for a year. This is leaving 92,000,000 acres for the support of horses, and for raising wood, vines, and butcher-meat for the use of man. If we suppose that 30,000,000 of the 76,000,000 arable acres in France are cultivated in potatoes, each acre will yield, according to M'Culloch, (*Commercial Dict.*, Art. *Potatoes*), food for two—according to Arthur Young and Newenham, for three individuals. Take it at the lowest estimate of two individuals, these 30,000,000 acres would maintain 60,000,000 more persons, or 140,000,000 in all; still leaving 62,000,000 acres for luxuries, roads, canals, cattle, horses, &c., for this immense population.—See NEWENHAM on the *Population of Ireland*, 340; ARTHUR YOUNG'S *Tours in Ireland*, Append. 12, 24, 4to edit.; and M'CULLOCH'S *Statistics of Great Britain*, i. 471.

is overcharged in the data on which it is founded. It leads to a conclusion of the very highest importance, and which bears with overwhelming force upon the history of the Revolution; for it shows that the French people, when that convulsion broke out, were far within the limits of their possible and comfortable increase; and consequently that the whole suffering which had preceded, and crimes which followed it, are nowise chargeable on Providence, but are to be exclusively ascribed to the selfishness, the vices, and the corruption of man.¹

Another peculiarity in the physical situation of France, both before the Revolution and at this time, is very remarkable, and deserves to be noted, both from its important bearing on economical principles, and from rendering the dreadful devastation of the Revolution the more surprising. The agricultural population at the former period was 16,500,000, and it furnished food for 8,500,000 persons living in cities, or engaged in trade or manufactures; at this time, 22,000,000 of agriculturists, in round numbers, are engaged in raising food for 11,000,000 persons engaged in pursuits unconnected with the productions of subsistence. In other words, the agricultural population, at both periods, was double the manufacturing. In Great Britain, on the other hand, in 1789, the total population was about 10,000,000, of whom only 4,000,000 were engaged in agriculture, and they furnished food for 6,000,000 occupied in trade and manufactures. That is, the agricultural population was little more than half of the manufacturing. Since that period the proportion has turned in a still more striking manner in the same direction; and by the late census in 1841, the prodigy was exhibited of a *fourth* of the whole population furnishing subsistence for the remaining three-fourths engrossed in trade, manufactures, or professions unconnected with the raising of food.* These extraordinary facts both demonstrate in the clearest manner the superiority of British to-French agriculture; the vast resources for an increasing population which exist in

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¹ Malte Brun, iii. 197, 198. Dupin, Tour Com. de France, i. 37, 46.

4. Remarkable disproportion between agriculturists and manufacturers in France and England.

* By the census of 1831, out of a population of 3,125,175 families in Great Britain, 961,134 only were engaged in the production of food; being at the rate of 282 in 1000, or somewhat more than a fourth. In Ireland, out of a population consisting of 1,385,000 families, no less than 884,339 are employed in raising food, being at the rate of 638 in 1000.—See PORTER, *Progress of the Nation*, i. 59.

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II.

every country, even the most densely peopled, if developed by an improved cultivation of the soil ; and they render unpardonable the crimes and devastations of the Revolution. In all countries, and in all ages, the rural population is the virtuous and orderly—the urban, the corrupted and turbulent portions of the people. What, then, must have been the vices of that ancient *régime*, which spread discontent so widely through the country population ; and what the weakness of some, and the guilt of others, which, in the progress of the convulsion, subjected sixteen millions engaged in agricultural pursuits to the unresisted tyranny of less than half the number of city or manufacturing inhabitants !

5.
General
character of
the French
people.

The manufactures of France, previous to the Revolution, though brought to high perfection in some branches, were far from having attained, upon the whole, the state of advancement which the resources and riches of the country might have led us to expect. The silks and velvets of Lyons, the jewellery and watches of Paris, the muslins of Rouen, were known and celebrated through all Europe ; but though the *Tiers Etat*, which carried on these lucrative employments, had increased prodigiously in wealth and consideration, yet manufacturing industry as a whole bore a small proportion to agricultural. The genius of the people, ardent, impetuous, and impassioned, not less than the character of the feudal and military institutions which prevailed among them, rendered them little qualified for the persevering industry, the strict frugality, the continued self-denial, which are essential to lay the foundation of manufacturing greatness. War was their ruling passion, glory their national idol. Gay, volatile, and inconsiderate on ordinary occasions, they were yet capable, when thoroughly roused, of ardent pursuit, heroic determination, and frequently animated by vehement passion. No people in Europe had, on different occasions, been more enthusiastic in the pursuit of civil and religious freedom, and none had prosecuted war with more impetuous ardour ; yet was their government still despotic, their hierarchy still absolute, their territory still bounded by Flanders and the Rhine. Want of steadiness and perseverance in carrying on these objects, had always been their great defect—their passions, like those of all

persons of a similar temperament, were rather vehement than lasting.

The foreign commerce of France, though long kept down by the superior energy and prowess of British seamen, had been the object of anxious solicitude to the Government, and had been nursed by the patriotic wisdom of Louis XVI. to an unparalleled pitch of splendour. Her American colonies, planned and planted with extraordinary and prophetic sagacity, had risen up with great rapidity, and early assumed a formidable aspect; but the same defect in national character which rendered their manufactures inconsiderable, caused them to sink in the first serious conflict before the persevering efforts of their less far-seeing rivals. The opposite history of the Transatlantic settlements of the two countries is very curious, and singularly characteristic of their respective national dispositions. The English, when they first set foot on America, settled on the sea-coast, in a comparatively sterile soil; gradually cleared it by the efforts of persevering industry, and, after the lapse of a century and a half, surmounted the ridge of the Alleghany, and spread themselves over the alluvial plains of the Ohio and the Mississippi, the garden of North America. The French, with far superior penetration, followed from the first the course of the great rivers, and established stations, which, if adequately supported and sustained, would, beyond all question, have given them the empire of the New World. Ascending the course of the St Lawrence, they placed extensive colonies at Montreal, Toronto, and Quebec; descending the Ohio and Mississippi, their flag was to be seen at Louisburg and New Orleans. But though amply endowed with the genius which conceives, they had not the perseverance which matures, colonies: they sought at once to snatch greatness as by the vehemence of military conquest; they could not submit to win it by the toil of pacific exertion. They did not spread into the woods, and subdue nature by the enduring labour of freemen. Hence the different destinies of the two colonial empires in America: the English, inconsiderately formed at first, was slowly raised by persevering industry to unparalleled greatness; the French, magnificently conceived in the outset, and aiming at inclosing the New World in its arms, sunk in the first rude shock before the strokes of its less aspiring rival.¹

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II.

6.
French colonies, and
cause of
their loss.

¹ Malte Brun, iii. 754.

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II.

7.
Vast colonial trade of France with St Domingo.

One great colony, however, remained to France, even after the disastrous issue of the Seven Years' War, which of itself nourished an immense commerce, and was worth all the other colonies in the world put together. In 1788, when the Revolution broke out, the exports of France to St Domingo amounted to 119,000,000*f.* or nearly £5,000,000 sterling; and the imports from it were still greater, for they had risen to 189,000,000*f.* or £7,487,000: it maintained sixteen hundred vessels, and twenty-seven thousand sailors, which gave to France the elements of a powerful marine. It was, from the very outset of his reign, an object of extreme anxiety to Louis XVI. to increase this important arm of the national strength: he deemed no sacrifices unimportant which led to its augmentation. When reproached by the queen, or some of the royal family, for any of his economical reductions, he was wont to reply—“Hush! it will give us a ship of the line the more.”¹ The results of this steady policy, ably seconded by his ministers, and supported by the vast trade with this magnificent colony, were in the highest degree satisfactory, and, for the first time in the history of the two nations, brought the naval forces of France almost to an equality with those of England. United to those of Spain—they were decidedly superior.²

¹ Weber, i. 124.

² Dumas, viii. 112, 113. Jom. xiv. 445, 446.

8.
Its naval forces as compared with those of England.

At the opening of the revolutionary war in 1792, France had eighty-two ships of the line and seventy-nine frigates; and although Great Britain had nominally a hundred and fifty-six line-of-battle ships and eighty-nine frigates at her command, yet so many of them were unserviceable, or guard-ships, that not more than a hundred and fifteen of the line, and eighty-five frigates, could be relied on for active naval operations; and when the number of guns on the whole on both sides was taken into view, the superiority of the British was little more than a *sixth*.* Add to this, that the Spanish navy consisted of seventy-six ships of the line and sixty-eight frigates; so that the

* The line-of-battle ships fit for service in the British and French navies stood, in 1792, as follows:—

	No. of Ships.	Guns.	Weight of Broadside, lbs.
British line,	115	8,718	88,957
French line,	76	6,000	73,957

—JAMES'S *Naval History*, i. 53, and *Appendix to Vol. I.*, No. 6.

French and Spanish navies, taken together, and making allowance for unserviceable vessels on either side, could bring a hundred and thirty-five line-of-battle ships to bear on the British one hundred and fifteen. And the reality of this disparity had clearly appeared in the American war: for the united fleets of France and Spain had repeatedly, during that contest, proved so superior in number to that of England, as seriously to endanger the latter's maritime superiority; particularly on the occasion of the siege of Gibraltar, and when the combined fleets rode triumphant in the Channel, and blockaded the English squadron in Plymouth in 1781.¹*

¹ James' Naval Hist. i. 49, 51, 53, and App. No. 6 and No. 7.

The military forces of France, before the war broke out, were by no means so considerable. The infantry consisted of a hundred and sixty thousand men, the cavalry of thirty-five thousand, the artillery of ten thousand; but a great proportion of these forces had left their colours during the agitated state of the country prior to the breaking out of the war. During the stormy period of the Revolution, the discipline of the troops had sensibly declined, and the custom of judging for themselves on political questions, had introduced a decree of license inconsistent with the habits of military discipline; but all these defects were more than counterbalanced by the number of able men who speedily entered the ranks from the *Tiers Etat*, and, by their vigour and audacity, first supplied the want of military experience, and soon after induced it. The cavalry, consisting of fifty-nine regiments, brave, enthusiastic, and impetuous, were at first deficient in steadiness and organization; but these defects were speedily supplied under the pressure of necessity, and by the talent which emerged from the lower classes of society. The artillery and engineers, the higher grades in which were not exclusively confined, under the old *régime*, to men of family, from the first were superior in intelligence and capacity to any in Europe, and contributed more than any other arm to the early successes of the Republican forces. The staff was miserably deficient;² but from the general diffusion of an admirable military education, the materials

9.
Military strength of France before the war.

² Jom. i. 224. Carnot's Memoirs, 136. St Cyr, Introd. i. 36.

* The combined fleet which blockaded Gibraltar consisted of forty-four ships of the line; the British which relieved that fortress under Lord Howe, only of twenty-seven: the French and Spanish fleets which entered the Channel in August 1781, consisted of fifty line-of-battle ships and twenty frigates, to which Admiral Darby could only oppose twenty-one ships of the line and nine frigates.—ADOLPHUS' *History of George III.*, i. 257.

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II.

of the finest *état-major* existed in France, and the ascendant of genius, in a career open to all, soon brought an unparalleled accession of talent to that important department.

10.
Real force
of France in
1792.

But the chief addition to the numerical strength of the army when the war broke out, consisted in two hundred battalions of volunteers, raised by a decree of the Constituent Assembly; and who, although not fully completed, and imperfectly instructed in military exercises, were animated with the highest spirit, and in the best possible state of mental and physical activity. In both these respects they were greatly superior to the old regiments, which were not only paralysed by the divisions and insubordination consequent on the Revolution, but weakened by the habits of idleness and vice which they had contracted during a long residence in barracks. It is a mistake, however, to imagine that the regular military force of France at this period was inconsiderable, or that the independence of France was preserved, on the invasion in 1792, merely by the revolutionary levies. Napoleon's authority is decisive to the contrary. "It was neither," says he, "the volunteers nor the recruits who saved the Republic; it was one hundred and eighty thousand old troops of the monarchy, and the discharged veterans whom the Revolution impelled to the frontiers. Part of the recruits deserted, part died, a small portion only remained, who, in process of time, formed good soldiers. You will not soon find me going to war with an army of recruits."¹

¹ Jom. i. 226.
St Cyr, i. 38.
Thib. Cons.
109.

11.

Household
troops of the
king.

One part of the French army under Louis XVI. deserves particular attention, from the share which it took, with the most disastrous effect to the monarchy, in the convulsions which terminated in the Revolution. This was the household troops, or *Maison du Roi*, as they were called, the élite of the army in point of discipline, appearance, and equipment, and the officers of which were exclusively drawn from the sons of the old noblesse. This body of guards was twelve thousand strong, and in some of the favoured regiments, particularly the *Gardes du Corps* and the *Mousquetaires du Roi*, which were immediately placed about the person of the sovereign, and were constantly on duty in the interior of the palace, the whole privates even were gentlemen by birth. The expense of those pampered regiments, as may well be conceived, when they were filled

entirely with the young scions of the nobility, was very great; and they were a constant thorn in the side of Turgot and the economical ministers of Louis XVI., who were as anxiously set upon reducing that costly part of the establishment, as the ladies and courtiers were on keeping it up. Yet was this magnificent body of guards not without its use, both in the field of battle and in the general arch of the social system established by Louis XIV.; more than once it had decided the fate of important actions; two of its regiments had arrested the terrible English column at Fontenoy. All great commanders have felt the necessity of such a chosen reserve, upon which they may rely with confidence at the critical moment: the companions of Alexander, the tenth legion of Cæsar, the old guard of Napoleon, were the same institutions under a different name. Nor was its political importance less in the internal arrangement of the monarchy. It formed the keystone, as it were, of the military hierarchy, and a link, at the same time, which connected the greatest families in the country at once with the throne and the army. Of all the reforms of Louis XVI., which preceded, and had so large a share in producing the Revolution, there was none perhaps so fatal as the sweeping and ill-judged changes of Count St Germain, which, as it will appear in the sequel, irrevocably broke up this important bulwark of the throne.¹

¹ Soularie,
Règne de
Louis XVI.
iii. 68, 73.

What, then, was it which, in a country so profusely endowed with the riches of nature, and inhabited by a race of men so brave, so active, and so enterprising, has led to a convulsion attended with the unspeakable horrors of the French Revolution? The answer is to be found in the previous state of the country, and the general perversion of the national mind: in the oppressions to which the people were subjected—the vices by which the nobles alienated them—the corruptions by which morals were contaminated—the errors with which religion was disfigured—the extent to which infidelity had spread. “The people,” says the greatest of French statesmen, “never revolt from fickleness, or the mere desire of change. It is the impatience of suffering which alone has this effect.”² Subsequent events have not falsified the maxim of Sully, though they have shown that it requires modification. If the condition of the lower orders in France anterior to

12.
What, then,
led to the
Revolution?

² Sully, i.
133.

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II.

the Revolution is examined, it will not be deemed surprising that a convulsion should have arisen; and if humanity sees much to deplore in the calamities it produced, it will find much cause for consolation in the grievances it has removed.

13.
Modification
of Sully's
opinion as
to griev-
ances alone
producing
revolution.
Universality
of the dis-
affection.

The observation of the French statesman, however, is true only in reference to the commencement of revolutionary troubles. The people, over a whole country, never pass from a state of quiescence to one of tumult, without the experience of practical grievances. Disturbances never assume the magnitude of revolutions, unless these grievances have come to affect the great body of the citizens. But when the minds of men have been once set afloat by successful resistance, subsequent innovations are made from mere temporary causes, and arise from the thirst for illicit gain on the part of one class, and delusion or timidity on the part of another; the restlessness following high excitation; the distress consequent on suspended credit; the audacity arising from unpunished crime. "The people," said Robespierre, "will as soon revolt without oppression, as the ocean will heave in billows without the wind."—"True," replied Vergniaud, "but wave after wave will roll upon the shore, after the fury of the winds is stilled." The universality of the disaffection which prevailed in France anterior to the Revolution, is a sufficient indication that causes were in operation affecting all classes in the state. Temporary distress occasions passing seditions; local grievances excite partial discontent; but general and long-continued suffering alone can produce a steady and extensive resistance. In France, at the convocation of the States-General, the desire for change was universal, excepting with part of the privileged orders. The cruelty of the Jacobins, and the precipitate measures of the Constituent Assembly, subsequently produced a very great division of opinion, and lighted the flames of civil war in Lyons and La Vendée; but, in the beginning, one universal cry in favour of freedom was heard from Calais to the Pyrenees. The nobles, for the most part, returned members in the interest of their order; the dignified clergy did the same; but the *Tiers Etat*, and the *curés*, unanimously supported the cause of indepen-

dence. The bitter rancour which subsequent injustice induced between the clergy and the supporters of the Revolution, was unknown in its earlier stages; the Tennis Court oath found no warmer supporters than in the solitudes of La Vendée; and the first body who joined the commons in their stand against the throne, were the representatives of the ordinary clergy of France.¹

¹ Mig. i. 26.
Th. i. 8, 41.

Without doubt, the observation of a modern philosopher is well founded, that the march of civilisation necessarily produces a collision between the aristocratic and the popular classes, in every advancing community. Power founded in conquest, privileges handed down from barbarous ages, prerogatives suited to periods of anarchy, are incompatible with the rising desires springing from the tranquillity and opulence of civilized life. One or other must yield: the power of the noblesse must extinguish the rising importance of the commons, or it must be modified by their exertions. But it is not necessary that this change should be effected by a revolution. It is quite possible that it may be accomplished so gradually, as not only to produce no convulsion, but to be felt only by its vivifying and beneficial effects upon society. It is sudden innovation which brings about the catastrophe; the rapidity of the descent which converts the stream into a cataract.²

14.
The collision of the classes did not necessarily produce revolution.

² Mig. i. 26.
Th. i. 8, 41.
Guiz. Hist. Mod. 321.

Situated in the centre of European civilisation, it was impossible that France, in the eighteenth century, could escape the general tendency towards free institutions. How despotic soever her government may have been; however powerful her armies; however haughty her nobility, the natural progress of opulence, joined to the force of philosophical inquiry, spread an unruly spirit among the middle ranks. The strength of the government, by suppressing private wars, and affording tolerable security to the fruits of industry, prepared the period of a reaction against itself. The burghers, after the enjoyment of centuries of repose, and the acquisition of a competent share of wealth, felt indignant at the barriers which prevented them from rising into the higher ranks of society; the enterprising, conscious of powers suited to elevated stations, repined at their exclusion from offices of trust or importance; the studious, imbued with the spirit of Greek or Roman free-

15.
Middle ranks desirous of elevation.

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II.

dom, contrasted the brilliant career of talent in the republics of antiquity, with its fettered walk in modern times. All classes, except the privileged ones, were discontented with the government, in consequence of the expanded wants which a state of advancing civilisation produced. No institutions in modern times can remain stationary, excepting under governments such as the Eastern dynasties, which, by preventing the accumulation of wealth, prevent the possibility of individual elevation in the middle classes; if the lower orders are permitted to better their condition, their expansive force must, in the end, affect the government.

16.
Slavery prevented this appearing in ancient times, and pressure from below brings it out in modern.

The universality of slavery prevented this progress from appearing in ancient times. The civilisation of antiquity was nothing but the aggregate of municipal institutions; its freedom, the exclusive privilege of the inhabitants of towns. Hence, with the progress of opulence, and the corruption of manners in the higher classes, the struggles of liberty gradually declined, and at last terminated with the supremacy of a single despot. The freest ages of these times were the earliest; their most enslaved, the latest of their history. No pressure from below was felt upon the exclusive privileges of the higher orders, because the bodies from which it should have originated were fettered in the bonds of slavery, and incapable of making their influence felt on the other classes in the state. Careless of the future, destitute of property, incapable of rising in society, provided for by others, the great body of the labouring classes remained in a state of pacific servitude, neither disquieting their superiors by their ambition, nor supporting them by their exertions. In modern times, on the other hand, the emancipation of the industrious ranks, through the influence of religion and the extension of information, has, by means of the press, opened the path of elevation to the great body of the people. Individual ambition, the desire of bettering their condition, have thus been let in to affect the progress of freedom. The ebullition of popular discontent becomes strongest in the later periods of society, because it is then that the accumulated wealth of ages has rendered the middle orders most powerful, and the simultaneous multiplication of the lower made them most formidable. The progress of opulence, and the increase of

industry, thus become favourable to the cause of liberty, because they augment the influence of those classes by whose exertions it must be maintained. The strife of faction is felt with most severity in those periods when the increasing pressure from below strains the bands by which it has been compressed, and danger or example has not taught the great the necessity of gradual relaxation. If these bands are slowly and cautiously unbent, it is Reformation; if suddenly removed, either by the fervour of innovation or the fury of revolt, it is Revolution.¹

The operation of these causes may be distinctly perceived in the frame of society in every free country in modern times. Universally the chief spring of prosperity is to be found in the lower classes; it is the active exertion, spirit, and increasing energy of the poor, when kept within due bounds by the authority of government and the influence of the aristocracy, which both lay the foundation of national wealth, and secure the progress of national glory. Ask the professional man what occasions the difficulty so generally experienced in struggling through the world, or even in maintaining his ground against his numerous competitors; he will immediately answer, that it is the pressure from below which occasions all his difficulty: his equals he can withstand; his superiors overcome; it is the efforts of his inferiors which are chiefly formidable. Those, in general, who rise to eminence in every profession where a free competition is permitted, are the sons of the middle or lower orders; men whom poverty has inured to hardship, or necessity compelled to exertion, and who have acquired, in the school of early difficulty, habits more valuable than all the gifts which fortune has bestowed upon their superiors. The history and present state of England exhibit numerous and splendid examples of the great acquirements and deeds of persons connected by birth with the aristocratic classes; but this rather confirms than negatives these principles. But for the competition they had to maintain with the middle and lower orders, there is no reason to suppose that they would have been superior to similar classes in France or the Continental states. It is the combined efforts of all ranks, each in their appropriate walk of life, occasioned by this incessant competition and necessity for exertion, which draws forth the

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II.

¹ Guiz. Hist.
Mod. 31, 54.

17.
General
operation of
these princi-
ples in mo-
dern times.

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II.

varied talents of all, and occasions at once the wonders and deformities, the greatness and weakness, of modern society.

18.
Its impor-
tant effects
in modern
times.

So universal is the influence of this principle, so important are its effects upon the progress and prospects of society, that it may be considered as the grand distinction between ancient and modern times. All others sink into insignificance in comparison. The balance of power in a free country is totally altered in consequence of the prodigious addition thus made to the power and importance of the lower orders; a spring of activity and vigour is provided in the humble stations of life, which proves a rapid remedy for almost every national disaster, except those arising from the licentiousness of these orders themselves—a power developed in the democratic party in the commonwealth, which renders new bulwarks necessary to maintain the equilibrium of society against its excesses. Without some advantages to counteract the superior energy and more industrious habits of their inferiors, the higher ranks, in a prosperous, opulent, and advancing state, must in general fall a prey to their ambition. The indolence of wealth, the selfishness of luxury, the pride of birth, will prove but feeble antagonists to the pressure of poverty, the self-denial of necessity, the ambition of talent. The successive elevation of the more fortunate or able of the lower orders to the higher ranks of society, is no sufficient antidote to the danger; for it is rare that energy survives the necessity which gave it birth; and nowhere does the enervating influence of wealth appear more strongly than in the immediate descendants of those who have raised themselves by their own exertions. The incessant development of vigour in the lower orders, indeed, if kept within due bounds, and directed in its objects by the influence of religion and the habits of virtue, will always bring a sufficient portion of talent and industry to uphold the fortunes of the state, but not to maintain the ascendancy of one class within its bosom; and in the strife of domestic ambition, the aristocracy will find but a feeble support in the descendants of those whom new-born wealth has enriched, or recent services ennobled.

The enervating effect of wealth upon national character, and its tendency to extinguish the love of freedom, so

justly and so feelingly complained of by the writers of antiquity, has not hitherto been so strongly experienced in modern times from the influence of the same cause. Corruption uniformly follows in the train of opulence; if those who have raised themselves by their exertions withstand the contagion, it rarely fails to affect their descendants. But the continual rise of citizens from the inferior ranks of society, for a time strongly counteracts the influence of this principle; how feeble or inefficient soever the higher ranks may become, a sufficient infusion of energy is long provided in the successive elevation of classes whom necessity has compelled to exertion. It is by precluding their elevation, or in consequence of corruption extending to their ranks, that an age of opulence sinks irrecoverably into one of degeneracy. The period when the public spirit, and with it the general liberty of Great Britain, will become extinct, may be predicted with unerring certainty. It will be when the people have become weary of asserting or maintaining their privileges, from a sense of the evils with which, from being pushed too far, they have been attended, or their incompatibility with the indulgence of private rest and gratification. And that was what Montesquieu meant, when he said that the British constitution would perish, when the legislature became more corrupt than the executive.

But immortality or perfection is not the destiny of nations in this world, any more than of individuals. The elevation and instruction of the people has opened fountains, from which the vigour of youth is long communicated to the social body; but it has neither purified their vices nor eradicated their weakness. The tree of knowledge has brought forth its accustomed fruits of good and evil; the communication of intelligence to the mass of mankind has opened the doors as wide to the corruptions as to the virtues of our nature. The progress of wickedness is as certain, and often more rapid, in the most educated, as in the most ignorant states.

———“ And next to life
Our death the tree of knowledge grew fast by—
Knowledge of good, bought dear by knowing ill.” •

The anxious desire for elevation and distinction which the

• *Paradise Lost*, iv. 220.

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II.

19.
Extinction
of public
spirit by
private opu-
lence is long
averted by
these causes.

20.
Perils of this
progressive
rise of the
lower or-
ders

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consciousness of knowledge gives to the middle ranks, long an antidote to the degeneracy of the higher, at length becomes the source of corruptions as great, and effeminacy as complete, as the slavish submission of despotic states. The necessary distinctions of society appear insupportable in an age of ascending ambition; and, in the strife which ensues, the bulwarks of freedom are overturned, not less by the party which invokes than that which retards the march of democratic power.* After the strife is over, it is too often discovered that the balance of freedom has been destroyed, and that the elements of general liberty no longer exist, from the annihilation of all classes between the prince and the peasant, in the course of the massacres and confiscations which have taken place during its continuance. The lower orders then sink rapidly and irrecoverably into degeneracy, from the experienced impossibility of effecting any thing ultimately beneficial to themselves by contending for independence. According to the condition of society, the age of the state, and the degree of public virtue which prevails, such social contests are the commencement or the termination of an era of prosperity and glory—the expansion of bursting vegetation or the fermentation which precedes corruption—the revolution which overthrew the tyranny of Tarquin, or the disastrous contests which prepared, in the extinction of patrician power, the final servitude of the empire.

21. These causes, however, whatever may be their ultimate effects, render a collision between the higher and lower orders unavoidable in every advancing state in modern times. The nobles are naturally tenacious of the privileges and dignities which have descended to them from their ancestors; the middle ranks as naturally endeavour to enlarge theirs, when their increasing wealth or importance enables them to demand such enlargement; the lower ultimately become clamorous for a participation in the franchises

Collision of the higher and lower orders is unavoidable in every advancing modern state.

* ———“ He scrupled not to eat
Against his better knowledge; not deceived,
But fondly overcome with female charm.
As with new wine intoxicated both,
They swim in mirth, and fancy that they feel
Divinity within them, breeding wings
Wherewith to scorn the earth: but that false fruit
Far other operation first display'd,
Carnal desire inflaming.”—*Paradise Lost*, ix. 997.

which they see exercised by their superiors, and which their increasing numbers enable them to claim with effect. It is in the prodigious rapidity with which population advances in the later stages of society among the working classes, owing to the wealth of the opulent and recklessness of the indigent, contrasted with the stationary number of the elevated, the result of their artificial wants or corrupted manners, that the real cause of this collision is to be found. The rich become a beleaguered garrison, of which the spoils are constantly increasing, the defenders diminishing, and the numbers and hardihood of the assailants augmenting. It was in the boroughs of Europe that the struggle first commenced, because there the protection of walls, and of assembled multitudes, had produced the earliest passion for independence: it next appeared in England, because there the security of an insular situation, and the efforts of an industrious people, had vivified the seeds of Saxon liberty: it lastly spread to France, because its regular government and powerful armies had long secured the blessings of internal tranquillity and foreign independence.

I. The destruction of the power of the great vassals of the crown, and the consolidation of the monarchy into one great kingdom, during the reigns of Louis XI., Francis I., and Henry IV., was undoubtedly an essential cause of the Revolution. This anomalous and unforeseen result, however, arose not from the oppression so much as the protection afforded by the government to the people. Had the central power been weaker, and the privileges of the great feudatories remained unimpaired, France, like Germany, would have been split into a number of independent duchies, and all unity of feeling or national energy lost amid the division of separate interests. A revolution could no more have taken place there than in Silesia or Saxony; whereas, by the destruction of the power of the great vassals, and the rise of a formidable military force at the command of the central government, the unity of the nation was preserved, its independence secured, and its industry protected. For a century and a half before the commencement of the Revolution, France had enjoyed the blessings of domestic tranquillity; no internal dissensions, no foreign invasions, had broken this long period of security and

22.
Destruction
of the power
of the no-
bles.

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II.

repose; war was known only as affording an outlet to the ardent and impatient spirits of the country, or as yielding a rich harvest of national glory; the worst severities of aristocratic oppression had for ages been prevented by the cessation of private warfare. During this interval of peace, the relative situation and feelings of the different ranks in society underwent a total change. Wealth silently accumulated in the lower orders, from the unceasing efforts of individual industry; power imperceptibly glided from the higher, in consequence of the absorption of their revenues in objects of luxury. When civil dissensions again broke out, this difference appeared in the most striking manner. It was no longer the territorial noblesse, headed by their respective lords, who took the field, or the burghers of towns who maintained insulated contests for the defence of their walls; but the national guard, who every where flew to arms, animated by one common feeling, and strong in the consciousness of mutual support. They did not wait for their landlords to lead, or their magistrates to direct; but, acting boldly for themselves, they maintained the cause of democratic freedom against the powers they had hitherto been accustomed to obey.

23.

Military
spirit of
the people.

II. The military spirit of the French people, and the native courage, which a long series of national triumphs had fostered, rendered them capable both of the moral fortitude to commence, and the patient endurance to sustain a conflict. But for this circumstance, the Revolution would never have been attempted, or, if begun, would have been speedily crushed by the military force at the disposal of the monarchy. In many countries of Europe, such as Italy, Portugal, and Spain, the people have lost, during centuries of peace, the firmness requisite to win their freedom. They complain of their oppressors, they lament their degeneracy, they bewail their liberties, but they have not the courage generally to attempt the vindication of these liberties. Unless under the guidance of foreign officers, they are incapable of any sustained or courageous efforts in the field: when deprived of that guidance, they sink immediately into their native imbecility. But the case was very different with the French. The long and disastrous wars with the English, the religious contests of the sixteenth century, the continued conflicts with the Euro-

pean powers, had spread a military spirit throughout the people, which neither the enjoyment of domestic peace, nor the advantages of unbroken protection, had been able to extinguish. In every age the French have been the most warlike people of Europe ; and the spirit of military enterprise is nearly allied to that of civil freedom. Military courage may, and often does, subsist without domestic liberty ; but domestic liberty cannot long subsist without military courage. The dreams of inexperienced philanthropy may nourish expectations inconsistent with this position, and anticipate an adequate protection to private right from the extension of knowledge, without the aid of warlike prowess ; but experience gives no countenance to these ideas, and loudly proclaims the everlasting truth, that as regulated freedom is the greatest blessing in life, so it never can be defended for a course of ages from the assaults of regal or democratic despotism, but by the hardihood and resolution of those who enjoy it.

III. Though the Reformation was extinguished in France, freedom of thought and the spirit of investigation were unrestrained in the regions of taste and philosophy. Louis XIV. made no attempt to curb the literary genius of his age, provided it did not interfere with political topics ; and the intellectual vigour which was exhibited during his reign, on general subjects, has never been surpassed. In the mental strife which occurred during the Revolution, no more energetic speculation is to be found than exists in the writings of Corneille and Pascal. But it is impossible that unfettered inquiry can long subsist without political controversy becoming the subject of investigation. Religion and politics, the condition of man here and hereafter, ever must form the most interesting objects of thought. And, accordingly they ere long became so, under the feeble successors of the Grande Monarque. In the philosophical speculations of the eighteenth century, in the writings of Voltaire, Rousseau, Raynal, and the Encyclopedists, the most free and unreserved discussion, if not on political subjects, at least on those which were most nearly allied to them, on morals and religion, took place. By a singular blindness, the constituted authorities, despotic though they were, made no attempt to curb these inquiries, which, being all couched in general terms, or

24.
Philosophy
and literature.

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II.

made in reference to other states, appeared to have no direct bearing on the tranquillity of the kingdom. Strong in the support of the nobility, the protection of the army, and the long-established tranquillity of the country, they deemed their power beyond the reach of attack, and anticipated no danger from dreams on the social compact, or the manners and spirit of nations. A direct attack on the monarchy, or still more, on any of the ministers or royal mistresses, would have been followed by an immediate place in the Bastile; but general disquisitions excited no alarm either among the higher classes, or in the government. So universal was this delusion, that the young nobility amused themselves with visionary speculations concerning the original equality and pristine state of man; deeming such speculations as inapplicable to their interests as the license of Otaheite or the customs of Tartary.¹

¹ Ségur's
Memoirs, i.
62. Lac.
i. 12, 10.

25.
Causes of
the general
delusion
regarding
public opi-
nion.

It is not surprising that the higher ranks mistook the signs of the times. They were advancing into a region in which the ancient landmarks were no longer to be seen, where the signs of a new heaven, and hitherto unseen constellations, were to guide the statesman. Judging from the past, no danger was to be apprehended; for all former convulsions of a serious description had been headed by a portion at least of the higher ranks. Judging from what we now know of what followed, the speck was already to be seen in the horizon which was to overwhelm the civilized world with darkness. The speculations of those eloquent philosophers spread widely among the rising generation. Captivated by the novelty of the ideas which were developed, dazzled by the lustre of the eloquence which was employed, seduced by the examples of antiquity which were held up to imitation, the youth warmly embraced not only free, but republican principles. The injustice of feudal oppression, the hardship of feudal exclusion, produced a corresponding reaction in the public mind. In the middle ranks, in particular, upon whom the chains of servitude hung heaviest, and who longed most for emancipation, because they would be the first to profit by it, the passion for ancient freedom was wrought up to the highest pitch. Madame Roland,² the daughter of an engraver, and living in a humble station, wept, at nine years

² Madame
Roland, i.
88, 89. In-
troduction,
p. 18.

of age, because she had not been born a Roman citizen, and carried Plutarch's Lives, instead of her breviary, in her hand, when she attended mass in the cathedral.

The tenor of the prevailing ideas which have moved the public mind, may always be known from the style of eloquence adopted, and the allusions made use of, by those who direct it. During the Great Rebellion in England, the language universally employed by the popular leaders was that of gloomy austerity; their images and allusions were all drawn from the Old Testament. Fanaticism was the engine by which alone at that period the great body of the people could be moved. In France, religion was never once alluded to by the popular party; or if mentioned, it was only to be made the subject of derision and obloquy. Classical images, reference to the freedom and spirit of antiquity, formed the great means of public excitation; the names of Brutus and Cato, of Scipio and Themistocles, were constantly upon their lips; the National Assembly never resounded with such tumultuous applause as when some fortunate allusion to the heroes of Greece or Rome was made; the people were never wrought up to such a state of fervour as when they were called on to follow the example of the patriots in the ancient republics. Even in periods of extreme peril, with the prospect of immediate death before their eyes, the same splendid imagery was employed; and it is impossible to read without emotion the generous sentiments which the victims of popular violence frequently uttered, at their last moments, in the words of ancient eloquence.

26.
Classical allusions which generally prevailed.

The circumstance of all others which chiefly contributed to this turn of the public mind, was the great influence which the masterpieces of the French stage had acquired in the capital. The Theatre Français had, for above a century, been to the Parisians what the Forum was to the Athenians—a great arena in which political and moral sentiments of the most elevated kind were inculcated, and arguments the most admirable urged on the opposite sides of every great public question. The crowds in the pit, generally the most enlightened part of the audience, listened to the inimitable declamations of Corneille or Racine, with the same admiration which the

27.
Influence of the French stage on the public mind.

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II.

Greek citizens felt when witnessing the oratorical contests of Æschines and Demosthenes. The grandeur of thought, the elevation of sentiment, the heroism of character, which were so nobly portrayed in these dramas, unavoidably acquired a vast influence over the public mind. It was the greater, because it was on the stage alone that liberty of discussion could then be heard in so despotic a state, and in the representations of the social struggles of antiquity only, that the yearnings of the human mind after present freedom could be satisfied: the more dangerous, because it established, in general thought, a standard of excellence wholly unsuitable to the actual character of humanity, and spread the belief that men in real life were to be influenced by the dignified considerations which swayed the heroes of dramatic fiction. Never was a more delusive belief diffused. The great Condé might shed tears* at the representation of the masterpieces of Corneille; but it was in such heroic breasts—a mere fraction of the human race—that they alone could find a responsive echo. Yet no one who has studied closely the history of the Revolution, and observed the constant allusions by the popular leaders to the heroic occurrences of antiquity, can entertain a doubt that this cause had a material influence on its fortunes, and contributed not a little to produce those magnificent ideas of the virtues of a republic, and that exalted conception of the sway of generous sentiments over emancipated man, which were destined to be so grievously disappointed by the selfishness, vice, and cruelty of the Revolution.†

IV. The CHURCH in France experienced the fate of all attempts, in an advancing age, to fetter the human mind;

* It is recorded by Voltaire, in his admirable Commentaries on Corneille, that the great Condé shed tears at the magnanimous speech of Augustus, in the last scene of *Cinna*, where he pronounces his forgiveness. But Paris, during the Revolution, was not peopled with great Condés.—See *Œuvres de CORNEILLE*, iii. 387; edit. 1817, with VOLTAIRE'S Notes.

† It is observed by Voltaire, as a remarkable circumstance, that in the Greek tragedies, addressed to the people of all others most ardently attached to democratic institutions, there is no allusion to be found to their value; while those of Corneille, intended for the court of the Bourbons in the palmy days of its power, are full of them. But the reason is obvious, and has been abundantly illustrated since Voltaire's death. Corneille put declamations on the virtues of a republic into the mouths of his heroes, because he had never known democracy; it was an Utopia to all around him. Euripides was silent on the subject, for he knew it too well; it was the real life with which his audience were familiar.

the resistance to its authority became general, and in the fervour of opposition, the good and the bad parts of its doctrines were indiscriminately rejected. This is the usual consequence of attempts to force incredible and absurd doctrines upon public belief. As long as the minds of the people are in a state of torpor or inactivity, they embrace without scruple whatever is taught by their spiritual guides; but when the spirit of investigation is roused, and the light of reason breaks in, the reaction becomes just as strong in the opposite direction, and infidel supplies the place of superstitious fanaticism. Religious as well as political reformers seldom content themselves with amending what is really defective in the subject of their improvement; in the fervour of innovation they destroy the whole, because part has been found corrupted. It was thus with the Catholic Church of France. Supported, as it had been, by the greatest names, and adorned by the most splendid ability; teaching, for the most part, the most simple and beneficent system of belief, it fell into general obloquy, in consequence of the irrational and dangerous nature of some of its tenets, and the disgraceful use which it had made of its power. How strong soever the force of superstition may be, the power of reason is still stronger; if the former is to be supported, the latter must be enchained.

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II.
28.
State of the
Church.

If we would discover the cause of this remarkable bent of literary and philosophical thought in France during the last half of the eighteenth century, we must look for its principal cause in the injustice of preceding reigns. It was the REVOCATION OF THE EDICT OF NANTES which occasioned that fatal direction; it was the stoppage of the comparatively gentle purification of the Reformation which induced the fiery torrent of the Revolution. The enormous cruelty, the frightful injustice, the flagrant impolicy of that deed of despotism, has been already noticed* in reference to the political history of France anterior to the Revolution; but its effects upon its ecclesiastical interests were hardly less important, and still more fatal. It at once destroyed religious freedom in that great country; by a single blow it extinguished intellectual energy in the Church. Toleration, even, was at an

29.
Fatal effects
of the revo-
cation of
the Edict
of Nantes.

* *Ante*, chap. i. §§ 65, 66.

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end ; exile, confiscation, imprisonment, were to follow the slightest inclination towards the Huguenot opinions. In this complete victory, the champions of the Roman Catholic faith in France beheld an unqualified ground of triumph ; but he must be blind indeed, who does not now perceive, that it was the principal cause of the unbounded calamities in which the Gallican Church and the French monarchy were involved at the close of the eighteenth century.

30.
Weakness
it induced
on the Galli-
can Church.

As long as the Protestant faith existed in the country, and free discussion was allowed under the tolerant edict of Henry IV., abuses of a flagrant kind were prevented on the part of the national Establishment, from the dread of exposure by the champions of the opposite faith. Talent, at the same time, was roused. Eloquence was called forth on both sides, not only from the polemical contests which were carried on between the professors of the new and the old opinions, but from the more useful and generous rivalry which prevailed as to which should gain the greatest number of converts to its faith, and disseminate most widely the blessings of Christian instruction. But when the five hundred thousand weeping Protestants were sent into exile—when the Huguenot worship was every where proscribed, and its trembling votaries, if detected celebrating its rites, were liable to stripes, confiscation, and exile—no check on the Roman Catholic worship remained. Effort on the part of its priesthood relaxed, from the necessity for it having passed away. The vast genius of Bossuet was no longer seen singly sustaining by its might the belief of the faithful : the mild spirit of Fénelon ceased to win the heart by the fervour of the gospel. Indolence and pride crept over the higher dignitaries of the Church ; bigotry and ignorance enveloped the lower ; its errors, its superstitions, its cruelties, remained unchanged ; while the talents and energy which had adorned it had passed away. At a time when the inquisitive spirit of the age was daily extending, irresistible power rendered the dignified prelates blind to their dangers ; and the fetters of a former period were the more strictly drawn, when the hands which were to rivet them were rapidly becoming weaker.

But no effort of despotism, how energetic soever, can, in an advancing and intellectual age, permanently extin-

guish the light of reason. The ardent spirit of religious inquiry, banished from the pulpits of the Huguenots, broke forth within the bosom of the Church : the contest of the followers of Jansen and Molina took the place of that between the disciples of Luther and the successors of St Peter. This celebrated controversy partook in many points of the characteristics of the great Protestant schism. It was distinguished by the same stern and dogmatic spirit on the one side, and the same inward fervour and bold inquiry on the other : vindictive authority commanded among the Jesuits, and intrepid enthusiasm animated the Jansenists. Pascal was the soul of the latter body: the Jesuits never recovered from the effect of his celebrated Provincial Letters. "The comedies of Molière," says Voltaire, "have not more wit than the former part of these letters, nor the writings of Bossuet more sublimity than the latter." The Jansenists, following the dogmas of their founder, Cornelius Jansen, bishop of Ypres, maintained the principles of necessity and predestination, which run through the tenets of extreme Calvinism ; the Jesuits, with Molina, a Spanish priest of that order, asserted the doctrine of free-will, and the necessity of unity in the Church. "Superstition," says Hume, "is an enemy to civil liberty: enthusiasm is a friend to it. The Molinists, while conducted by the Jesuits, are great friends to superstition, rigid observers of external forms and ceremonies, and devoted to the authority of the priests and to tradition. The Jansenists are enthusiasts, and zealous promoters of the passionate devotion and of the inward life ; little influenced by authority, and, in a word, but half Catholics. The Jesuits are the tyrants of the people, and the slaves of the court ; and the Jansenists preserve alive the small sparks of the love of liberty which are to be found in the French nation."¹

31
It issues
in the con-
tests of the
Jesuits and
Jansenists.

¹ Hume's
Essays, i.
231. Smyth's
Lectures on
the French
Rev. i. 66.

But these sparks were destined ere long to rise up into a flame ; and the declining fervour of religious controversy, warmed by the vigour of political ambition, produced that fermentation in the country which at length issued in the fury of the Revolution. The PARLIAMENTS of France bore no resemblance to the great national council of England ; they were provincial assemblies, composed entirely of magistrates of rank from the order of the nobility, or the *Tiers Etat* raised by office to that station, entrusted chiefly

32.
Transition
of this con-
test into
that of the
parliaments
with the
king.

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with judicial duties, but constituting, in the absence of the States-General, which had not been assembled since 1614, the only subsisting check recognised by the constitution on the authority of the sovereign. The parliament of Paris, the most important of these bodies both in point of rank and influence, and which took the lead in all contests with the crown, was very numerous: it consisted of a hundred and seventy members, including seventeen peers, of whom two were princes of the blood. This assembly, from its numbers, its spirit, and the individual respectability of its members, early acquired great consideration, which it retained to the very commencement of the Revolution. It was universally felt to be the only remaining bulwark of public liberty after the nobles had sunk before the ascendant of Richelieu; and from the persevering, and often heroic courage, with which it combated the despotic measures of the crown, it enjoyed a large and well-deserved share of popularity. It had one immense advantage, which will be readily appreciated by all who have experienced the debasing influence either of monarchical or popular appointment, when limited to a short period, or held at will only: its members were *independent*. They were neither nominated by the intrigues of Versailles nor by the populace of Paris; they received mandates neither from the royal mistresses nor the popular demagogues. They acquired their offices, as commissions are obtained in the English army, by *purchase*; subject, indeed, to the royal approbation, and to certain regulations formed by themselves, to prevent the introduction of improper members; but neither the crown nor the nobility had, practically speaking, the appointment. Though this system may appear strange to English ideas, yet a little reflection must show, as Burke has observed, that it was admirably fitted both to confer independence and insure the upright discharge of duty. None could obtain admission but persons of a respectable station; a certain fortune was requisite to purchase the situation; integrity and independence were the only passports to public esteem. Neither royal frowns nor popular despotism could dispossess them of their offices. They know little of human nature who are not aware that these are the only circumstances which can be permanently relied on to produce integrity and independence in judicial functionaries.¹

¹ Soulavie, i. 197. *Ma-*
bly, b. i. § 3.
Burke's
Works, vi.
367. Grim.
Corresp.
xvi. 88.
Weber, i.
469.

The most important constitutional power with which the parliaments were entrusted, was that of consenting to or refusing the king's edicts for the imposition of any new tax; and it was part of consuetudinary usage, that no impost, though imposed by a royal decree, had the force of law until it was registered in the parliamentary books. When the parliaments were refractory, therefore, or disapproved of the measures of the court, the course they adopted was to refuse to register the edict which laid on any new tax; and as the courts of law, till this was done, refused to enforce it, this power was often a very effectual one. The only known remedy was for the king to hold what was called a *lit de justice*, or bed of justice; that is, to repair to the place where the parliament sat, and ordain the registration of the edict on his own authority. Unpopular as such a measure of course was, it was not unfrequently had recourse to, and sometimes even by the mild and forbearing Louis XVI. Yet it was always regarded as an arbitrary step; the parliaments loudly protested against its legality; many great constitutional lawyers agreed with them, as holding it an unwarrantable stretch of the royal authority; and at any rate it was sure to be an unpopular proceeding, likely to endanger any ministry by whom it was recommended.¹

33!
Powers of
the parlia-
ments.

¹ Card. de
Retz's Mem.
ii. 117. Ma-
bly, Obs. sur
la Court,
b. i. § 3.
Soul. i. 197.
Smyth's
Lectures,
i. 67

The contest between the crown and the parliaments had subsisted in France for two centuries; but it never became envenomed till it was mixed up with the controversy of the Port-Royal. Such was the legacy bequeathed to the country by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes; an internal semi-religious strife, springing from the outward extinction of religious dissent. The details of this contest would fill volumes, and belong properly to the history of France during the eighteenth century, not to the annals of the Revolution. But the general results may be stated in a few words:—Orders, in the first instance, were issued by the archbishop of Paris, and the clergy acting under the influence of the Jesuits, to refuse the sacrament to those of the Jansenist persuasion: this was met by censure and prosecutions from the parliament of Paris against those who obeyed these orders. The crown, upon this, issued a mandate to stay all such prosecutions: the parliament remonstrated, and the royal commands were renewed. The parliament retorted, by suspending all judicial business

34.
Progress of
the contest
with the
parliaments.
1756.

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II.

in their courts. The crown, upon this, issued a mandate enforcing the repeal of these resolutions of suspension : the parliament immediately attached the revenue of the archbishop of Paris. Rigorous measures were now resorted to by the court : *lettres de cachet* were issued ; all the members of the parliament exiled ; four of the most obnoxious were sent to the state prisons ; and an attempt was made to form new courts of justice instead of the parliament. But the letters-patent constituting these new courts were not valid till registered in the inferior courts, and these courts, espousing the cause of the parliament, refused to record them. The nation was now roused : the provincial parliaments every where met and supported the parliament of Paris ; the clergy who refused the sacraments were generally prosecuted. Thus the nation was reduced to an inextricable position if the contest were any further pursued : on the one hand, the holiest rites of religion were suspended ; on the other, the most important legal courts were closed. The necessity of applying a remedy at length prevailed over the stubbornness of the court : the parliaments were recalled, and the archbishop was exiled.¹

In the progress of time the Jesuits became obnoxious to the most powerful interests in the court, from the incessant intrigues which they kept up, and the disagreeable manner in which they interfered with the mistresses and council of Louis XV. Madame Pompadour, and the Duke de Choiseul, the chief minister, united their strength to effect the destruction of a rival authority ; and they were powerfully supported by the parliament of Paris, and the numerous body in France, both in and out of the Church, who belonged to the Jansenist party. Louis XV. long held out against their united efforts, partly from the influence of the archbishop of Paris, and the dignified clergy in the metropolis, who were almost all of the Molinist side and party, and partly from an impression that the Jesuits were valuable as ecclesiastical agents of the crown ; and that Cardinal Fleury's maxim was well founded, that " if they are bad masters, they will prove good servants."

But at length, when the monarch, in his declining years, became more devoted to sensual enjoyments, and found that the Jesuits about the court might interfere with the orgies in the *Parc-aux-Cerfs*,² he yielded to the persecution

1757.

¹ Soulavie,
Décad. de
la Monarch.
Franc. ii.
249, 258.
Smyth, i.
65, 67. Lac.
xviii. Siècle
iii. 266, 288,
194, 200.

35.

Suppression
of the Je-
suits.

² Lac. iv. 13,
38. Soul.
Décad. iii.
279, 285.

which the parliaments had long carried on against this celebrated sect, and by a royal decree, in November 1764, their order was entirely suppressed in France.*

The destruction of the Jesuits had immediately the effect of stilling the fury of the religious controversy; but it was far from putting an end to the contest between the crown and the parliament, which continued unabated down to the close of the reign of Louis XV. Meanwhile, the cessation of the religious conflict had the effect of disarming the vigilance, and paralysing the strength of the church. The Jansenists, delivered from their oppressors, no longer exerted their talents: the Molinists slumbered in fancied security amidst the pomp of their palaces; the inferior clergy forgot alike their zeal and their fanaticism. The age of toleration commenced; it speedily turned into one of indifference; and such an age is in general but the precursor of one of incredulity. The spirit of the times ran violently in favour of the new opinions, the liberal ideas of enlarged philosophy, the entrancing speculations of social perfectibility. The clergy, sensible of their weakness both in intellectual and political strength, slumbered on in philosophic tolerance of the dissolution, alike of morals and opinions, which was going forward. They recovered their dignity, and stood forth with the grandeur of ancient martyrs, during the storms of the Revolution.¹

In the great philosophic efforts of the eighteenth century, which in their ultimate effects convulsed the world, a prodigious phalanx of ability was engaged. But three men appeared as giants in the fight, and contributed in a signal manner, by the originality and force of their talents, to stamp the impress of their genius upon the opinions of their own, and the events of the succeeding age. These were Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau.

Charles De la Brede, Baron of MONTESQUIEU, was born at the chateau of La Brede, near Bordeaux, on the 18th January 1689. From his earliest years he gave evidence of the great talents for which he afterwards became cele-

* Frederick the Great, who, with all his partiality to the French free-thinking philosophers, knew well where the real supports of the throne are to be found, exclaimed, when he heard that the Government had banished the Jesuits from France—"Pauvres, ils ont détruit les renards qui les défendaient des loups, et ils ne voient pas qu'ils vont être dévorés."—WEBER'S *Memoirs*, i. 94.

36.
Cessation of the religious contests, and rise of the philosophical opinions.

¹ Soulavie, i. 99, 200.

37.
Life and character of Montesquieu.

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brated; and he was educated with care for the magistracy, to which his father's influence near Bordeaux promised him an early entrance. His thirst for knowledge, even in early youth, was unbounded, and continued without abatement through life—insomuch that he frequently used to say, that he had never felt a chagrin which an hour's reading did not dissipate. History, antiquities, travels, were his favourite study; with the classics he was familiar; and these interludes of employment formed his recreation amidst the dry details of legal acquirement. But he possessed from the first the rare faculty—the distinctive mark of genius—of extracting from this infinity of details a few ruling principles. His collections were as numerous as the eighty thousand observations of Kepler; but he knew, like the immortal astronomer, how to deduce the few laws of social order from these observations. In 1716, at the early age of twenty-seven, he was appointed president of the parliament of Bordeaux; and the laborious efforts of that dignified and responsible office, happily for himself, kept him far removed from the vices and attractions of Parisian society. Twenty years were employed in the collection of materials for the composition of his greatest work—the “*Esprit des Loix*.” His life thus afforded few materials for biography—fewer still for scandal. He travelled much, and surveyed with the eye of a philosopher all the principal countries of Europe, on which he wrote notes, which unhappily were not left in so complete a state as to be fit for publication. Like Corneille, Boileau, Pascal, and all the great men of his age—and in truth of every age—he lived the greater part of his life in retirement, and found in the converse of the great of former times, and in reflection on their thoughts, a compensation—and more than a compensation—for all the attractions of present society. Meanwhile his great work advanced, as he himself said, “*aux pas de géant*,” and after twenty years of labour, the immortal “*Esprit des Loix*” appeared.¹ His disposition was generous, his temper gentle, his life unruffled: wrapt up in great objects, and the contemplation of eternal truth, he felt none of the ordinary crosses of mortality,* and terminated a life

¹ Biog. Univ. xxix. 501, 520. D'Alembert's *Eloge de Montesquieu*, *Encyclopedie*, vol. v., and prefixed to his works.

* “I have hardly ever,” he said, “experienced a chagrin, still less an hour of ennui, in my life. I waken in the morning with a secret joy at beholding the light; the whole of the rest of the day I am pleased. I sleep

of more than ordinary happiness, serene and thankful, after a short illness, on the 10th February 1755. Voltaire pronounced his epitaph in this magnificent eulogium:—
“The human race had lost its titles: Montesquieu rediscovered them, and restored them to the owner.”

Montesquieu was one of the greatest thinkers that the world ever produced; he is to be placed on a level in that respect with Bacon and Machiavel, and above either Cicero or Tacitus. Less eloquent and ornate than the first of the Roman writers, less condensed and caustic than the last, he took a wider view of human affairs than either, and deduced general conclusions with more wisdom, from a vast variety of detached and apparently insulated particulars. He is greater than the Roman historian as a philosopher, but inferior to him as a writer and a delineator of events. Though his principal work, and that which has chiefly given him his colossal reputation, is the “*Esprit des Loix*,” yet it may be doubted whether the “*Grandeur et Décadence des Romains*” is not more profound, and does not contain a greater number of just philosophic conclusions. It has not the practical sagacity which an extensive experience of human wickedness has given to the Florentine sage, nor the incomparable wisdom which secured to the English statesman so deep an insight into the secret springs of human action; but in philosophic generalization and luminous deduction, it is perhaps superior to the work either of Machiavel or Bacon.* In the “*Esprit des Loix*,” though deep thought is frequently to be met with, and

38.
Character
of his writ-
ings.

at night without waking; and in the evening, before I close my eyelids, a sort of delicious trance prevents me from making reflections.” Part, doubtless, of this rare felicity was owing to unbroken domestic happiness; his rank was high, his situation distinguished, his fortune affluent, his reputation uncontested, his marriage happy, his children affectionate. More still was to be ascribed to the serenity of mind, springing from the constant contemplation of abstract truth, and the never-failing enjoyment which he derived from the study of the great works of former days. But most of all is to be considered owing to the inward satisfaction derived from the consciousness of a well-spent life, of great powers nobly applied, and the calm conviction that he had raised for himself a monument destined to be as enduring as the human race.—See *Biographie Universelle*, xxix. 518, 519.

* It is a curious circumstance, which has been demonstrated by a careful examination of the numerous manuscripts which Montesquieu has left, that many of his most profound and original thoughts were suggested by passages in works of imagination, and light and frivolous compositions. Whoever has reflected much on individual or national events, will probably not be surprised at this circumstance, for it is in such productions that the secret springs of the heart, the moving power in all human affairs, unconsciously are brought to light.—See *Biographie Universelle*, xxix. 520.

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vast erudition is every where conspicuous, yet there is often too great a disposition to trace fanciful analogies, and ascribe remarkable differences in national institutions, rather to accidental or trivial causes, than to great and permanent moving powers of human action—the usual fault of ingenious and philosophic minds, which carry to excess the spirit of generalization, the foundation of all true political wisdom. Yet such as it is, this noble work made a prodigious step in the progress of knowledge; it gave birth to a new science, the *philosophy of history*, of which antiquity had obtained only a few detached glimpses; and to its influence, more perhaps than any work of the eighteenth century, is the subsequent direction of human thought and the course of public events to be ascribed.*

39.
Influence
of Montes-
quieu on
the Revolu-
tion.

It may seem ungenerous to say of so great a man, that his labours were conducive, along with those of others, in bringing about the French Revolution; and unjust to affirm, that by leading men to think on political subjects, they were instrumental in producing that convulsion: yet nothing is more certain than that both effects took place.

* D'Alembert, in his admirable eulogium on Montesquieu, prefixed to the fifth volume of the Encyclopædia, and since transferred to all the complete editions of his works, has given the following interesting picture of the private character and habits of this great man:—"Il était sensible à la gloire; mais il ne voulait y parvenir qu'en le méritant. Jamais il n'a cherché à augmenter la sienne par ces manœuvres sourdes, par ces voies obscures et honteuses, qui déshonorent la personne sans ajouter au nom de l'auteur. Digne de toutes les distinctions et des toutes les récompenses, il ne demandait rien et ne s'étonnait point d'être oublié; mais il a osé, dans les circonstances les plus délicates, protéger à la cour des hommes des lettres persécutés, célèbres, et malheureux, et leurs à obtenir des grâces. Quoiqu'il vécut avec les grands—soit par nécessité, soit par convenance, soit par gout—leur société n'était pas nécessaire à son bonheur. Il fuyait dès qu'il pouvait à sa terre; il y retrouvait avec joie sa philosophie, ses livres, et le repos. Entouré des gens de la campagne, dans ses heures de loisir, après avoir étudié l'homme dans le commerce du monde, et dans l'histoire des nations, il s'étudiait encore dans ces âmes simples que la nature seule a instruite; et il y trouvait à apprendre; il conversait gaiement avec eux; il leur trouvait de l'esprit comme Socrate; il paraissait se plaire autant dans leurs entretiens que dans les sociétés les plus brillantes, surtout quand il terminait leurs différends, et soulageait leurs peines par ses bienfaits."—See *Cœuvres de MONTESQUIEU*, Vol. i, p. 109, *Introduction*. What a picture of the greatest man of his age, enjoying retirement, asking nothing, no ways surprised at being forgot! He knew courts and ministers well who acted thus after having written the "Esprit des Loix,"—Carlyle has well observed, that all governments have a jealousy of their teachers. Many traits in this exquisite portrait will remind the reader of the corresponding features of Sir Walter Scott in Mr Lockhart's admirable Life. But it would have been well for the illustrious novelist if he had practised that economy in his desires and habits, which, without diminishing his numerous deeds of generosity and charity, and leaving him funds sufficient for his numerous travels, enabled Montesquieu to transmit his paternal estate undiminished to his children.—See D'ALEMBERT'S *Eloge*, p. 111.

True it is, indeed, that revolutions are carried into *execution*, not by those who think, but by those who do not think on human affairs; but the physical strength of the greatest number is ever directed by the intellect of a few; and the spring of the ideas of those few is to be found in the recesses of individual thought. Montesquieu's celebrated doctrine, that the principle of government in a monarchy is honour—in a despotism, fear—and in a republic, virtue, though not destitute of foundation, was far too broadly expressed, and proceeded on a most erroneous view of the tendency of unrestrained human conduct. It spread abroad the idea that virtue *would be* the ruling principle in republics, whereas what Montesquieu meant was, that virtue was its safeguard, its preserving principle—and that is undoubtedly true; but he forgot to add what was equally true, that in an advanced state of society, selfishness is its demon, corruption its destroyer, and that though virtue may be its theory, vice is too often its practice. But that was the great error of the philosophers of the eighteenth century; an error which religion had foretold, and which the French Revolution demonstrated—an undue estimate of the virtue of mankind. It was the error of noble and generous minds, who judge of others by themselves, and are unable to form a conception of that general prevalence of selfishness and timidity, which, in all social conflicts, renders the great body of men the prey of the wicked and audacious. It was the error, however, which brought about the French Revolution; which in all its phases, from the dreams of Necker to the blood of Robespierre and the carnage of Napoleon, was but a commentary on the opposite doctrines of human perfectibility, the foundation of philosophic innovation—and of general corruption, the cornerstone of Revelation.*

* Almost alone of the illustrious men of his day, Montesquieu never, in the writings at least which bear his name, attacked the truths of religion; and in the *Lettres Persannes*, and those which were anonymous, it was the abuses of the Roman Church only which attracted his animadversion. He was too great a man not to be a sincere Christian. "I have always," said he, on his deathbed, "respected religion; the morality of the Gospel is the noblest present God ever made to man." Being pressed by his confessor to erase some expressions at which they had taken umbrage from his *Lettres Persannes*, he replied "I am willing to sacrifice every thing to religion, but nothing to the Jesuits; consult with my friends, and they will decide on the subject." He then received extreme unction, and the priest said, "You feel, sir, how great God is."—"Yes," replied he, "and how little man."—These were his last words.—See *Biographie Universelle*, xxix. 519, 520.

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40.
Birth and
parentage
of Voltaire.

FRANCOIS MARIE AROUET DE VOLTAIRE was born at Chatenay, near Sceaux, on the 20th February 1694. His father, though a respectable man, was a simple notary at Chatelet, so that he had none of the advantages of birth, though by the mother's side he was descended from an ancient and noble family in Poitou. His constitution was at first so feeble that it was with great difficulty he was kept alive in the years of infancy; and though he lived to the advanced age of eighty-four, he was always of a weak frame of body, and his infirmities in this respect contributed not a little to augment the natural irritability of his temper. He was early initiated in the mysteries of infidelity by his godfather, the Abbé of Chateaufort, who taught him at three years of age to repeat, by heart, the *Moisade*, an impious parody on the life of the Jewish law-giver. At fourteen he was sent to the college of Louis le Grand, where he soon became distinguished by the acuteness and versatility of his talents; but such was the decided turn to scepticism which he even then evinced, that his preceptors, the Jesuits, were glad to get quit of him by sending him to Paris. It was predicted by one of the acutest of their number that he would one day become "the standard of Deism in France." Some lively and satirical verses on the priests, which he had made at college, procured for him an introduction to the gay and witty circles of the metropolis, in which the polished and profligate nobility consoled themselves for the increasing austerities of the declining and calamitous years of Louis XIV., by indulging in orgies of mingled scepticism and licentiousness. It was in this fascinating and poisonous circle, composed of those who should have been the pillars of order and morality, that the young Arouet learned the art of sapping the foundations of both. The Prince of Conti, the Duke of Vendôme, the Duke of Sully, the Marquis de la Fare, the Abbé de Chaulieu, the Abbé Courtins, the Abbé Servier, the Abbé de Chateaufort, were the principal wits at that period* of a society inferior to none that ever existed in the polish and charms of its manners,¹ and

¹ Biog. Univ. xlix. 464, 465. Vie de Voltaire, par Condorcet. Œuvres de Voltaire, i. 1, 17.

* The highest rank or literary distinction constituted there, as now in the exclusive society of London, the only passport to that magic circle.—"We are all here princes or poets," said Voltaire on one occasion, looking round a brilliant supper party at the Prince of Conti's.—*Biographie Universelle*, xlix. 464, 465.

superior to any in the depravity and licentiousness of its principles. By the last of these libertine ecclesiastics, Arouet, while yet a youth, was introduced to the celebrated Ninon de l'Enclos, who, though somewhat in the wane, had still the chief nobles and wits of Paris in her train, and who was so much struck with the lively turn of his repartees, that she left him by her will a legacy of two thousand francs to buy books:—a curious and ominous circumstance, that the foundation of the library of the great apostle of Deism was laid by the bequest of an old courtesan, to whom he had been introduced by an apostate priest.

These scenes of dissipation, however, and the fugitive pieces necessary to maintain his place in them, did not entirely absorb the young poet: and already, in 1712, at the age of eighteen, he was engaged with his noble tragedy of *Merope*. Sent shortly after to Holland, in the capacity of page to the Marquis of Chateauneuf, ambassador there, he was soon engaged in an intrigue with a young Protestant lady at the Hague, which occasioned his recall to France, where, by means of his usual versatility of power, he succeeded in persuading some of the Jesuits and bishops that it was necessary to bring her back to Paris, to save her from Huguenot heresy and Protestant corruption. As this edifying project was not carried into execution, he plunged again into the profligate noble society of the capital, in which his inextinguishable love of satire, and irritable temper, once procured for him personal chastisement which led to a challenge, and twice a place in the Bastile, where he was on the first occasion confined twelve, the second, six months. His active mind, however, was not crushed by these imprisonments: within the walls of that fortress he finished his *Merope*, and made great progress in the *Henriade*. Upon being liberated by the Regent Orleans, he changed his name, hitherto chiefly known only by scandal, from Arouet to Voltaire, and ere long the successful representation of *Merope* laid the foundation of his prodigious reputation. For nearly forty years afterwards he led an active but desultory life, continually engaged in literary efforts, which augmented alike his fame and his fortune; rarely possessing a home, and almost constantly involved in difficulties, from open satire or secret libel.

41.
His subsequent career.

Being ordered to leave the kingdom on account of a

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42.
Rises to
great literary
eminence.

satire on the Duc de Sully, accompanied by a declaration of love to his mistress, he retired to England, where he remained several years, and formed an intimate acquaintance with the principal political and philosophical characters in that country. It was in their school, in the society of Bolingbroke, Tindal, Toland, and other distinguished deists, among whom at that period was to be found so considerable a proportion of British talent, that Voltaire obtained all the information and real argument which appears in his numerous declamations against Christianity. He was, at the end of two years, permitted to return to France, where he commenced his historical labours with the celebrated Life of Charles XII., soon followed by those of Peter the Great and Louis XIV. He afterwards continued for twenty years a life of desultory but incessant activity, alternately engaged in tragedy, comedy, philosophy, history, satires, lampoons, and epic poems; during the course of which he withdrew to a country chateau at Airy, on the borders of Lorraine and Alsace, with the Marchioness of Chastelet, a married lady of wit and learning, with whom he lived in no very Platonic alliance to the time of her death in 1749. After that bereavement he repaired, on the invitation of Frederick the Great, with whom he had long been in correspondence, to Berlin, and for long inhabited the palace, and was the daily guest of that celebrated monarch.

43.
Retires to
Ferne, on
the Lake
of Geneva.

But though he admired his talents, and agreed with his freethinking principles, he was soon disconcerted by the imperious disposition of the Prussian hero. Their tempers, both irritable, could not long agree—frequent quarrels ensued, and after three years of splendid captivity, he was glad to make his escape by stealth from his royal jailer, and regain the comparative freedom of French despotism. In 1759, he finally retired to Ferney, on the banks of the Lake of Geneva, since immortalized by his memory, where, in possession of an ample fortune, the fruit of his fortunate speculations as a contractor for the army, of his literary success, and uniform economy, he spent the last twenty, and by much the most respectable, years of his life. He continued while there his literary labours; but his great works were completed, and the never-failing activity of his mind appeared in the prodigious correspondence which now forms so large, and not the least interesting part of his works.

His life in that retirement was that of a grand seigneur of the old school. An ample revenue was expended upon the improvement of his estate; frequent acts of beneficence spread happiness around his dwelling; he chiefly appeared in the literary world as the defender of humanity in punishments; and the celebrated inscription which he put on the village church which he restored—"Deo erexit Voltaire," showed that he had not, with his hostility to Christianity, abjured the truths of natural religion. The entreaties of his niece, Madam Denis, who was worn out with the ennui of Ferney, induced him at length to issue from his retreat, and at the age of eighty-four cross the Jura, and proceed to Paris, whither he was preceded by his vast reputation, and where his principles had now obtained nearly universal assent.

He arrived there, accordingly, in February 1778, and was every where received—at the theatres, the academies, the public places, even in the streets—with an enthusiasm which approached to adoration. Profoundly moved by this intense gratification of his ruling passion, Voltaire asked whether they meant to stifle him under garlands of roses, to make him die of joy: but the excitement occasioned by these transports proved too strong for his now feeble frame; he was seized with a mortal complaint, and soon brought to the verge of death. Apprehensive of being refused burial in a consecrated place of sepulture, he sent for a priest, and, abjuring his former errors, asked pardon of God and the Church for the offences he had committed against them; but having, contrary to all expectation, recovered for a time, he again plunged into the vanities of the world; was crowned with laurel at the theatre, and carried home by an enthusiastic crowd of admiring votaries.* This last triumph, however, proved fatal to his now exhausted constitution: his former complaint returned with increased violence, and he was soon stretched on the bed of death. Being pressed in his last moments, by the curé of St Sulpice, to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus Christ, he turned on his side, said feebly,¹ "For the love of God don't

44.
Last visit
to Paris,
and death.

May 30,
1778.

¹ Biog. Univ.
xlix. 486,
489. Con-
dorcet, Vie
de Voltaire,
124, 136.
Œuv. de
Voltaire,
vol. i. edit.
1829.

* "Je ne veux pas qu'on jette mon corps à la voirie," said he, when he found himself in danger; and he immediately sent for the Abbé Gauthier, who obtained from him a declaration that he died in the Catholic religion, in which he had been born, and that he besought pardon of God and the Church for the offences which he might have committed —See *Biographie Universelle*, vol. xlix. 487.

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II.

mention that man—allow me to die in peace;” and soon expired. His remains were interred in one of the chapels of the Abbey of Scellières, for which humane act the prior was, to the disgrace of the French Church, dismissed from his office; but it was too late to prevent the burial, and the remains of Voltaire rested there in peace, till they were transferred, twelve years after, to the Pantheon, during the fervour of the Revolution.

45.
Character
of his phi-
losophy.

The character of Voltaire’s philosophy is clearly depicted in his private life. The companion of nobles, the flatterer of mistresses, the courtier of kings, the panegyrist of his patrons, the lampooner of his enemies, he was at the same time an indefatigable annalist, a voluminous pamphleteer, a great poet, an ardent supporter of humanity, and the persevering and acrimonious enemy of the Christian faith. With popular fervour he had little sympathy, for popular rights no anxiety; it was the fetters, as he deemed them, of religion, which he sought to strike off the human soul. No man was more keenly alive to the dangers of democratic ascendancy; none had read with more diligence in the great book of history the frequent lessons which it teaches, or its ruinous effects upon the best interests of society: the inimitable declamation against popular institutions which Corneille puts into the mouth of Cinna, was the object of his unbounded admiration.* It was in the destruction of religion that he perceived the antidote to all the evils of society. For the relaxation of the frightful barbarities of ancient punishment, he often and eloquently contended; but it was chiefly when instigated by priests

* “Quand le peuple est maître, on n’agit qu’en tumulte;
La voix de la raison jamais ne se consulte;
Les honneurs sont vendus aux plus ambitieux;
L’autorité livrée aux plus séditieux:
Ces petits souverains qu’il fait pour une année,
Voyant d’un temps si court leur puissance bornée,
Des plus heureux desseins font avorter le fruit,
De peur de le laisser à celui qui les suit;
Comme ils ont peu de part au bien dont ils ordonnent,
Dans le champ de public largement ils moissonnent;
Assurés que chacun leur pardonne aisément,
Espérant à son tour un pareil traitement:
Le pire des états, c’est l’état populaire.”—*Cinna, Act ii. Scene 1.*

“Quelle prodigieuse supériorité,” says Voltaire, in his commentary on this passage, “de la belle poésie sur la prose! Tous les écrivains politiques ont délayé ces pensées; aucun n’a-t-il approché de la force, de la profondeur, de la netteté, de la précision, de ce discours de Cinna. Tous les corps d’état auraient dû assister à cette pièce, pour apprendre à penser et à parler.”—*Œuvres de CORNEILLE, avec les Commentaires de VOLTAIRE, iii. 308.*

that they were the object of his detestation ; if emanating from civil authority, he felt for them little aversion. Philanthropy was the ostensible object of his philosophy, but it admitted of large exceptions when ecclesiastics or women were concerned ; and of him, even more truly than of the great English historian, it may be said, that " his humanity never slumbered except when Christians were tortured or women ravished."

Though far from being a profound, he was a lively and entertaining historian, and the first in modern times who directed the attention of his readers to the progress of arts and civilisation, and other subjects than the annals of war or courts. The prodigious stores of varied information which he possessed, were applied with surprising effect, in his other voluminous prose writings, to elucidate almost every country of the world, and every subject of human thought. Often superficial in matters of science, always prejudiced in those of religion, he yet never failed to throw an air of plausibility over even his most dangerous paradoxes, by the admirable clearness, the pithy good sense, with which his opinions were stated. Many writers have exceeded him in the accuracy and depth of their views on particular subjects ; none have equalled him in the vast and various subjects of knowledge which he embraced in his labours. As a critic, though sometimes envious, he was clear, judicious, and discriminating, and often gave way to impassioned and generous bursts of admiration. Though never aspiring to the highest flights of the muse, he has yet produced, in the *Henriade*, the best epic poem in the French language. But the great theatre of his glory was the drama ; and it is impossible to read his immortal tragedies, abounding as they do with pictured character, noble feelings, skilful combinations, pathetic incidents, eloquent declamation, and vehement action, without feeling that to him, for good or for evil, was indeed given the richest fruit of the tree of knowledge. They have not the dignified language, the profound thought of Corneille, nor the felicitous expression and exquisite pathos of Racine ; but they are more impetuous, more varied, more graphic, and embrace a wider sphere of human action, and a far more extensive portraiture of human character. His lasting disgrace was the *Pucelle d'Orleans* ; and when we reflect on the wicked

46.
And his
history, cri-
ticism, and
poetry.

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II.

prejudice which made him conceal what he knew to be the truth in regard to that extraordinary woman,* and cover the heroine and saviour of France with obscene ribaldry, merely because she had thrown lustre by her exploits over the cause of religion, we feel that the offence, too great for an individual, was a national one, and that it was rightly requited when the English standards, from the ultimate consequences of the very doctrines of the infamous libeller, passed in triumph through the gates of Paris.

Voltaire, however, was not an atheist; had he been so, the mischief he produced would have been much less considerable. No man who openly denies the existence of a Supreme Being will ever acquire a general influence over mankind, how great soever his ascendancy may be in particular depraved circles. The avowed atheists were the object of more cutting sarcasm on his part, than the Catholic clergy themselves; and to him we owe the striking sentiment which Robespierre, taught by experience, was driven to reiterate amidst the blood of the Revolution—"If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent his being."† It was under the specious but delusive guise of deism that his advances against Christianity were veiled; it was the philanthropic tendency of his principles, as to the administration of the Supreme Being and the government of men, which gave them their fatal ascendancy, by enlisting so many of the generous feelings on his side. But in the sense of moral responsibility, he was utterly deficient: of the feeling of duty, he had no steady conception. It is doubtful if he believed in the immortality of the soul; and of the great principle of moral probation and inherent corruption, he was throughout life the determined antagonist. Man, in his estimation, was made for happiness, not duty; he was sent here to enjoy, not win enjoyment. Innocent, pure, and elevated in his original nature and native tendencies, his vices were all owing to the oppression of priests

* It appears from what Voltaire himself has written on the Maid of Orleans, in his "Essai sur les Mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations," that no one was better aware of the great and noble qualities of the French heroine who perished in the flames, by English barbarity, within the walls of Rouen—a crime which "the execrations of ages have inadequately censured," but which the more generous spirit of English genius has striven, in our times at least, to expiate.—See *Essai sur les Mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations*, vol. iii. p. 371.

† Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer."—See VOLTAIRE, *Dialogues*, li. 41.

or the bigotry of creeds; his misery, to the pernicious restraints thrown by the dogmas of the Church over the enjoyments provided by nature. The great object of his philosophy was to cast down these selfish systems of artificial restraint. By following the dictates and impulses of nature, he thought man would arrive at once at the greatest happiness and highest destiny of his being. Hence it was, that the author of *Zaïre* was at the same time the author of the *Pucelle*; that the historian of Louis XIV. composed *Candide*. In these different and seemingly opposite works, he was tracing out, with an equally skilful hand, the various and unrestrained inclinations and passions of the human heart, and at the same time indulging his own passion for universal and indiscriminate admiration. He was all things to all men. With equal readiness he dealt out generosity for the generous, bravery for the brave, wisdom for the wise, selfishness for the selfish, voluptuousness for the voluptuous, and profligacy for the profligate.

Voltaire stopped short with the Church: he never ventured to assail the Palace. It was under the shadow of monarchy, emancipated from the fetters of superstition, that he contemplated the perfection of society.* But those who destroy the altar will find it difficult to uphold the throne; and a native-born genius soon appeared, who carried into the theory of government the principles which the apostle of deism had arrayed only against the truths of Christianity. JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU, a humble watchmaker's son in Geneva, was born on the 28th June 1712; and the throne of Louis XIV. crumbled under his strokes. Like Voltaire, his character is portrayed in the history of his private life. Endowed by nature with an ardent imagination, a boundless fancy, and susceptible feelings; awkward in manner, and at the same time vain in thought; shy, but yet ambitious; diffident, but not ignorant of

48.
Rousseau.
His early
life and ha-
bits.

* He contemplated

“ La liberté publique,
Sous l'ombrage sacré du pouvoir monarchique.”

—*Brutus*, Act ii. Scene 1.

“ Why do you not stop,” said the Duc de Choiseul, minister of Louis XV. in 1764, to the new philosophers, “ where Voltaire did? Him we can comprehend. Amidst all his sallies he respected authority; but *you* are mysterious and obscure, and lay down your doctrines in a harsh and pedantic manner. We abandon to you religion and the clergy—will not this suffice? We surrender many of our prejudices; but cannot you at least show some regard for those which are useful?”—SMYTH'S *Lectures on the French Revolution*, i. 86, 87.

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his powers;—he spent his early years in dreaming over romances, or devouring Plutarch's Lives; and was sometimes seduced, according to his own admission, into discreditable and criminal actions. He early wandered from his father's home, and was sheltered, while yet a boy, by Madame Warens, a benevolent old Catholic lady, at Anneci, who was so shocked with the laxity of his religious principles, that she sent him to a monastery at Turin to correct his opinions. He was too glad to escape from its rigid austerities, by entering the service of the Countess of Vercelli as a *laquais*, where he committed a theft, and had the baseness, on his own admission, to charge with it a young female fellow-servant who was entirely innocent of the offence. Dismissed from his situation for this affair, he entered into the employment of another noble family in Turin; but soon disgusted with the drudgeries of domestic service, he fled to the house of Madame Warens, whose kindness had rescued him from destitution when a boy, and by whom he was again sheltered in misfortune. Madame Warens boarded him with the music-master of the cathedral, whom he accompanied at her desire to Lyons; but the latter having been seized with a fit of epilepsy, which made him fall down in the street, Rousseau seized the opportunity to take to flight, and shake himself clear of the burden, leaving the unhappy wretch, as he himself has told us, "deserted by the only friend he could rely on in the world."¹

¹ Rousseau, Confessions, Par. i. l. 3. Biog. Univ xxxix. 126, 127.

49. Criminal irregularities of his youth.

This disgraceful inhumanity met with its appropriate reward. Rousseau, on returning to Anneci, found Madame Warens from home; her domestics could not tell what route she had taken, and he was obliged to wander away, destitute and unbefriended as he had left his unhappy friend on the streets of Lyons. He reached Lausanne, hardly knowing where he was going, and there and at Neufchatel earned a precarious subsistence for some time by teaching music, in which he was himself, at that time, very superficially instructed; thence he visited Paris, but finding himself immersed in an inferior society, he returned to Anneci, where Madame Warens again sheltered him, and his increasing passion for music made him take to teaching that art as a profession. Impetuous in all his designs, however, he could not rest in that employment;

he took, with extravagant passion, to games of hazard, and nearly killed himself by the vehemence with which, during some months, he devoted himself to those exciting pursuits. The study of Latin, of geometry, astronomy, and medicine, afterwards absorbed him, each for a few months of intense labour; and such was his facility at acquiring knowledge, that in that short period he obtained an extraordinary degree of proficiency in those different branches of information. Volumes would be required to recount all the follies and vices of this extraordinary man; suffice it to say, that at one period he was a preceptor for some months in the family of the brother of the celebrated Abbé de Mably, who was grand-provost of Lyons, where, neglecting the duties of his station, he spent his time, while dreaming over romances, alternately in drinking the delicious wine which he had stolen from the provost's cellars, and in making love to his wife; while at another, he conceived a passionate attachment for a vulgar young woman of the name of Theresa, whom he met when she was acting as a servant in an obscure inn at Paris, and who, during more than thirty years, exercised a tyrannical sway over his mind. She soon made him a father; but Rousseau sent his son to the foundling hospital, having first taken the precaution to efface all marks by which he could ever be recognized; and he was so pleased with this expeditious mode of ridding himself of the burden of maintaining his family, that he continued it through life. The author of so many eloquent declamations against the unnatural feelings of mothers who do not nurse their offspring, had the disgrace of sending *five* of his own children to the foundling hospital, with such precautions against their ever being recognized, that he never could or did hear of them again.^{1*}

¹ Biog. Univ.,
xxxix. 120,
131.

Despite all these disgraceful acts of selfishness and turpitude, the genius of Rousseau was such that it broke through all obstacles, and raised him to the highest pinnacle of literary glory. His first essay in the career in which he ultimately acquired such celebrity, was at once

50.
His first
essay in literature.

* It augments the indignation which all must feel at this heartless, unnatural conduct on the part of Rousseau, that the three last children whom he thus abandoned, were born when he was in comfortable circumstances, which, compared with those of his previous life, were affluence.—*Biog. Univ.* xxxix. 132.

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characteristic of the turn of his mind, and decisive as to the future tendency of his writings. It was an essay for a prize proposed by the Academy of Sciences at Dijon, on the question—"Have the arts and sciences contributed to the corruption or purification of morals?" He undertook to compete, by the advice of Diderot—boldly supported the side that they had contributed only to the progress of corruption, and carried off the prize. From that moment his fate was fixed: he determined, as he himself has told us, "to break at once with the whole maxims of his age."* Such, however, was the ardour of his passion for music, that his next essay was an opera, *Le Devin du Village*; the simple and pathetic language of which charmed the court, and obtained unqualified success. So entirely artificial had manners and ideas become in the Parisian capital, that the imagery and language of nature came upon its inhabitants with the charm of novelty: the feelings of rural life were as unknown to them as the music of the spheres.¹

¹ Lac. Hist. de France, iii. 102, 105. Biog. Univ. xxxix. 131, 133.

51. Heartless-ness towards Madame Warens.

His literary success neither improved his principles nor softened his heart. He passed soon after by Chambéry, where he visited Madame Warens, who had been a second mother to him during his youth and distress: he found her so reduced in her circumstances, by subsequent imprudence and misfortune, that he hardly knew her amidst the desolation with which she was surrounded. He hastened from the scene, and left scarcely any succour to her who had been so generous to him in his own evil days. He had even the barbarity to look, in the midst of her afflictions, to her little succession, and tell her that he expected to inherit a black dress which had caught his fancy. At Geneva, whither he repaired after leaving Madame Warens, his head was turned, on his own admission, by the republican ardour of which that little state was the theatre; and he had some thoughts of settling in its vicinity for life—a design from which, however, he was turned aside by the jealousy he felt at Voltaire, who had recently established himself with seigniorial splendour at Ferney, in the neighbourhood of that city.² He returned in consequence to Paris, and took refuge with Madame d'Épinay, who received him readily, in the house since so well known

² Confessions, p. 1, 15. Œuvres, xiii. 329, and 345, Edit. 1817.

* "De rompre brusquement en visière aux maximes de son siècle."—*Confessions*, ii. 124; *Biographie Universelle*, xxxix. 132.

under the name of the Hermitage, in the valley of Montmorency.

There his principal works, the *Social Contract*, and *Nouvelle Héloïse*, were written; but having fallen desperately in love with the Countess d'Houdelot, sister-in-law to Madame d'Épinay, and mistress to the Marquis St Lambert, who received his passion with disdain, he quarrelled with his benefactress, and after a variety of discreditable adventures, he found shelter in an apartment of the chateau of Montmorency, from the kindness of the Duke of Luxembourg; and soon after his greatest work, *Emile*, appeared. He was now turned of fifty, but so little had his numerous repulses in love checked his vanity, that he again conceived a ridiculous passion for a lady of fashion, the Countess Boufflers; indeed, so unconscious was he at this period of the awkwardness of his manner, that he openly avowed, in his correspondence, that he thought no woman, even of the highest rank, could resist him.* All these weaknesses are revealed in his *Confessions*, from which principally the preceding detail has been taken; a sure proof that he had repented of none of them, for no man confesses a fault of which he is really ashamed. Subsequently he retired to Neufchâtel, and soon after took up his abode in a cottage in the little island of St Pierre, in the middle of the beautiful lake of Bièvre: but an order of the Senate of Berne at length compelled him to leave that charming retreat. He then married Theresa Levasseur, after twenty-three years of irregular connexion, and of rude despotism on her part. At length he expired suddenly at Ermenonville, on the 3d July 1778, not without suspicions of having hastened his end by poison.¹

From a life so irregular, and in many periods so disgraceful, no fixed principle or firmness of mind could be expected; and yet such was Rousseau's genius, that it may be doubted whether any author ever produced so great an impression both upon his own age and that which

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II.

52.
His subsequent writings, and death.

1 Confessions, Part ii. l. 9, 12. Biog. Univ. xxxix. 141, 144. Lac. iii. 102, 112.

53.
His literary character.

* "Il y a peu des femmes, même dans le haut rang, dont je n'eusse fait le conquête, si je l'avais entrepris."—See *Biographie Universelle*, xxxix. 136. It is a curious circumstance, that Abelard, the Rousseau of the twelfth century, and whose doctrines on the Natural Innocence of Man very closely resembled those of the Philosopher of Meillerie, said just the same—"J'en étais venu au point, dit il, que quelque femme que j'honorasse de mon amour je n'avais à craindre aucun refus."—ABELARD, *Liber Calam. Mearum*, p. 40; and MICHELET, *Histoire de France*, ii. 290.

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succeeded him. His writings, more even than Voltaire's, brought about the French Revolution. He followed up and applied to social life what that great philosopher directed only against the institutions of religion. It was to their entire novelty, and the entrancing eloquence of the language in which they were couched, that this extraordinary success was owing. Surrounded as the Parisians were with the vices and the corruptions of a highly artificial mode of life, the language of nature, the fervour of unsophisticated affection, fell on them with inexpressible charms. It was like the sudden mania with which the votaries of fashion, half a century later, were seized for the melodramatic corsairs of Lord Byron. What particularly distinguished Rousseau's works, and gave them a decided superiority over all of a similar kind which had preceded them, was the brilliant and highly-coloured descriptions of nature and genuine bursts of passion with which they abounded. His pencil was literally "dipt in the orient hues of heaven." If his works had stopped here, they would have been only interesting as a picture of the times, and a step in the progress of literature, and have deserved little attention in general history. But they went a great deal further; and in the fundamental doctrine of Rousseau's philosophy, is to be found both the antagonist principle in every age of the Christian faith, and the spring of revolutionary convulsions all over the world. This is the doctrine of HUMAN INNOCENCE and SOCIAL PERFECTIBILITY.

It was his constant affirmation that the human mind was born innocent, and with dispositions only to goodness; that the hunter and the savage were the model of every virtue, and that all the subsequent vices and miseries of man were owing to the tyranny of kings, the deception of priests, the oppression of nobles, and the evils of civilisation. Property, he argued, was the grand abuse which had ruined mankind; reason the source of all iniquity.*

54.
Foundation
of his philo-
sophical
principles.

* "L'homme qui raisonne est l'homme qui pêche," was his favourite maxim. Rousseau and Diderot openly proclaimed the doctrine, that *Property* was the origin of all the social evils, and that a remedy for them could be found only in its abolition:—"Le premier qui dit," said Rousseau, "Ce champ est à moi," introduisait dans la société le germe de toutes les calamités; une voix courageuse devait lui crier—"Ces fruits sont à tous, et la terre à personne."

"La propriété," said Diderot, "est la cause générale et permanente de

This doctrine, which ever will be agreeable to the visionary, and ever condemned by the experienced of mankind, was received with unbounded acclamations by a generation which, itself immersed in frivolity, corruption, and sensuality, gladly embraced any principles which laid the whole consequences of these indulgences on others, and proclaimed that, in a state of nature, every inclination and desire might be gratified, alike without danger, and without criminality. These doctrines lie at the root of Rousseau's social contract; they are the foundation of the scheme of education which he developed in his *Emile*; they breathe in the *Letters from the Mountains*, and received their practical development in the fervour of the *Nouvelle Heloise*. It did not require the glowing pages of his eloquence, nor the brilliant colours which he lent alike to virtue and vice, to give popularity to a system which proclaimed impunity to passion and innocence to gratification; which dignified indulgence with the name of freedom, and profligacy with that of happiness; which stigmatized self-control as a violation of nature, and denounced restraint as an inroad on the benevolence of the Almighty.

The preceding detail, minute as it is, and trifling as to some it may appear, will not, by the reflecting reader, be deemed misplaced, even in a work of general history. It is thought, not physical strength, which really rules mankind; it is to the masters of mind that is alone given to open the cavern of the winds. More even than by Mirabeau and Danton, the French Revolution was brought about by Voltaire and Rousseau; their dominion over the opinions of men has been more durable than that of Robespierre and Napoleon over their bodies. The Encyclopedists, who openly professed the principles of atheism; the Democrats, who commenced that great convulsion; the Jacobins, who carried it on, but pushed to their natural and unavoidable result the principles of these mighty magicians. It is well to see the private life of those by

55.
Importance
of the pre-
ceding de-
tail as to
these great
men.

toutes les désordres; par elle tout est bouleversé. Voulez-vous régénérer le monde? « Laissez pleine liberté aux vrais sages d'attaquer les erreurs et les préjugés qui soutiennent l'esprit de propriété. J'indique le coup qu'il fait porter à la racine de tous les maux: de plus habiles que moi réussiront peut-être à persuader. »—See CAPEFIGUE, *L'Europe pendant la Révolution Française*, i. 54. The doctrines of the followers of Babeuf in France in 1797, and of the Socialists and Chartists in England in 1840 and 1841, were nothing but the practical application of these principles.

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whom thrones are overturned ; it is sometimes instructive to trace out the self-reform of the men who undertake to purify the world. Nothing, too, is so characteristic of the state of society in the French capital at that period—of that unparalleled mixture of polish of manners with thirst for indulgence ; of talent in conversation with frivolity of conduct ; of elegance in habit with baseness in inclination ; of sentiment in writing with selfishness in conduct ; of taste in feeling with corruption in practice ; of freedom of thought with servility of action ; of declamations on liberty with dispositions to slavery—as the lives of those extraordinary men. And little was to be expected of a revolution which commenced with a library bequeathed to a young infidel by an old courtesan, and was fanned by the declamations on parental affection of a libertine father who had consigned his five children to a foundling hospital.

56.
The new
opinions are
carried out
still further
by their suc-
cessors.

As with other great changes in the current of human thought, the doctrines of these powerful intellects were pushed by their successors beyond what they themselves had intended. Like all profound and original writers, they were followed by a crowd of imitators, who carried to the verge of extravagance at once their excellences and their defects. So powerful did the society of Men of Letters at Paris become, in the latter years of the reign of Louis XV., that they openly aspired to effect a total revolution in almost all the subjects of human thought, and remould the world, its institutions, habits, and opinions, after a model of their own. To effect this object, they combined all their strength in that immense undertaking, the Encyclopædia—the first work of that description which had ever been attempted, and which, by the combination of talent which it embraced, and its extending to every branch of human knowledge, aimed at spreading its influence through all classes of the next generation. Its principles, sometimes just, in part generous, were always seductive, at least to a superficial generation. They denounced external restraint and severity of every kind ; denied the rigours and asceticism of religion ; declaimed against torture, and all the frightful cruelties of ancient punishment, and inveighed against the powers and fetters of the feudal system ; loudly claimed entire liberty of conscience in matters of belief ;

supported freedom of commerce and action of every kind ; and proclaimed a certain remedy for all imaginary grievances, in the general adoption of representative governments and popular institutions. But amidst so many philanthropic projects, there was one fatal defect which rendered them all, when applied to practice, entirely nugatory. They made no provision for coercing the selfish passions of our nature ; amidst all their reforms, they forgot the one on which they all depend—the reform of the human heart. They tried to solve the problem, of all others the most insoluble, “ Given a world of knaves, to produce happiness out of their united actions.”¹ Against religious influence, which alone has ever proved adequate to that herculean work, they declared the most envenomed hostility : they trusted to the united virtue of mankind for a safeguard against all the temptations which arise in the course of extensive changes in society ; and the French Revolution was the consequence.

¹ Carlyle.

In the warfare against the Church, which formed so remarkable a characteristic of French literature in the latter part of the eighteenth century, many able and learned men took an active part. The Abbé Raynal, in his philosophical history of the two Indies, laboured by all the powers of eloquence, and the charms of historic painting, to portray the supposed innocence and virtue of primitive man, and the unbounded calamities which the bigotry of priests and the thirst for gold had brought into the regions of his unsophisticated abode. D’Alembert, Helvetius, and Diderot, took bolder ground, and, without stopping short at oblique insinuations, openly denied the existence of God, and ascribed the whole material and moral universe to the fortuitous concourse of atoms, the inherent and immutable laws of matter, or the not less rigorous and compulsory subjection of mind to the laws of necessity. These frightful doctrines, which tended at once to extinguish all feeling of moral responsibility, and all motive to self-control in men, and to reduce society to a mere game of chance, where success was the only test of excellence, were rendered the more dangerous by the admirable and lucid talent with which the first of these highly gifted men traced out the deepest mysteries of the modern analysis, and the prodigious and varied industry, as well as graceful taste, with which the two

57.
Raynal, Diderot, and D’Alembert.

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II.

last touched equally on the lightest and most fascinating, as on the deepest and most abstruse branches of literature.

These really eminent and able, though dangerous and deluding writers, were followed by a crowd of others, whose names have already sunk into oblivion, but whose writings exercised at the time, and for long after, an unbounded sway over public thought in France and great part of Europe. Openly supporting the doctrines of materialism, denying the existence of a Supreme Being and a future state, they applied all the energy of their talent to add to the force of present passion, and minister to the variety of sensual gratification. The novels of Crebillon and Laclos, Louvet's memoirs of Faublas, and innumerable madrigals, belong to this class. Licentious adventures, highly painted scenes of voluptuousness, erotic poems, or undisguised obscenity, were the stimulants which they incessantly applied to emancipate man. To gain money which might purchase such enjoyments, was held forth as the only rational object in existence. Future punishment was not to be thought of; it was a mere invention of priests to terrify mankind. It is not in such studies that the moral preparation necessary to qualify man for the powers of freedom is to be found. This was the great cause of the downward progress, unbounded wickedness, and ultimate failure of the Revolution. The character of these men has been drawn by the hand of a master—himself an eternal monument of the consequences of their doctrines. "The Encyclopedists," says Robespierre, "embraced several estimable men, but a much greater number of ambitious charlatans: many of their chiefs have become considerable statesmen; whoever is ignorant of their influence and politics, will have a very incomplete idea of our Revolution. They introduced the frightful doctrines of Atheism—were ever in politics below the dignity of freedom: in morality they went as far beyond the dictates of Reason. Their disciples declaimed against despotism, and received the pensions of despots; they composed, alternately, tirades against kings, and madrigals for their mistresses; they wrote books against the court, and dedications to kings; were fierce with their pens, and rampant in antechambers. They propagated with infinite care the principles of materialism. We owe to them that

53.
Pernicious
doctrines of
the Mate-
rialists.

¹ Discours.
de Robes-
pierre sur
l'Être Su-
preme, May
7, 1794.
Hist. Parl.
xxxii. 369.

selfish philosophy which reduced egotism to a system ; regarded human society as a game of chance, where success was the only distinction between what was just and what was unjust ; probity as an affair of taste and good breeding ; the world as the patrimony of the most dexterous of scoundrels.”

The writings of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Raynal, Diderot, Helvetius, and their successors, exercised an influence over the opinions of the whole educated classes in France, of which no previous example had existed in the world. Almost the whole philosophical and literary writers in Paris, for a quarter of a century before the Revolution broke out, were avowed infidels ; the grand object of all their efforts was to load religion with obloquy, or, what was more efficacious in France, to turn it into ridicule. When David Hume was invited at Paris to meet a party of eighteen of the most celebrated literary men in the French capital, he found to his astonishment that he was the *least sceptical* of the party : he was the only one present who believed even in the probability of the existence of a Supreme Being.* It was to propagate and extend these principles that all their exertions, both in teaching, writing, and conversation were directed. Such productions are not permanently hurtful to the cause of religion over the world, but they often destroy a particular state : the reaction comes with unerring certainty ; and the cause of Christianity, purified in the furnace from its human imperfections, at length comes forth in primeval simplicity, and with renovated strength. Already the reaction has begun, alike in France and England. Religion is again, as in its best days, the basis of the highest class of British literature ; and in the French capital, the calm eye of philosophical investigation, undeterred by the sneers of an infidel age, has traced to admiring multitudes the historical blessings of religious institutions.¹ But the immediate effects of these sceptical writings were to the last degree destructive. By accustoming men to turn into ridicule what others most revere ; by leading them to throw off the principles and faith of their forefathers, they prepared the way for a general dissolution of the bonds not only of religion, but of society. It is a slight step for those who

59.
Universal
infidelity
which pre-
vailed.

¹ Guizot,
Civilisation
Europe.

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have thrown off restraint in religious, to disregard authority in civil concerns.

60. •
Spread of these irreligious principles among the nobility.

The sceptical doctrines of the philosophers, permitting as they did unbounded gratification to the senses, without either restraint in this world or punishment in the next, were too agreeable to the wishes of a corrupted and libertine age, not to meet with almost universal assent in the French capital. Towards the latter part of the reign of Louis XV., no one at court but the King, the Dauphin and Dauphiness, and a few of the older part of the nobility, evinced any respect for religion. Even the external acts of worship were abandoned to the tradesmen and the lower people. Such of the higher ranks as did not openly turn religion into ridicule, from a lingering respect for ancient opinions, confined themselves to three slight and ambiguous observances of its forms. On Sunday, they went out and paid visits to avoid going to the mass; they might be thought to have been there. During Lent, they passed one half of the season in Paris, the other in the country. In this way they eluded observation or enquiry as to whether or not they joined in the religious observances of that period of devotion. Finally, on the death-bed of one of two married persons, the family kept the confessor at a distance; they were unwilling that the priest should be made acquainted with the infidelities of the dying spouse, in an age when regularity of manners was regarded only as a subject of ridicule. The children and relations concealed from the *curé* the dangerous nature of the malady, and only sent for him when it was too late to obtain a confession. Religion, banished from the palaces of the great, found shelter only in the cottages of the poor; and it was there alone, accordingly, in the western provinces, that any effectual stand against the Revolution was made.¹

¹ Soulavie, Règne de Louis XVI. i. 207, 299.

61.
Great encouragement given to irreligion by Frederick and Catharine.

It is a remarkable proof how completely ignorant the most able persons in Europe were of the ultimate effects of this irreligious spirit, that the greatest encouragement which the sceptical philosophers of France received, was from the clear-sighted and imperious despots of the north. Frederick the Great of Prussia and the Empress Catharine of Russia not only corresponded regularly with Voltaire, D'Alembert, and Diderot, but evinced in their letters the most lively interest in the great work going forward, of

destroying the Church in France. The former of these sovereigns gave Voltaire an asylum, with an ample establishment, in his palace at Berlin; while the latter settled a pension on Diderot, and corresponded with him on such flattering terms as amply consoled him for all the persecution he underwent from the government of Louis XV. No man was better aware than Frederick how unfit men of abstract habits of thought, in general, are for the regulation of mankind: to him we owe the caustic saying, the truth of which probably few practically acquainted with human affairs will be disposed to dispute, "If I wished to destroy one of my provinces, I would entrust its government to the philosophers." Nevertheless, so enamoured was he of the warfare against the Christian religion, which the Parisian *savans* were carrying on, that he, as well as Catharine, never gave the French Church any other name, in their correspondence with Voltaire and D'Alembert, but the sobriquet "*l'Infame*," which they had invented for it; the initial letters of which words so long perplexed the French police, who opened their letters.¹ * Catharine, in the latter years of her reign, was so sensible of the encouragement she had given to sceptical opinions in France,

¹ Soulavie,
Règne de
Louis XVI.
i. 205, 207.

* In 1759, Voltaire wrote to the King of Prussia, "Votre Majesté me reproche de caresser quelquefois *l'Infame*. Eh! mon Dieu! non; je ne travaille qu'à l'extirper, et j'y réussis beaucoup parmi les honnêtes gens."—VOLTAIRE TO KING OF PRUSSIA, 9th June 1769. On the 8th January 1766, Frederick wrote to Voltaire, "*L'Infame* ne donne que des herbes vénéneuses; il vous est réservé de l'écraser avec votre redoutable massue, avec les ridicules que vous répandez sur elle, et que portent plus de coups que tous les argumens." Again, on 25th February 1766, "Votre vieillesse est comme l'enfance d'Hercule; ce dieu érasait des serpens dans son berceau, et vous—chargé d'années—vous écrasez *l'Infame*." In 1767, Frederick and Voltaire mutually congratulated each other on the success of the efforts of the philosophers against *l'Infame*. "J'ai lu," says the Prussian monarch, "toutes les pièces que vous m'avez envoyées; vos pièces contre *l'Infame* sont si fortes que, depuis Celse, on n'a rien publié de plus frappant. Il ne reste plus de refuge au Fantôme de l'Erreur; il a été flagellé sur toutes ses faces, sur toutes ses côtés. Il est tems de prononcer son oraison funèbre, et de l'enterrer." And on the 16th March 1771, Frederick wrote to Voltaire, "J'approuve fort la méthode de donner des nassardes à *l'Infame*, en la combattant de politesses."—See CORRESPONDENCE OF FREDERICK AND VOLTAIRE, *Œuvres de Voltaire*, vols. lii. liii., edition 1829. This "*l'Infame*," so much the object of their philosophic horror, was the Church of France—the Church of Bossuet and Fénelon, of Flehler and Bourdaloue, of Pascal and Saurin! Voltaire and D'Alembert, for a series of years, generally closed their letters with the letters *écr. l'Inf.*, (*écrasez l'Infame*), which long puzzled the French police, who opened them. What a picture of an age! The first of monarchs and the first of philosophers corresponding on their efforts to destroy the Church, and their letters regularly opened by the police of a despotic monarch!—See SOULAVIE, *Règne de Louis XVI.* i. 206, et seq.

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and their disastrous effects, that she entertained a serious dread that she would be regarded by history as one of the causes of the Revolution.

62.
Weakened
state of the
Church at
this period.

The clergy in France were far from being insensible to the danger of this flood of irreligion which deluged the land, and they raised their voice in the loudest strains to denounce it ; but they did not possess ability sufficient to stem the torrent, and had no other resource but to call on the Government to enforce the laws against works of an irreligious tendency, and get the writings of the modern philosophers burnt by the hands of the common hangman. The Romish Church now felt the consequences of the entire overthrow of the Protestant faith in France, so long the subject of congratulation ; the barbarous injustice of the revocation of the edict of Nantes at length recoiled on the head of its authors. Victory had abated their energies, the cessation of controversy had destroyed their powers ; indolence and luxury in the noble dignitaries, poverty and ignorance in the inferior functionaries of the Church, rendered them wholly unequal to a contest with the giant powers of newly-roused infidelity. The race of Bossuet and Bourdaloue, of Pascal and Fénelon, was extinct ; the Roman Catholic faith did not now require their robust arms to defend its tenets ; the followers of Molina and Jansen had ceased to contend for victory ; their fierce contests no longer divided the religious world. These acrimonious antagonists had suspended their polemical quarrel on the approach of civil conflict ; the controversy of the Port Royal had merged in that of the parliaments with the throne. So low had the talents of the once illustrious Church of France fallen, that in the latter part of the eighteenth century, when Christianity itself was assailed in its vitals, not one champion of note appeared in its ranks ; and when the convocation of the clergy in 1770 published their famous anathema against the dangers of unbelief, and offered rewards for the best essays in defence of the Christian faith, the productions called forth were so despicable that they sensibly injured the cause of religion.¹

¹ Soulavie,
i. 219, 223.

The prophecies of the French Church, however, though their defence of Christianity was feeble, are well deserving of attention as historical documents. They demonstrate,

Remarkable prophecies of the French Church on the effects of the irreligion of the age.

March 18,
1770.

what is often so conspicuous in human affairs, that whenever any great change in society is taking place, its ultimate effects are foreseen and foretold by one party as clearly as they are denied and ridiculed by another; and that it is not ignorance but prejudice which is the evil principally to be dreaded.* In a general assembly of the clergy held in 1770, the most vigorous remonstrances against the multiplication of irreligious books were made, and the denunciations of Isaiah and Jeremiah repeated against the modern dereliction from the faith of their fathers. "Impiety," said they, "has passed from the capital to the provinces; it is found under the roof of the artisan and in the cottage of the peasant; it misleads alike their ignorance and their simplicity. Impiety is making inroads alike on God and man; it will never be satisfied *till it has destroyed every power, divine and human*. Anarchy and independence are the two gulfs into which irreligion would plunge the nation. To accomplish that infernal object, it breaks down by degrees all the bonds which attach man to his duties. It looks abroad over society and the chiefs who govern it, and sees there nothing but a vile mass of ignorant corrupted men, prostrated before priests who deceive, and princes who oppress them. It teaches, that there is in existence neither a Supreme Being, nor a soul, nor a world to come. It sees in the priesthood nothing but a vile league against virtue and the human race. It teaches nations, that kings have no power but such as it has pleased them to entrust their sovereigns with; that the people have a right to restrain or moderate it, to demand an account of it, and even to extinguish it, according to their supreme pleasure. It is this spirit which has given birth to the endless multiplication of sects among our neighbours in England, but it is

* The present is one remarkable instance of this truth, which deserves the most attentive consideration from political philosophers. Others not less striking will be found in the sequel of this work; in particular, the predictions of the opponents of the abolition of the slave trade on the ultimate effects of that measure, c. xlv. § 22; of the opponents of Catholic emancipation on its consequences, c. xxxix. § 24, and c. xlv. § 77, 78; and of the Opposition on the effects of Mr Vansittart's breaking in upon the Sinking Fund in 1813, in c. lxxiii. §§ 28, 29. A similar instance of the exact prediction of the consequence of a great political change, wholly disregarded and ridiculed at the time, occurred on occasion of the great monetary change of reverting to cash payments in 1819, particularly in the petition from the merchants of Bristol.

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II.

1 Soulavie,
Règne de
Louis XVI.
i. 218, 223.

fitted to produce effects far more disastrous among the French. There it will be found, in the inconstancy of the nation, in its activity, its love for novelty, its inconsiderate ardour, an additional means of producing the most frightful revolutions, *and precipitating it into all the horrors of anarchy.*"¹*

64.
Corruptions
and evils of
the Church.

The temporal constitution of the French Church, however, rendered it as unfit to withstand these political dangers, as its intellectual power was to grapple with its spiritual enemies. Within the bosom of the establishment, and in all who fell within the sphere of its influence, the seeds of deep-rooted discontent were to be found. This arose from the invidious exclusion of all persons of plebeian birth from the dignities and emoluments of the ecclesiastical profession. In extraordinary cases, indeed, the force of talent may have procured elevation without the advantages of blood; but, generally speaking, the dignitaries of the church were drawn from the same class as the marshals or princes of the empire. While the bishops and elevated clergy were rolling in wealth or glittering in the sunshine of royal favour, the humbler clergy, on whom the whole practical duties of the pastoral office devolved, toiled in virtuous obscurity, hardly elevated, either in rank or comfort, above the peasantry who composed their flocks.† The dubious class of Abbés brought discredit on the Church, from the profligate lives which many of them led, and the general devotion of the whole body to worldly interests and enjoyments. The simple piety and unostentatious usefulness of the rural priests, while it endeared them to their parishioners,

* The same denunciations were repeated in an assembly of bishops held two years after, in 1772. "Impiety," said they, "abuses too audaciously the art of writing to break all the cords which unite us to the Christian faith. Irreligious books have become a general pest which pervades the nation. Hence the general effervescence of minds, and that afflicting revolution which is taking place every day under our eyes in the public morals. In many provinces the Protestants are again holding their assemblies no longer secretly, but in the open light of day."—SOULAVIE, *Règne de Louis XVI.* i. 224.

2 Chateau-
briand,
Etudes,
Hist. iii.

284. Thiers,
i. 34.

† The total revenues of the Church, derived from tithes, were 130,000,000 francs, of which only 42,000,000 were in the hands of the parochial clergy; the number of the ecclesiastics was 80,000. But this revenue, large as it was, was inconsiderable, compared to the extent of the territorial possessions of this body, which embraced almost a *third* of the whole land of France. The nobles and the clergy possessed nearly two-thirds of the whole estates of the kingdom; and the other third was in the hands of the Tiers Etat, upon whom fell the greater proportion of the burdens of the state.²

formed a striking contrast to the luxurious habits and dissipated lives of the high-born dignitaries of the Establishment. The enormous wealth of the latter excited the envy both of their own body and of the lower classes of the people; while the general idleness in which they passed their lives, prevented all possibility of justifying the scandalous inequality of their fortunes. The sceptical philosophers took advantage of these real abuses, connected with the Established Church, to influence the public mind against an establishment of any kind; and to represent the appropriation of any proportion of the landed property of the kingdom to the support of religion, as the most flagrant abuse which existed in society. Hence the universal indignation, in 1789, at the vices and corruption of the Church, and the facility with which, in the very commencement of the Revolution, their property was sacrificed to relieve the embarrassments of the finances.¹

¹ Rivarol, 93.
De Staël, i.
13. Sièyes,
81. Biblio-
thèque d'un
Homme
Public, par
Condorcet,
iii. 132.

V. A sect, too, had risen up at this period in France, which, although far from being so important in its ultimate effects as the great atheistical phalanx, which aimed at destroying all the foundations of religious belief, yet exercised a most important influence on its political history. This was the sect of the ECONOMISTS, the founders of that school of philosophers who first applied abstract principles to human affairs, and sought to enunciate in a few propositions the principles on which social prosperity depended. Many bright lights had been thrown on this noble science in the beautiful work which Fénelon composed to instruct his royal pupil in the science of government; * but the founder of the sect of the Economists, properly so called, was Quesnay, a physician in Mantes, who about the year 1761 began to inculcate the simple and original ideas which afterwards made their doctrines so celebrated. His maxims were, that there is a natural order intended by Providence for society; that if this order is observed in human institutions, every thing prospers and mankind are happy; if it is violated, misery is engendered and the people are wretched. The only source of wealth, according to him, was to be found in agriculture: commerce or manufactures did not create

65.
The Econo-
mists.

* *Télémaque.*

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II.

¹Biog. Univ.
xxxvi. 396.

86.
Their pe-
culiar doc-
trines.

riches, they only changed their form from that of rude produce to that of manufactured articles : the artisan or the merchant consumed as much in food, in altering the form, or changing the place of rude produce, as they added to its value.¹*

It followed from these principles, that unlimited freedom should prevail, both in external and internal commerce ; but that Government should look for the principal and only secure source of national riches, to the improvement of the cultivation of the soil. They carried this principle of free trade so far as to apply it to the whole relations of social life, and proposed to abolish all incorporations, crafts, faculties, apprenticeships, and restrictions of every kind, from those of medicine and theology downwards, and to let every man exercise any profession, set up any trade, or carry on any employment in any part of the kingdom. Religion was not to be excluded from the general competition : no peculiar creed was to be supported by the state : every man was to pay his priest as he did his butcher and baker. A heavy tax on the rent of land should, according to Quesnay, be the sole public burden permitted in the state, as it directly reached in the cheapest form its real revenue. These doctrines, from their novelty and simplicity, soon attracted general notice ; they formed the basis of the political opinions of the statesmen and philosophers who rose to eminence immediately before the French Revolution ; and from having been in great part embraced, and attempted to be put in practice by Turgot, when minister of Louis XVI., they deserve a place in the history of that great convulsion. In the belief which these doctrines spread among the thinking classes in France, that the existing structure of society was essentially defective, and that unbounded social blessings would follow its entire change, is to be found one of the most powerful causes of that violent convulsion which so soon after entirely uprooted all its institutions.

Certainly in these doctrines, apart from their fatal error as to religion, abstractly considered, there is much truth

* Quesnay was a great favourite of Madame de Pompadour, and the first réunions of the Economists were held in her drawing-room. At that period, not even the speculations of philosophers could be fostered any where but in the boudoirs of mistresses.

which the philosopher must admire, and some which the statesman might cautiously embrace ; but they require to be essentially modified before they are put in practice. If rashly adopted, they cannot fail, from the vast extent of vested interests they injure, to produce wide-spread misery or dreadful convulsions. It is true that all wealth in *the world* originally comes from the soil ; but it is not less true that a particular state, such as Holland or Venice, may attain the greatest riches and importance without any considerable territorial possessions, by merely drawing to itself, in exchange for its mercantile industry, the agricultural resources of other states. It is true that all incorporations and statutes of apprenticeship are restraints on the freedom of human action ; but it is not the less true that they provide for the classification of men according to their professions and crafts—the best system which human wisdom has ever devised to extend their legitimate influence, and assuage their unavoidable misfortunes. It is true that all taxation must ultimately be paid from the produce of the soil in the country where it is imposed, or in those which exchange their rude produce for its manufactured articles ; but it is not less true that the sum drawn from the latter source may, in a commercial community, come to be greater than that derived from the former, so that the taxes it can afford to pay may greatly exceed the whole rent of its land * It is true that there is an order to which nature points, and which wisdom approves, in human society ; but it is not the less true that this can be nowhere completely established, in consequence of the innumerable existing interests which have grown up under a different system ; and the philosopher who unfolds, in one chapter, the benevolent intentions of Providence in the adaptation of the human mind to the varying exigencies of society, would do well to devote the next to the modification which these principles must ever receive from the follies, the vices, and the selfishness of man.†

* This has long been the case in Great Britain. The rental of the island is now about L.35,000,000, while the taxes are L.50,000,000 ; and during the latter years of the war were above L.70,000,000, or double the whole land rent of the country.

† The doctrines of the Economists, which deserve much more attention than they have hitherto received, or are likely to receive, in the mercantile community of Great Britain, are disclosed in several able works. The

CHAP.
II.

67.
Reflections
on these
doctrines.

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II.

68.
Privileges of
the nobles.

VI. Insult is more keenly resented than injury. The pride of nobility is more difficult to tolerate than all the exclusive advantages which its order possesses. "Numerous and serious as the grievances of the French nation were," says the ablest of the royalist writers, "it was not they that occasioned the Revolution. Neither the taxes, nor the *lettres-de-cachet*, nor the other abuses of authority, nor the vexations of the *préfets*, nor the ruinous delays of justice, have irritated the nation; it is the *prestige* of nobility which has excited all the ferment: a fact which proves that it was the shopkeepers, the men of letters, the monied interest—in fine, all those who were jealous of the nobility—who roused against them the lower classes in the towns, and the peasantry in the country. In truth, it is an extraordinary circumstance, that the nation should say to a child possessed of parchment,—'You shall one day be either a prelate, a marshal, or an ambassador, as you choose,' while it has nothing to offer to its other children." In fact, the men of talent and the men of fortune found this distinction so insupportable, that they invariably purchased a patent of nobility when they had the means of doing so; but from this arose a new difficulty, and fresh dangers to the monarchy. The wealth which bought titles could not confer eminence; it could not give historic names, or remove the stain of ignoble birth. Hence the distinction between the old families and those newly ennobled, and a division in the aristocracy itself, which prevented that body as a whole from ever adopting any common measures for the general safety. The great families were more jealous of the *parvenus* than of the inferior classes of the people. From the last they anticipated no danger;¹ the first were placed in a situation approaching too closely to their

¹ Rivarol, 93, 94. De Staël, i. 44, 198.

"Physiocratie ou Constitution Naturelle des Gouvernemens," by Quesnay, published and edited by Dupont de Nemours, contains, in three small volumes, their whole principles;—but this work is exceedingly rare. In "L'Ordre des Sociétés," by Mercier de la Rivière, in two volumes, the same doctrines are very ably stated; and again more fully developed in La Trone's "Ordre Social," in one large volume. The Comte de Mirabeau, (father of the great Mirabeau,) in his celebrated work entitled "L'Ami des Hommes," in five volumes, has fully expounded the same views in an eloquent and systematic manner. The great defect which strikes an English reader in them all, is the ignorance of real business, and of the practical working of men in society, which was, without doubt, the unavoidable result of ingenious minds speculating under a despotic government on such subjects, without the benefit of any real experience.

exclusive domain, to admit of their ever combining with them in measures for their common defence.

The distinction of nobility and base-born was carried to a length in France, of which it is difficult, in this free country, to form a conception. Every person was either noble or *roturier*; no middle class, no shades of distinction were known. On the one side were a hundred and fifty thousand privileged individuals; on the other, the whole body of the French people. All situations of importance in the church, the army, the court, the bench, or the diplomatic line, were exclusively enjoyed by the former of these classes. In a flourishing and prosperous country, such a system is of itself sufficient to produce a revolution. Men of fortune will not long submit to the insolence of aristocratic pride—men of talent, in the end, will scorn the trammels of patronage and the condescension of fashion. When a public has arisen, and the means of arriving at distinction, independent of the support of the nobility, exist, genius will generally incline, in a country so situated, to the side, whatever it is, which is opposed to the government. This tendency may be observed in all free countries, and in none more than in England, as shown by its recent history.* It is provided for in the independence of thought which is the general accompaniment of intellectual strength, and is the counterpoise provided by nature to the influence of government, which might otherwise prove overwhelming. This change, accordingly, had taken place in France before the Revolution. The industrious classes, the men of talent, the men of wealth, were unanimous in their hatred of the nobility; the universal cry was for Liberty and EQUALITY, a cry almost unknown during the English Rebellion. Equality of rank, abolition of privileges, equal eligibility for office, were the universal objects of desire to the nation; because they were the pressing evils which had excited the discontents, and thwarted the vanity which has always, by their own admission, been the leading feature of the French character. The insurrection was less against the throne than against the nobility—against the oppressive weight of feudal tyranny, inconsistent with the spirit of the age, and bequeathed by the power of barbarian conquest.¹

69.
Rigorous distinction of noble and *roturier* in France.

¹ Thiers, i. 34, 35. Nap. in D'Abbran. vii. 169. Rivarol, 7.

* "Lords and Ladies don't like to have their mouths stopped."—JOHNSON.

CHAP.
II.70.
Composition of the
privileged
classes.¹ Soulavie,
iv. 21.

The noble families of France had contrived, in a long course of years, to engross the whole offices in the gift of the crown. The higher situations in the magistracy were confined to fifty families, in which they had become almost hereditary, and which could number among their ancestors some of the greatest men and purest patriots of France. Still, though their merit in this respect was universally admitted, the monopoly they enjoyed of all elevated situations in the judicial establishment was justly complained of as a very serious grievance.¹ The whole commissions in the army above the rank of a lieutenant, were given to persons of noble birth: those in the *Maison du Roi*, or body guards, who were twelve thousand strong, were confined to the higher nobility, and in the more favoured corps of that body the privates even were required to be of noble birth. Notwithstanding these substantial advantages, the nobility, generally speaking, had much declined from their ancient splendour. There were in France about eighty thousand families which claimed a noble descent, and to them belonged nearly a hundred and fifty thousand individuals who formed the privileged class. Four thousand civil offices either conferred or transmitted the rights of nobility; but instances of their being thus acquired by the *Tiers Etat* were not frequent. Of these eighty thousand families, about one thousand could trace back their origin to the distant ages of the monarchy; but such had been the extravagance of successive generations, or the misfortunes in which they had come to be involved, that not more than three hundred of them were in affluence when the Revolution broke out. Only two hundred had historic names, or could boast of public services rendered by their ancestors to the state; the remainder, unknown alike in past and present times, enjoyed no advantage but exemption from several of the most oppressive direct taxes, and the favour of the court in the obtaining of commissions in the army. Most of them were miserably poor, and debarred alike by private pride and public opinion from engaging in those lucrative commercial pursuits by which the *Tiers Etat* had been so much enriched. Many of this latter class were superior to the most prosperous of the nobility, a few great families alone excepted, in wealth, talents, and personal respectability; but still they were ineligible

to the higher situations in the magistracy, the church, or the army; and they could not, if strictly watched, obtain a place in any of the parliaments in the kingdom. In the nobility itself, a distinction, considered to the last degree invidious by the older families, existed. This arose from the *nouveaux annoblis*, or new nobility, who had acquired titles in recent times by purchase, or by the holding of offices which conferred that distinction, and whose newly acquired wealth often eclipsed the decayed and now antiquated splendour of the ancient houses. The most part of the great estates which conferred titles, had fallen into the hands of farmers of the finance, or rich merchants, while the titled heirs of their original owners hung about the court, a useless and discreditable burden on the state. Thus, power and influence was confined to a class little qualified to exercise them; while the vast majority in numbers, and no inconsiderable part of the holders of property in the state, were excluded from any enjoyment of either.¹

¹ Bouillé's Memoirs, 50, 51. Rév. Mem. vii. 51. Smyth's French Rev. i. 166.

VII. While the nobility was thus lowered in consideration and divided in feeling, the third estate, or *Tiers Etat*, had immensely advanced, during the eighteenth century, in numbers, wealth, and respectability. The calamitous termination of the wars of Louis XIV. had, for a quarter of a century, diverted the ambition of France from foreign conquest; and the subsequent contests, terminated by the peace of Aix-La-Chapelle in 1749 and that of Paris in 1763, had not been of such extent or duration as seriously to affect the internal prosperity of the kingdom. During this long period, the industry and activity of the *Tiers Etat* had brought about an extraordinary change in their condition and feelings. France had founded colonies in America. She had immensely extended her maritime commerce; that to the single island of St Domingo maintained, as already noticed, sixteen hundred vessels and twenty-seven thousand sailors.* Domestic manufactures had spread to a very great degree; foreign commerce was flourishing; her commercial marine was second only to that of Great

71. Prosperous condition of the *Tiers Etat*.

* The exports of France to the Spanish and French St Domingo in 1789, amounted to no less than 250,000,000 francs, or L.10,000,000 sterling; its imports from that island, 189,000,000 francs, or L.7,487,000. The whole exports of Great Britain to all her West India islands put together, are only L.3,600,000 at this time, (1842.)—See DUMAS, *Guerre de 1799 à 1808*, viii. 112, 113.

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II.

Britain ; her warlike navy, as the American war proved, was almost on a level, for the first time in history, with that of her great antagonist. The riches flowing into the state, from this prodigious increase of mercantile industry, had all been centred in the *Tiers Etat* ; the nobility, disdaining the humble employments of commerce, remained in secluded pride, strangers alike to the wealth which this industry had produced, and the feelings to which it had unavoidably given rise.¹

¹ Neckar, Rév. France, i. 93, 94, 151. Bouillé, 52, 55.

72. Vast growth of Paris and the principal towns of the kingdom.

As a natural consequence of this state of commercial prosperity, the principal harbours and manufacturing towns in France had greatly increased in wealth, population, and influence. Lyons, Rouen, Bordeaux, Marseilles, Nantes, were larger cities than the capitals of most of the adjoining kingdoms. Paris had increased to a degree that had even become alarming ; it now numbered six hundred thousand inhabitants, and their intelligence and mental activity rendered them more influential than did even the vast aggregate of their numbers. During a succession of ages they had largely profited by the policy of Richelieu and Louis XIV., who attracted the nobles to the capital : the extravagance and prodigality of these haughty seigneurs had insensibly, but certainly, caused their wealth to glide into the coffers of the jewellers and money-lenders. Almost all the provincial towns were the seats of flourishing branches of manufacture, or of a multitude of legal practitioners before the local courts, stewards and factors on estates, or other functionaries, who largely partook in the spoils of the absent and heedless nobility.* In a higher class, the farmers of fiefs, or of the royal revenue, had in great part accumulated considerable, sometimes great fortunes ; and it was hard to say whether the royal influence was most impaired by the large portion of the revenue which they diverted from the public treasury, or by the consideration they imparted to the *Tiers Etat*, now, if not in open hostility to, at least in sullen alienation from the crown.²

² Bouillé's Mém. 52, 53. Neckar, Rév. France, i. 150, 152.

It was the natural result of this prosperous condition

* If the birth and parentage of a large proportion of the persons who played an important part in the Revolution is examined, it will be found that they were the sons or grandsons of stewards of estates, bailiffs, and factors, or domestic servants and valets-de-chambre in the chateaus of the neighbouring proprietors, the descendants of whom had risen to the rank of advocates, physicians, attorneys, or surgeons in the provincial towns where they had been born.—BOUILLE, 55, note.

of the middle classes, that they had in great part at least received an education which might put their superiors to the blush, if they reflected on the greater advantages they had enjoyed, and the larger means of acquisition which they had misapplied. This was the unavoidable consequence of their situation; for they were brought up to professions, such as the law, medicine, commerce, or the humbler stations in the church, in which a certain degree of information was indispensable to the obtaining even of the most inferior employment; and the higher could only be reached by intellectual cultivation of no ordinary kind. It had long been observed in France, accordingly, that the middle classes were, with some brilliant exceptions, not only better informed, but incomparably superior in ability to the noblesse or the clergy; and the greater part of the literary men, or philosophers, who for half a century before the Revolution directed the public thought, had sprung from this class. In all countries, even the most free, intellectual vigour and ability, arising from the middle class, is in the general case inclined to the democratic side, for the very obvious reason, that, sprung from its ranks, it sympathizes with its feelings, and is identified with its real or supposed interests. If this tendency is clearly discernible in Great Britain, where the career of talent is open to all, and the son of a commoner is so frequently raised to the wool-sack or the archiepiscopal chair, it may be conceived with how much vehemence it must have operated in France, where a sullen line of demarcation prescribed a limit to the elevation even of the most transcendent abilities in the middle class; and all elevated situations at the court, in the army, the magistracy, the church, and the diplomatic line, were rigorously confined to persons of higher birth, but inferior qualifications.¹

¹ Bouille, 53, 55.

VIII. The taxation of France afforded a practical grievance of the most serious kind, rendered yet more galling by the inequality with which it was imposed. The two privileged orders, the nobles and the clergy, were exempted from several of the most oppressive imposts—a privilege grounded on the feudal fiction, that the former defended the state by their swords, while the latter interceded for it by their prayers. Such a reason was peculiarly untenable

X
74.
Taxation.
Its inequa-
lities.

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after a long period of peace, during which the nobility were exclusively occupied in the frivolities of the court, and many of the higher clergy suspected, with too much reason, of sharing in its vices. The actual addition which the exemption of so large a proportion of the most opulent classes made to the burdens of the people, though by no means inconsiderable, was the least part of the evil: the bitterness lay in the sense of its injustice. But much misrepresentation has taken place on this subject, and the freedom from taxation by the privileged orders, has been generally described as much more extensive than it really was. They certainly did not contribute equally with each other, or with the commons; but they both paid largely to the public service. Neither the nobility nor clergy enjoyed any exemption from any of the indirect impositions which in France, as in other countries, constituted so large a proportion of the public revenue. The former paid the capitation tax and the twentieth penny or vingtième, which, together, sometimes amounted to four shillings in the pound. The clergy in the provinces annexed by conquest to France, comprehending about an eighth of the territory and a sixth of the wealth of the kingdom, also paid the capitation and the vingtième; and although the clergy in the old provinces did not pay the capitation, this was because they had redeemed it by payment of 24,000,000 of livres, or L.1,000,000 sterling; they did not pay the vingtième, but they, in return, made free gifts and were subject to other charges, which amounted to nearly as much as their proportion of what was paid by the other orders. The real ground of complaint, and it was a most substantial one, was the exemption of both the privileged orders from the *taille*: a direct burden on the produce of land of the most odious and impolitic kind, and the weight of which, being borne exclusively by the *Tiers Etat*, led to the general impression that the privileged orders were entirely freed from taxation of any sort.¹

¹ Burke's Considerations, Works, v. 222, 223. Duc de Gaeta, ii. 311. De Staël, i. 150. Monthion, 154. Thiers, i. 34.

The taxes of France were not only heavy, and liable to hateful exemptions, but they were unequally distributed even upon the classes who bore them, and in an especial manner oppressive to the cultivators of the soil. The *taille* and the vingtième imposts, exclusively affecting agricultural labour, and rising in proportion to its profits, with other

smaller burdens, amounted to no less than 171,000,000 of francs, or L.7,505,000 sterling, a sum at least equivalent to L.15,000,000 on the land of England. So excessive was the burden which this created upon agricultural labour, that it has been calculated, by a very competent observer, that in some districts where the valuation was rigorously taken, supposing the produce of an acre worth L.3, 2s. 7d., the proportion which went to the king was L.1, 18s. 4d.; that to the landlord, 18s.; that to the actual cultivator, 5s.; or, if the proprietor cultivated his own land, his share was only L.1, 4s. 3d., while that of the king was L.1, 18s. 4d. In other words, if the produce of an acre had been divided into twelve parts, nearly seven and a half went to the king, three and a half to the proprietor, and one to the farmer; whereas, in England, at the same period, if the produce of an acre were L.8, the land-tax and poor's rates would be 10s., the rent L.1, 10s., and the share of the cultivator L.6, being three-fourths of the produce, instead of one-twelfth, as under the French monarchy. Nearly one-third of France, at this period, was in the hands of small proprietors, upon whom these taxes fell with unusual severity; and some of these, particularly in the Limousin, the Cevennes, the lower Pyrenees, and Dauphiné, had abandoned cultivation altogether from the weight of the burdens to which they were subjected.

The taxes on consumption amounted to 260,000,000 francs, or L.10,400,000, and the total revenue to 469,000,000 francs, or L.18,750,000; but this immense burden was imposed without any regard to equality in the different provinces. Some had obtained commutations unreasonably favourable to themselves; others, from having evinced a refractory spirit, had been saddled with more than a just proportion of the public burdens. Those who had acquired no commutation, were liable to a progressive and most vexatious increase of their imposts. The fixing of these burdens was in the hands of the intendants of the provinces, from whose decision there was, practically speaking, no appeal, and who frequently exercised their powers in an arbitrary manner. Royal commissions had been established to take cognisance of questions regarding the revenues, of which the decision properly belonged to the ordinary tribunals;² several contributions were judged of

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II.

75.

Inequality in the imposition of the direct taxes in France.

1 Arthur Young, i. 332, 574, 575. Rap. du Comité de l'Imposit. Pièces Just. No. 1. Marshall's Travels, iv. 332; 333. Soulavie, i. 196.

76.

Indirect taxes.

2 Marshall's Travels, iv. 332, 333. Monthion, 155. Thiers, i. 34. De Staël, i. 152. Young, i. 332, 571, 575, 576, 598. Rap. du Comité de l'Imposit. Pièces Just. No. 1.

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II.

by the king in council—a species of judicature in which justice, in a question between the crown and a subject, was not likely to be obtained.

77.
State of the
labouring
poor.

IX. When the weight of the taxes under which they groaned is considered, it will not appear surprising that the cultivators of France were in the most miserable state. Mr Young calculated, in 1789, that the rural labourer in France, taking into view the price of provisions, was 76 per cent poorer than in England; that is, he had 76 per cent less of the necessaries and conveniences of life than fell to the lot of a similar class in this country; rural labour being 76 per cent cheaper in France than in England, it follows that all those classes which depend on that labour, and are the most numerous in society, were, in a similar proportion, less at their ease, worse fed, worse lodged, worse clothed, than their brethren on this side of the Channel. With a very few exceptions, accordingly, the peasantry were in the most indigent condition—their houses dark, comfortless, and almost destitute of furniture—their dress ragged and miserable—their food the coarsest and most humble fare. “It reminded me,” says Mr Young, “of the miseries of Ireland!” Nor was the condition of the people more comfortable in those extensive districts of the country where small properties existed; on the contrary, these were uniformly distinguished by the most numerous and squalid population. Nor is this surprising; nothing can conduce so much to a redundant population as a minute division of landed property and an oppressive government; the means of subsistence, without the means of enjoyment; scope to the principle of increase, without any development of its limitations.¹

¹ Young, i.
98, 148, 413,
447. Mar-
shall, i. 232,
iv. 101.

78.
Non-resi-
dent pro-
prietors.

X. In addition to an indigent peasantry, France was cursed with its usual attendant, a non-resident body of landed proprietors. This was an evil of the very first magnitude, drawing after it, as is invariably the case, a discontented tenantry and a neglected country. The great proprietors all resorted to Paris in quest of amusement, of dissipation, or of advancement; and with the exception of La Vendée, where a totally different system of manners prevailed, the country was hardly ever visited by its landowners. The natural consequence of this was, that no kindly feelings, no common interest, united the landlord and his

tenantry. The former regarded the cultivators in no other light than as beasts of burden, from whose labour the greatest proportion of profit was to be extracted; the latter considered their lords as tyrants, known only by the vexatious visits and endless demands of their bailiffs. From being neglected by their natural guardians, and experiencing no benefits or encouragement from them, the labouring classes every where imbibed a sour and discontented spirit; and were ready to join any incendiaries who promised them the pillage of the chateaus of their landlords, or the division of their estates. Nor was this all: all those useful and beneficial undertakings, so common in England, which bind together the landed aristocracy and their tenantry, by the benefit they confer upon the estates of the former, and the employment they afford to the industry of the latter, were unknown in France. No improvements in agriculture, no advances of capital, were made by the proprietors of the soil; roads, harbours, canals, and bridges, were undertaken and managed exclusively by the government; and the influence naturally arising from the employment of industry and the expenditure of capital, was wholly lost to the French noblesse. In La Vendée alone, the landlords lived in pristine simplicity, consuming in rustic profusion the produce of their estates upon their own lands; and in La Vendée alone, the tenantry supported them in the hour of trial, and waged a long doubtful and glorious war with the Republican forces.¹

¹ Barante, in *Madame de la Roche-jacquelin*, p. 45, 46. *Scott's Napoleon*, i. 31. *Young*, i. 598.

XI. The local burdens and legal services due by the tenantry to their feudal superiors, were to the last degree vexatious and oppressive. The peasantry in France were almost all ignorant; not one in fifty could read, and in each province they were unaware of what was passing in the neighbouring one. At the distance of twenty leagues from Paris, they were unacquainted with what was going forward during the most interesting era of the Revolution. They rose at the instigation of the demagogues in the neighbouring towns to burn the chateaus of their landlords; but never carried their ideas beyond the little circle of their immediate observation.² No public meetings were held, no periodical press was within their reach to spread the flame of discontent; yet the spirit of resistance was universal from Calais to Bayonne. This affords decisive

79.
Feudal services.

² *Young*, i. 58. *Marshall*, iv. 68.

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II.

evidence of the existence of a serious mass of oppression or numerous local grievances, capable of producing discontent so general, and hatred so implacable. The feudal rights of the landed proprietors stood foremost in this list of grievances. The most important operations of agriculture were fettered or prevented by the game-laws, and the restrictions intended for their support. Wild animals of the most destructive kind, such as boars and herds of deer, were permitted to go at large, through large districts called *Capitaneries*, without any inclosures to protect the crops. The damage they did to the farmers, in four parishes of Montceau only, amounted to 184,000 francs, or nearly L.8000 a-year.¹ Numerous edicts existed, which prohibited hoeing and weeding, lest the young partridges should be killed; mowing hay, lest the eggs should be destroyed; taking away the stubble, lest the birds should be deprived of shelter; manuring with night soil, lest their flavour should be injured.² Complaints for the infraction of these edicts were all carried before the manorial courts, where every species of oppression, chicanery, and fraud was practised. Nothing can exceed the force of expression used in the cahiers of the provincial bodies, in describing the severity of these feudal services.³

Fines were imposed at every change of property in the direct and collateral line, and at every sale on purchasers; the people were bound to grind their corn at the landlord's mill, to press their grapes at his press, and bake their bread at his oven.⁴ *Corvées*, or obligations to repair the roads, founded on custom, decrees, and servitude, were enforced with the most rigorous severity;⁵ in many places the use even of handmills was not free, and the seigneurs were invested with the power of selling to the peasantry the right of bruising buckwheat or barley between stones.⁶ It is vain to attempt a description of the feudal services which pressed with so much severity upon industry in every part of France. Their names cannot find parallel words in the English language.* Long before the Revolution

* We should be at a loss to know what was meant by "Chevauches, Quintaines Soule, Saut de Poisson, Baiser de Mariès, Chansons, Transports d'œuf sur Charette, Silence de Grenouilles, Corvée à Misericorde, Melods, Lesde, Couponage, Cartilage, Barage, Fouage, Maréchassée, Ban Veu, Ban d'Aout, Troussés, Gilinage, Civirage, Taillabilité, Vingtaine, Stertage, Bordes delage, Meriage, Ban de Vendanges, Droit d'Accepté,"⁷ if the universal voice of the French people, manifested in their cahiers, or official instructions to the Deputies at the States-General from the electors, had not proclaimed that they signified real and oppressive burdens.—*Young's Travels in France*, i. 206.

¹ Cahier du Tiers Etat de Maux, 49.

² Young, i. 600.

³ Cahiers, Rennes, art. 12. Nivernois, art. 43.

80.
Their variety and oppressive character.

⁴ Young, i. 601.

⁵ Tiers Etat, Rennes, 159.

⁶ Rennes, 57.

⁷ Résumé des Cahiers, iii. 316, 317.

broke out, complaints were loudly heard over the whole country, of the baneful tendency of these feudal exactions.* They became better understood by the higher classes as it advanced, from the clamour which was raised by the nobility at their abolition. The *corvées*, or burdens imposed for the maintenance of the highways, annually ruined vast numbers of the farmers. In filling up one valley in Lorraine, no less than three hundred were reduced to beggary.¹ The enrolments for the militia were also the subject of general complaint, and styled in the cahiers "an injustice without example."² But the people soon found that they had made a grievous exchange in substituting for it the terrible conscription of Napoleon.

¹ Rennes, i. 598.

² Nob. Briey, 6, 7. Young, ii. 598.

Indeed, although these services were numerous and vexatious, they did not constitute so considerable a grievance as the indignant feelings of the French provincial writers would lead us to imagine. "The people of Scotland," says Sir Walter Scott, "were in former times subject to numerous services which are now summed up in the emphatic word *rent*;" and this, in truth, was equally the case with the French tenantry. Their general condition was that of *métayers*; that is, they received their implements and stock from their landlords, and divided with him the gross produce after the tax-gatherer was satisfied. The numerous feudal services were just a payment of rent in kind; a species of liquidation universal and unavoidable in all rural districts in a certain state of civilisation, when a ready market for agricultural produce is, from the absence of great towns, or the want of internal communication, not to be found. The people expected, when feudal services and tithes were abolished during the Revolution, that their amount would form a clear addition to their gains; but they soon found that they only augmented the rent of their landlords, or were exchanged for an enormous land-tax rigorously collected by government,

81.
Exaggeration on this subject.

* An old law, long obsolete, but characteristic of the state of the people in feudal ages, was mentioned in the debates in the Assembly on the feudal services, which declared it illegal for a seigneur in some provinces to put to death *more than two serfs* in order to warm his feet, by putting them in their entrails, when returning from hunting. This appears hardly credible; but the *Mercheta Mulierum*, or right of the seigneur to lie with his vassal's wife the first night of her marriage, before her husband, was common to France with other feudal countries, and was long claimed in some parts of the country by the seigneurs.—See *Histoire de la Révolution, par Deux Amis de la Liberté*, ii. 212.

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II.

and that their own condition was in no degree ameliorated. Without doubt, the multitude of demands on the French tenantry was often in the highest degree vexatious; but it may be doubted whether their weight has been alleviated by their condensation into a single payment; and whether the terrors of the words RENT and TAXES do not now equal those of the whole catalogue of feudal obligations.*

82.
Administra-
tion of jus-
tice.

XII. The administration of justice, as in all countries where public opinion has not its due weight, or the judges are exempted from its control, was liable to many abuses in France. In some places it was partial, and said to be venal. Fortune, liberal presents, court favour, the smiles of a handsome wife, or promises of advancement to relations, sometimes swayed the decisions of the judges in the inferior tribunals. This evil was felt in many parts of the country. The common opinion, though often unfounded, was, that to obtain justice in any of the provincial courts was out of the question. Nor were the decisions of the Parliaments or Supreme Courts, whether of the capital or provinces, altogether unsullied. These numerous and public-spirited bodies, notwithstanding their loud professions of patriotism, were not always immaculate; and the diversity of their customs introduced a degree of variance into their determinations, which rendered all attempt at uniformity impracticable.¹ But although, like the other institutions of the monarchy, the provincial parliaments stood much in need of amendment, yet they had several particulars in their constitution deserving of the highest approbation, and which had rendered them the cradles of freedom during the corruptions and oppression of preceding reigns. They possessed one fundamental excellence—they were independent. The most doubtful circumstance connected with their mode of appointment, that of its being by purchase, contributed to this independence of character. The members of these courts held for life, indeed many may be said to have held by inheritance. Though appointed in the first instance by the monarch, they were nearly beyond his power, for he could not remove them; and for long they had enjoyed the power of electing the members of

¹ Monthion, 154. Thiers, i. 35. Young, i. 598, 602.

* The land-tax in France is now twenty-five per cent, at the very lowest, on the gross agricultural profits; often forty or fifty per cent on the land-owners' gains.

their body, subject to his approval ; so that they were practically independent. The more determined the exertions of that authority against them became, the more their spirit of freedom and independence became manifest. They composed permanent bodies politic, and from that corporate and lasting constitution were well calculated to afford both certainty and stability to the laws. They had been a safe asylum to these laws in all the revolutions of opinion and under all the frowns of power. They had saved that sacred deposit of the country during the reigns of arbitrary princes and the struggles of arbitrary factions. They were the great safeguard to private property: their decisions, though varying with the customs of the different provinces, were, generally speaking, honest and upright: they had furnished no inconsiderable corrective to the vices and excesses of the monarchy. The independent spirit which terminated in the Revolution began in the free and courageous conduct of these assemblies, during a contest of nearly half a century with the crown; and it is one of the strongest proofs of the insanity which ultimately got possession of the public mind, that one of the first acts of the democratic party, upon attaining supreme authority, was to sweep away those venerable bulwarks by which the people had so long been sheltered from the invasion of despotic power.¹

¹ Michelet's
Hist. de
France, iv.
221. Ordon
1388, 1400,
1413.
Burke's
Considera-
tions,
Works, vi.
367.

XIII. The royal prerogative, by a series of successful usurpations, had reached a height inconsistent with anything like real freedom. The most important right of a citizen, that of deliberating on the passing of laws, and the granting of supplies, had fallen into desuetude. For nearly two centuries, the kings, of their own authority, had published *ordinances* possessing all the authority of laws, and which originally could not be sanctioned but by the representatives of the people. The right of approving or registering, as it was called, these ordinances, was transferred from the states-general, which were rarely convoked, to the parliaments and courts of justice; but their deliberations were liable to be suspended by *lits de justice*, or personal interventions of the sovereign, and infringed by arbitrary imprisonments. The regulations, which could legally be made only by the king in council, were frequently adopted without the intervention of that body; and

83.
Royal pre-
rogative.

CHAP.
II.

so common had this abuse become, that in many departments of government it was habitual. Taxes were imposed without the consent of the nation, or of its representatives: those originally laid on by legal authority continued after the stipulated period of their endurance had ceased, or were augmented far beyond the amount agreed to by the people. Criminal commissions, composed of persons nominated solely by the crown, were frequently appointed; and rendered both personal liberty and real property insecure. Warrants of imprisonment, without either accusation or trial, might deprive any subjects of their freedom, and consign them to dungeons for the remainder of their lives. Debts to an enormous amount, and of which the annual charge absorbed more than half the revenue of the state, had been contracted without national authority, or increased without its knowledge. The public creditors, kept in the dark as to the state of the finances, or of the security which existed for their payment, were daily becoming more apprehensive as to the ultimate solvency of the state. The personal expenses of the kings had risen under the reigns of Louis XIV. and XV. to a very great height, and they were not distinguished from the ordinary expenditure of government, except in a secret record, no part of which was divulged to the people. The salaries of all the civil servants of the crown, and of the higher officers in the army, were deemed excessive; while the duties of their several offices were too often either neglected or performed by deputy.¹

¹ De Staël, i. 130, 151. Monthion, 153, 154. *Etat de la Dette Publique, 1790*, 8. Th. i. 154.

81. Extreme inconsistency with which the Royal power had been exercised.

What rendered this tremendous power of imprisoning any person at the mere whim of the king, or any of his ministers or mistresses, the more obnoxious, was the extreme inconsistency with which it had been exercised, and the total impossibility of foreseeing what doctrines or measures might not, at no distant period, consign the most eminent men in France to confinement in the Bastille for years, perhaps for life. During the course of the long contest of the king with the parliaments, and the still more acrimonious disputes of the Jesuits with the Jansenists, the opposite parties had alternately been successful: and each had invariably applied, without mercy, the terrible engine of solitary imprisonment, to overawe or coerce its opponents. The ministers of the crown opened the

gates of the Bastile with equal readiness to the enemies of whichever of the contending parties had, for the moment, got possession of the royal confidence. When M. de la Vrillière surrendered the seals of the home office, which he had held for half a century, to Malesherbes, in 1775, there was no party, religious or political, in France, the chiefs of which he had not, on some previous occasion, sent into exile, or immured in the Bastile. The Jesuits and the Jansenists, the partisans of the court and the leaders of the parliament, the leaders of the church and the philosophic atheists, had been indiscriminately visited with this terrible penalty. The number of *lettres-de-cachet* he had signed was incalculable;* he had immured the Moli-
nist friends of the Pope at the desire of the regent Orleans, who depended on the parliaments; he had next sent to the Bastile the Jansenists in great numbers, to pay court to the Abbé Dubois, who was intriguing at Rome to obtain a cardinal's hat: under Cardinal Fleury and M. Arguella, he had confined within the same walls the leaders of the parliament who opposed the court; and more recently sent into exile the Abbé Terray and M. de Maupeou, who were the very ministers who had directed the last arrests. Finally, he had imprisoned numbers of the philosophers, who, ere long, supplanted him in office; and M. de Malesherbes, to whom he surrendered the portfolio of the home office in 1775, had himself been confined in the Bastile, under his warrant, only four years before.¹

¹ Soulavie, ii. 326, 327. Boissy d'Anglas, Vie de Malesherbes, ii. 23, 24.

XIV. Another frightful remnant of feudal cruelty which existed in France down to the close of the reign of Louis XV., was the use of TORTURE, not only in order to extract confessions from prisoners previous to trial, but to increase the sufferings and aggravate the horror of their execution. This dreadful barbarity, the bequest of ages of violence and anarchy, was continued in France, with a blindness which appears incredible, not only after the long establishment of regular government had rendered it unnecessary, but when the increasing humanity and laxity of the age had made it insupportable. All Europe had shuddered at the

85. Terrible torture which was still continued in France.

* It has been stated to have amounted to the enormous number of 50,000; but this estimate appears to be exaggerated; but 25,000, or 500 a-year, is probably within the mark; considerably less in half a century than, under the Convention, were sometimes imprisoned in a single month.—See BOISSY D'ANGLAS, *Vie de MALESHERBES*, ii. 23, 26.

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atrocious and prolonged cruelty with which Damiens, who had attempted the life of Louis XV. in 1757, was executed—a cruelty which sets, if possible, in a brighter light the admirable clemency which induced George III. in England to save the life of every one of the numerous assassins who had tried to murder him.* Nor was it only for such great state offences that these horrible torments were inflicted, or for the crimes, such as parricide, which all ages have stigmatized as of the deepest dye: the barbarity of the church, for it deserves no lighter name, had perpetrated similar punishments for offences against religion, in themselves rather disorders than crimes, and for which a few months' imprisonment would have been an adequate expiation.¹

¹ Lac. xviii.
Siècle, iii.
285. Con-
dorcet, Vie
de Voltaire,
101.

86.
Horrors
of the old
punish-
ments.

So late as the year 1766, two young officers, in a drunken frolic, insulted, during the night, a crucifix of wood which stood on the bridge of Abbeville. For this offence, which would rightly have been visited by a fine of twenty louis, or imprisonment for three months, they were both indicted: one fled, and received a commission from the king of Prussia; but the other, named La Barre, a youth of seventeen years, the son of an ancient family in the magistracy, was sentenced to be put to the torture, to have his tongue cut out, and to be afterwards beheaded, which inhuman sentence was actually carried into execution. Voltaire, from his retreat at Ferney, raised his powerful voice against this abominable proceeding: on this occasion, at least, it may safely be affirmed, he had all the right-thinking men in Europe on his side. As if, too, it had been specially intended to excite public indignation to the highest possible degree, torture was inflicted on criminals, not only in the dungeons of the Bastille, but in broad daylight in the streets of Paris; and so late as 1790, the citizens of the capital were excruciated by the cries of a wretched human being, who during several hours was exposed on the wheel, in the Place de Grève.

* "On the 28th March 1757, at four o'clock in the afternoon, his terrific punishment commenced. First, his right hand was burned: then his flesh was every where torn by red-hot pincers. Melted lead was poured into his wounds, and finally he was broken on the wheel."—See LACRETELLE, *Histoire de France pendant le xviii. Siècle*, iii. 285. On the 9th May 1766, the heroic Lally, wholly innocent of the crimes laid to his charge, who had so gallantly defended Pondicherry against the English, after having been imprisoned four years, and repeatedly tortured, was drawn on a hurdle, by sentence of the parliament of Paris, to the place of execution, and there beheaded, with his mouth filled with a wooden gag, to prevent his addressing the people.—*Biographie Universelle*, voce LALLY, xxiii. 252, 253.

The historian can hardly bring his pen to transcribe the awful details of the sufferings of these unhappy victims: but he who wishes to write or read the history of the French Revolution, must steel his mind to the contemplation of scenes of horror: and before entering on the dreadful atrocities of the Reign of Terror, it is well to consider the barbarities of the ancient *régime*, to which they are, in part at least, to be ascribed.* It is to the honour of the Revolution that it put a stop, it is to be hoped for ever, to these frightful barbarities; and amidst the innumerable crimes of its authors, this, at least, is to be recorded to their praise, that they never reverted, except at first, and in the most vehement excitement, to those ancient cruelties; and that their victims, save in a few instances of popular violence in the outset, suffered only by the edge of the guillotine.¹

¹ Condorcet, *Vie de Voltaire*, 100, 102. Duval, *Souvenirs de la Terreur*, i. 157.

XV. Corruption in its worst form, had long tainted the manners of the court as well as the nobility, and poisoned the sources of influence. The favour of royal mistresses, or the intrigues of the court, openly disposed of the highest appointments, both in the army, the church, and the civil service. Since the reign of the Roman emperors, profligacy had never been conducted in so open and undisguised a

87.
Corruption
at court.

* "The punishment of the wheel, which was suppressed in 1790, was one of the most frightful which can be imagined. The criminal was extended on a St Andrew's cross. There were on it eight notches cut, one below each arm, between the elbow and the wrist, another between each elbow and the shoulders; one under each thigh, and one under each leg. The executioner, armed with a heavy triangular bar of iron, gave a violent blow on each of these eight places, and, of course, broke the bone; and a ninth on the pit of the stomach. The mangled victim was now lifted from the cross, and stretched on a small wheel, placed vertically at one of the ends of the cross, his back on the upper part of the wheel, his head and feet hanging down. The sentence bore, that he was to remain there as long "as it please God to prolong his life." Many lingered there five or six hours: some longer. A son of a jeweller, in the Place Dauphiné, who had murdered his father, was only relieved by death at the end of twenty-four hours. These unhappy wretches, often uttering horrible blasphemies, always tormented by a continual thirst, incessantly called out for something to drink: a man of God, a priest, never left their side during their excruciating agony, but incessantly put water to their parched lips, wiped the sweat from their burning brow, and pointed to a merciful God above the scaffold, extending his arms to receive them. This holy duty was always discharged by a doctor of the Sorbonne."—DUVAL, *Souvenirs de la Terreur*, i. 157, 158 On reading these heart-rending details, one is almost tempted to forget all the cruelties of the Revolution, and to exclaim, with Byron, after recounting the inhuman sports of the Roman amphitheatre, "Arise, ye Goths, and glut your ire!" And yet, marvellous circumstance! decisive of the infernal agency which was at work in the Revolution, these horrid cruelties did not excite nearly so much obloquy as the religion which assuaged them; the Revolutionists could find some apology for the government which stretched the fractured criminal on the wheel, but none for the priest who wiped the sweat from his agonized brow.

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manner as under Louis XV. and the regent Orleans. From the secret memoirs of the period, which have now been published, it is manifest that the licentious novels which at that time disgraced French literature, conveyed a faithful picture of the manners of the age; that the scenes in *Faublas*, the *Liaisons Dangereuses*, and *Crebillon*, are by no means overcharged. Favourites of women of rank, selected often from the middle classes of society, were, not unfrequently, rewarded for their fidelity by a place in the Bastille, at the instance of their treacherous paramours, when they became tired of their embraces.* The reign of Louis XV. is the most deplorable in French history. If we seek for the characters who governed the age, we must search the antechambers of the Duc de Choiseul, or the boudoirs of Madame Pompadour or Du Barri. The whole frame of society seemed to be decomposed. Statesmen were ambitious to figure as men of letters; men of letters as statesmen; the great seigneurs as bankers; the farmers-general as great seigneurs. The fashions were as ridiculous as the arts were misplaced. Shepherdesses were represented in hoops in saloons, where colonels were engaged in feminine pursuits; every thing was deranged in the public feeling and manners, the sure sign of an approaching convulsion. Society had reached that puerile stage which appeared in Rome at the time of the Gothic invasion, and in Constantinople under the Byzantine emperors; instead of making verses in cloisters, they made them in drawing-rooms; a happy epigram rendered a general more illustrious than a victory gained.¹

It is difficult to treat of this subject without disclosing particulars at which purity may blush, or on which licentiousness may gloat; but general observations make little impression on the mind even of the most reflecting reader, if not attended with a detail of facts which proves that it

* Such was the dissolution of the manners of the court, that no less than 500,000,000 francs of the public debt, or £20,000,000 sterling, had been incurred for expenses too ignominious to bear the light, or to be even named in the public accounts; and the amount of expenditure of this description was ten times greater in the time of Louis XV. than it had been in that of Louis XIV. And it appears from an authentic document, quoted in Soulavie's History, that in the sixteen months immediately preceding the death of Louis XV., Madame du Barri had drawn from the royal treasury no less than 2,450,000 francs, or £102,000, equal to fully £200,000 of our money at this time.²—See *Histoire de la Décadence de la Monarchie Française, par SOULAVIE l'Aîné*, iii. 330.

¹ Chateaubriand, *Etud. Hist.* i. 118, Preface.

88.
Profligacy of the Regent Orleans and Louis XV.

² Du Barri's *Memoirs*, l. and il. Lab., *Hist. de la Rév.* i. 281. Soulavie, l. 115.

is well-founded, and one authentic example of the manners of the court and aristocratic circles in Paris, anterior to the Revolution, will produce a stronger conviction than whole chapters of assertion. All that we read in ancient historians, veiled in the decent obscurity of a learned language, of the orgies of ancient Babylon, was equalled, if not exceeded, by the nocturnal revels of the Regent Orleans, the Cardinal Dubois, and his other licentious associates. They would exceed belief, if not narrated on the undoubted testimony of concurring eyewitnesses.* Nor were manners improved on the accession of Louis XV. ; for although, during his earlier years, his manners were correct, and he was enthusiastically beloved by his subjects,† yet as he advanced in life, he fell under the government of successive mistresses, each more dissolute and degraded than her predecessor ; until at length decorum was so openly violated at court, that even the corrupted circles of Versailles were scandalized by the undisguised profligacy which was exhibited.¹ Female society had come to realize the state foreshadowed by the genius of Milton—

“ For that fair female troop thou saw’st, that seem’d
Of goddesses, so blythe, so smooth, so gay,
Bred only and completed to the taste
Of lustful appetite, to sing, to dance,

* “ Les soupers du Régent étaient toujours avec des compagnies forte étranges—avec ses maîtresses, quelquefois des filles de l’opéra, souvent avec la Duchesse de Berry, quelques dames de moyenne vertu, une douzaine d’hommes que, sans façon, il ne nommait autrement que *roués*, [the origin of the phrase,] et quelques gens sans nom, mais brillants par leur esprit et leur débauche. La chair était exquis ; et les convives, et le Prince lui-même, mettaient souvent la main à l’œuvre avec les cuisiniers ; et dans les séances, chacun était répassé, les ministres et les familiers comme les autres, avec une license affreuse. On buvait beaucoup et du meilleur vin ; on s’échauffait ; on disait des ordures à gorge déployée, et des impiétés à qui mieux mieux ; et quand on avait fait du bruit, et qu’on était bien ivre, on s’allait coucher.”—*Mémoires de M. LE DUC DE ST SIMON*, (an eyewitness ;) and LACRETELLE, i. 147, 148.

† When Louis XV. lay at the point of death, at Metz, in 1744, the grief and consternation at Paris were extreme—“ Paris,” says the contemporary annalist, “ all in terror, seemed a city taken by storm : the churches resounded with supplications and groans, the prayers of the priests and people were every moment interrupted by their sobs, and it was from an interest so dear and tender, that his surname *Bien-aimée* was acquired ; a title higher than all the rest this great Prince has yet earned.”—HENAULT, *Abrégé Chronologique de l’Histoire de France*, p. 701, and VOLTAIRE, *Siccle de Louis XV.*, c. 5. But when the same Prince lay on the real bed of death, thirty years afterwards, no symptoms of grief were shown ; and the decease of the sovereign excited only a passing remark among the people—so completely had the unmeasured profligacy of his latter years alienated the affections even of that little scrupulous people.—See BESEVAL’S *Mémoires*, ii. 59–90. It was no wonder the Parisians were tired of Louis XV. The *Parc-aux-Cerfs* alone cost the nation, while it was kept up, no less than 100,000,000 francs, or L.4,000,000 sterling.—LACRETELLE, iii. 172.

¹ Lac. iii
170, 172.
Soulavie, i.
101, 103.

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To dress, and troll the tongue, and roll the eye;
To these the sober race of men, whose lives
Religious titled them the sons of God,
Shall yield up all their virtue, all their fame,
Ignobly, to the trains and to the smiles
Of these fair atheists, and now swim in joy
Erelong to swim at large, and laugh for what
The world erelong a world of tears must weep.*

Madame Pompadour† concealed the ambiguous nature of her situation by the elegance of her manners, the discretion with which she exercised her power, and the encouragement which she afforded to literature and the arts; but when Madame du Barri,‡ with younger years, more seducing charms, and more abandoned habits, succeeded to the royal favour, no bounds were set to the general license and corruption which prevailed. What is very remarkable, her lasting ascendancy was founded, in a great degree, on the skill with which she sought out, and the taste with which she arrayed other rivals to herself; and the numerous beauties of the establishment called the *Parc-aux-Cerfs*, who were successively led to the royal couch, never diminished her lasting influence. Though resplendent with personal attractions herself, she never failed to exert her utmost powers to prevent the inclinations of the King from becoming torpid by want of variety, and studied to exhibit a constant succession of new objects of desire to his palled

* *Paradise Lost*, xi. 615.

† Jeanne Antoinette Poisson, afterwards Marchioness of Pompadour, was born in 1722. Her father was a butcher. The vivacity and grace of the young damsel soon led her relations to speculate on her attractions, as a source of profit to themselves; and she was so conscious of her power to please, that she afterwards admitted that from the first she had a secret presentiment she was destined to captivate the king. She was early married to Lenormand, a landed proprietor; but her disposition to gallantry being decided, after being for some time the chosen favourite of a select circle of admirers, it was resolved to try the effect of her charms on royalty. For this purpose she drove out in an open calèche, elegantly dressed, in the forest of Senart, where the king hunted, and was purposely made to cross the royal path. The monarch was so captivated by her grace and beauty, that he sent her the spoils of the chase; but the reigning favourite, the Duchess de Chateauroux, succeeded at that time in keeping her at a distance from the court. After the Duchess's death, in 1744, he again met her at a masked ball in Paris, and on this occasion her conquest was complete: she was soon after removed to apartments in Versailles, received a pension of 240,000 francs (L.10,000) a-year, was made Dame de Palais to the Queen, created Marchioness of Pompadour, and soon saw all France at her feet. The Jesuits, the Jansenists, the Noblesse, the Parliaments, alternately experienced her indulgence and her persecution. Her sway continued nearly unabated till her death, in 1764, at the age of forty-two. Her tastes were elegant and refined, though expensive; and she made, on the whole, a better use of her unbounded power than might have been expected.—See *Biographie Universelle*, (POMPADOUR,) 283, 290.

‡ Madame du Barri was born at Vaucouleurs, in 1744, of humble parents—the same district which had, by a singular coincidence, given birth to Joan

senses.* Yet, in the midst of these undisguised scenes of scandal, she was treated with the highest honours at court ; the long-established influence of the Duc de Choiseul over the royal mind was overturned by her intrigues ; Louis XVI. and Marie Antionette were obliged to submit to the degradation, to them to the last degree galling, of dining at table with her ; and the destruction of the whole parliaments of France, in 1771, which first brought the crown into open collision with the country, and was the first step in the Revolution, was occasioned by the anxiety of the monarch to secure a presentation at court to the abandoned favourite, who, after having exhausted in person all the arts of profligacy, had become the directress of the royal seraglio.¹

¹ Lac. iii. 172, 173. Weber, i. 37.

Corruption in exalted stations can hardly be conceived to exceed this : but the Orleans family, with some honourable exceptions, showed that the first prince of the blood could outdo royalty itself in unbridled license of manners. The taint introduced by the Regent descended, with its accompanying curse, through some noble individuals, to the third and fourth generations. Without polluting these pages by the details of the private life of other members of the family, it is sufficient to say, that the

^{90.} Dissolute habits of young Egalité.

of Arc, the noble and immortal defender of the throne. Her extraordinary beauty led to her being early sent to Paris, to make her way in that great mart of corruption, where she was placed with a *marchande des modes*, the usual school for such aspirants. She was shortly transferred to a celebrated establishment of courtesans, of which, under the name of Made-moiselle Lange, she soon made the fortune ; and her celebrity attracted the notice of Lebel, the valet-de-chambre of Louis XV., who introduced her to the monarch, who was soon entirely captivated by her charms and address. She was in form married to Count du Barri, and gradually acquired such an ascendent over the king, that she was formally presented at court in 1769, and had influence enough to occasion the downfall of his favourite minister, Choiseul, and place her creatures, the Duc d'Aiguillon and Maupeou, in his stead. Her name will appear again, on a mournful occasion, in the course of this history. — See *Biographie Universelle*, (Barri,) vol. iii. 431, 432.

* It augments the indignation which all must feel at this conduct, that no pains were spared to discover, even in respectable families, new objects of desire for the king, and that they were immediately abandoned, after they had gratified his caprice, to misery and destitution. "La corruption," says Lacretelle, "entraînait dans les plus paisibles ménages, dans les familles les plus obscures. Elle était savamment et longtemps combinée par ceux qui servaient les débauches de Louis. Des emissaires étaient employées à séduire des filles qui n'étaient point encore nubiles, à combattre dans de jeunes femmes des principes de pudeur et de fidélité. Amant de grade, il livrait à la prostitution publique celles de ses sujettes qu'il avait prématurément corrompues. Il souffrait que les enfans de ses infâmes plaisirs partageassent la destinée obscure et d'angéreuse de ceux qu'un père n'avoue point." — LACRETELLE, iii. 171, 173.

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dissipations of the Duc de Chartres, afterwards so well known in Paris as Duke of Orleans, and who ultimately perished on the scaffold, were carried to a length of which modern Europe had not hitherto exhibited an example. It renders credible all that is narrated in Suetonius and the historians of the Roman empire, as to the manners of the ancient rulers of the world. The French annalists must speak for themselves on this subject, for the scenes they describe could hardly bear the eye of an English reader in our own language : yet painful as the quotation is, it must be made. It is indispensable to see the private habits of those who sometimes take the lead in the much-vaunted regeneration of society ; and the details do not more paint an individual than portray an epoch : for no individual hardihood can much outstrip the manners of those with whom it associates.* It is not to be imagined, however, that the manners of the young Duc de Chartres were universal, or even general, in the aristocratic circles, or that many estimable characters did not yet remain at that period among the French nobility. Their conduct in adversity proved that many such existed. But it may be imagined to what a height general corruption must have risen, when, even in a single palace, such scenes could have been witnessed without reprobation by numerous spectators.¹

¹ Soulavie, Règne de Louis XVI. ii. 103, 104. Weber, i. 317. Besenval, ii. 295.

* M. le Duc de Chartres avait réussi à épouser Mademoiselle de Penthièvre; et la cour et la ville s'accordaient à dire que toutes les vertus étaient réunis dans cette princesse, comme toutes les vices et toutes les erreurs l'étaient dans l'esprit et le cœur de son mari. Uni à cette femme aussi vertueuse que belle, le Duc de Chartres continua de vivre en libertin, de parcourir les lieux de débauche de la capitale, et d'y commander des soupers fins. Les plaisirs du mariage n'avaient pour lui rien de piquant; les orgies sales étaient ses délices. Il avait élevé près de Paris un temple à la prostitution, où sa cour se permettait des scènes impudiques de toutes les espèces; il avait donné à ce mauvais lieu le nom de Folies de Chartres. Là étaient conduites, de nuit et les yeux bandés, les prostituées les plus hardies, plutôt que les plus séduisantes; et elles y étaient transportés quelquefois jusqu'au nombre de cent à cent-cinquante. Elles y trouvaient un repas splendide, qu'elles étaient obligées de prendre toutes nues; et lorsque les vins brûlans, les liqueurs, et les alimens du plus haut goût, avaient jété ces femmes dans la situations des bacchantes de l'antiquité, elles tombaient ivres et pêle-mêle dans les bras des laquais du Duc de Orléans, dans les siens et dans ceux de la compagnie."—SOULAVIE, *Règne de Louis XVI.*, ii. 103, 104.

Weber in his *Memoirs* gives the same account :—"Epoux de l'incomparable fille du Duc de Penthièvre, il se dérobaît à ses chastes embrassemens pour se livrer à des orgies dont la description étonnerait encore, si elle n'avait pas eu, dans toutes les classes de la société, d'aussi nombreux témoins qu'en déposent encore aujourd'hui. Aux auteurs seuls appartient la tâche de dévoiler ces honteuses mystères."—WEBER, *Mémoires*, i. 317; *Rév. Mém.* vol. xiv. See also, *Mémoires du BARON DE BESEVAL*, i. 264, 279.

It was the peculiarity of that age, that manners had assumed this frivolous and corrupt tone in the higher, at the same time that nobler and more generous sentiments had, from the progress of knowledge and the spread of civilisation, sprung up in the middle ranks. Madame Roland, a citizen's daughter, has given a graphic picture of the horror with which the rising ambition and conscious talent of the middle classes regarded the frivolity and vices of their hereditary rulers. "It excited my early astonishment," says she, "that such a state of things did not occasion the immediate fall of the empire, or provoke the avenging wrath of heaven." But with the overthrow of the aristocracy these evils did not cease. The example of vice is contagious; it seldom fails to descend in society. With the acquisition of the power which belonged to the old noblesse, the middle classes have since succeeded to their licentiousness, and it has now descended, in Paris and the chief towns, to the lowest. The nobility in France are now, for the most part, religious. Irreligion has become unfashionable, having gone down to the labouring ranks, at least in the towns. The effects of this general dissoluteness of principles have appeared in the strongest manner, both in the habits of the people and in the literature of the age. From thence has flowed that stream of depravity and licentiousness which has so long been peculiarly and characteristically the disgrace of French literature; and from these examples has followed that general dissoluteness of manners, which has now descended with the general growth of sceptical principles so far, that the illegitimate births in Paris will possibly in time be equal to the legitimate, and already every third child to be seen in the streets is a bastard.¹*

¹ Dupin, Force Commercial, vol. i. 99. Roland, Mém. i. 112.

XVI. Embarrassment in the finances was the immediate cause of the Revolution. It compelled the King to summon the States-General as the only means of avoiding national bankruptcy. Previous ministers had tried temporary expedients, and every effort had been made to avert the disaster; but the increasing expense arising from the weight of the annual charge of the debt rendered them

* In 1824, out of 28,812 births, 18,591 only were the result of marriage; 9221 were illegitimate.³ The proportion of illegitimate births is now greater. In 1831, the legitimate births were 19,152; the illegitimate 10 378. —*Ann. du Bureau des Long.*

² Dupin, i. 100.

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all abortive.* The annual deficit, at the time the Revolution broke out, was 189,000,000 francs, or above SEVEN MILLIONS sterling. No adequate provision was made for the liquidation or reduction of the debt, or even the regular payment of its interest. It is true a large proportion of the public burdens consisted of life annuities ; but still the exhausted state of the treasury made some extraordinary expedient necessary to satisfy even their passing demands. No other measure appeared practicable but the convocation of the States-General, from whom some relief, by the appropriation of part of the church property, was expected by all parties ; and the immediate cause of the Revolution, as will appear in the sequel, was the improvidence and waste of preceding reigns, coupled with the obstinate resistance of the parliaments to any new taxes.¹

¹ Necker de l'Administration des Finances, i. p. 87. Mig. i. 13, 23. Th. i. 22. Lac. vi. 110.

² Etat de la Dette Publique, 1790, p. 8. Young, i. 576, 577, 578, 579.

³ Necker, de l'Administration des Finances, i. 92, and ii. 517. Lac. vi. 110.

* The net revenue for the year 1789 amounted to 469,938,245 francs, or L.18,800,000; the debt to 6,500,000,000 francs, or L.244,000,000 sterling; and its annual charge to 259,000,000 francs, or L.10,400,000 sterling.² The annual expenses at this period amounted to 400,000,000 francs, or L.16,000,000, exclusive of the charges of the debt;³ so that while the annual expenses were 400,000,000 francs, or L.16,000,000 Interest of debt, 259,000,000 francs, or 10,400,000

	659,000,000	L.26,400,000
The annual income was	470,000,000	or 18,800,000
Annual deficit,	189,000,000	or L.7,600,000

The following Table will exhibit the steady progress of the deficit under the various administrations which preceded the Revolution :—

1783—D'ORMESSON, Minister.

Income,	510,000,000 francs, or	L.20,400,000
Expenditure,	610,000,000	or 24,400,000
Deficit,	100,000,000	or L.4,000,000

1786—CALONNE, Minister.

Income,	474,047,649 francs, or	L.18,800,000
Expenditure,	589,184,995	or 23,600,000
Deficit,	115,137,346	or L.4,800,000

1787—CALONNE, Minister.

Income,	474,048,239 francs, or	L.19,000,000
Expenditure,	599,135,795	or 24,000,000
Deficit,	125,087,556	or L.5,000,000

1788—BRIENNE, Minister.

Income,	472,415,549 francs, or	L.18,804,000
Expenditure,	527,255,089	or 21,100,000
Deficit, Ordinary,	54,839,540	or L.2,296,000
Extraordinary Deficit,	{ 76,502,367 29,293,585	or 3,024,000 or 1,166,000

Total, 160,635,492 or L.6,486,000

— See *Comptes Rendues par CALONNE et NECKER*, 1781, 1787, and 1788, 2 vols. 4to ; and NECKER, *sur les Finances de France*, i. 92; ii. 517, 518,

The sovereigns of France, having, with an exhausted exchequer, to supply the demands of an expensive court, a vast military establishment, and an insatiable nobility, had made, as might well be expected in such circumstances, the most strenuous efforts, during the course of preceding reigns, to augment the revenue, and fill up the void which, for above a century before, had been so painfully felt between the receipts and the expenditure of the public treasury. But all their endeavours had been rendered abortive by two causes:—1st, The nobility, though abundantly ready to engross for their own families the whole offices and lucrative employments in the state, could never be brought by any effort to abandon their privileges of exemption from the *taille*, the most productive of the direct taxes; and in this resistance they were cordially supported by the clergy, who enjoyed a similar exemption, as well as exemption from the *vingtième*. Their mode of resistance was perfectly simple, and, withal, entirely efficacious. They had influence enough in the parliaments, when a royal decree, imposing any new tax, required to be registered to give it legal validity, to prevent its registration, if it imposed any burden upon them. These legal bodies, though in part composed of the descendants of the *Tiers Etat*, yet formed a sort of subordinate noblesse, and were entirely in the interest of the old aristocracy, many of the highest of whom were proud of a seat in their councils, and with whom they were all associated, either by marriage, or by the nobility conferred by holding office. The financial and internal history of France for a century before the Revolution, is for the most part made up of successive efforts, on the part of the crown, to get new taxes registered by the parliaments, met by refusals on the part of those bodies to comply with the demand.—2d, The old taxes, all of which were exacted from the *Tiers Etat*, and part only from the nobility, had become so oppressive, chiefly in consequence of the greater part of them being imposed in the direct form, that experience had proved that any augmentation of these imposts, levied according to the existing system, was wholly unavailing, as the increased burden brought no additional revenue into the public treasury. Thus the only resource of the crown to meet its constantly increas-

93.
Ineffectual efforts of preceding sovereigns to make up the deficit.

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¹ Soulavie,
iii. 116, 117.
Smyth's
French
Revolution,
i. 116, 117.
Necker, sur
les Finances,
i. 54, 67.

ing expenses, was to borrow money; and to such a length was this carried, that during the four years alone of Necker's administration of the finances, ending in 1781, the loans contracted had amounted to 530,000,000 francs, or £21,250,000 sterling; the annual interest of which, being for the most part on life annuities, was no less than 45,000,000 francs, or £1,800,000 yearly: an immense burden for a nation, the whole net income of which at that period did not exceed £18,000,000.¹*

* Necker gives the following account of the income of France in 1784, when he published his work on the Finances. Those marked *, are those from which the nobility and clergy are exempt,—†, those from which the clergy only :—

Vingtièmes,†	55,000,000 francs,	or	L.2,200,000
Troisième Vingtième,†	21,500,000	or	900,000
Taille,*	91,000,000	or	3,550,000
Capitation,†	41,500,000	or	1,660,000
Impositions locales,	2,000,000	or	80,000
Fermes Générales,	166,000,000	or	6,640,000
Régie Générale,	51,500,000	or	2,060,000
Domaines Royales	41,000,000	or	1,640,000
Postes Royales,	10,300,000	or	412,000
Messageries,	1,100,000	or	44,000
Loterie Royale,	11,500,000	or	460,000
Contribution du clergé,	11,000,000	or	440,000
Octrois des Villes,	27,000,000	or	1,080,000
Aides de Versailles,	900,000	or	36,000
Corvées,	20,000,000	or	800,000
Contraintes,	7,500,000	or	300,000
Objets divers,	2,500,000	or	100,000
Corsica,	600,000	or	24,000
Gardes Françaises et Suisses,	300,000	or	12,000
Princes et engagistes,	2,500,000	or	100,000
Droits des pays d'état,	10,500,000	or	420,000
Mars d'or,	1,700,000	or	68,000
Poudre,	800,000	or	32,000
Monnaies,	500,000	or	20,000
Fermes Royales,	1,100,000	or	44,000
Revenus casuels,	5,700,000	or	228,000
Total Income,	585,000,000 francs,	or	L.23,400,000
	A déduire		Deduct
Frais de recouvrement, } Costs of collection, }	58,000,000 francs,	or	L.2,320,000
Corvées employées sur les routes,	27,000,000	or	1,080,000
	85,000,000	or	L.3,400,000
Total revenue,	585,000,000 francs,	or	L.23,400,000
Costs of collection, &c.,	85,000,000	or	3,400,000
Net revenue,	500,000,000 francs,	or	L.20,000,000

—NECKER, *Sur les Finances*, i. 35, 91.

From this Table it appears, that out of a clear revenue of L.20,000,000 annually, no less than L.7,290,000 belongs to the direct taxes, the taille, vingtièmes, and capitation, the most obnoxious of any, from which either the nobility or clergy, or both, holding fully half the lands of the kingdom, were exempt; and that from the taille, amounting to nearly L.3,600,000, they were both relieved.

While so many different causes were conspiring to produce at once weakness in the government, deep-rooted discontent among the people, and a general departure from ancient landmarks on the part of the leaders of public thought,—the aristocracy and clergy, the natural defenders of the throne, were, from another set of causes, daily becoming feebler and more divided. The policy, so long and successfully carried on by Richelieu and Louis XIV., of attracting the principal nobility, by the lavish distribution of court favours and honours, to the capital, had at once weakened their influence on their own estates, alienated them from the more humble rural proprietors who still remained in the country, and destroyed their respectability and consideration in the eyes of the nation. It was impossible that the peasantry on the estates of the absent proprietors could retain, through successive generations,

The national expenditure was as follows:—

Intérêts de la dette,	207,000,000	francs,	or	L.8,280,000
Remboursements,	27,500,000		or	1,100,000
Pensions,	28,000,000		or	1,120,000
Guerre,	105,600,000		or	4,224,000
Affaires étrangères,	8,500,000		or	340,000
Maison du Roi, (Gardes,)	13,000,000		or	520,000
Bâtimens et Prévôté,	3,400,000		or	136,000
Maisons Royales,	1,500,000		or	60,000
Maison de la Reine,	4,000,000		or	160,000
Frères du Roi,	8,300,000		or	332,000
Frais de recouvrement	58,000,000		or	2,320,000
Ponts et chaussées,	8,000,000		or	320,000
Secrétaire d'état, &c.,	4,000,000		or	160,000
Intendants de provinces	1,400,000		or	56,000
Police,	2,100,000		or	84,000
Pavé de Paris,	900,000		or	36,000
Justice	2,400,000		or	96,000
Maréchaussée,	4,000,000		or	160,000
Mendicité,	1,200,000		or	48,000
Prisons,	400,000		or	16,000
Aumônes,	1,800,000		or	72,000
Dépenses ecclésiastiques,	1,600,000		or	64,000
Routes,	20,000,000		or	800,000
Villes, hôpitaux, &c.,	26,000,000		or	1,040,000
Provinces,	6,500,000		or	260,000
Trésor Royal,	2,000,000		or	80,000
Palais de Justice,	800,000		or	32,000
Isle de Corse,	800,000		or	32,000
Dépenses diverses,	61,300,000		or	2,452,000
				610,000,000 francs, or L.24,400,000

—NECKER, ii. 517, 518.

DETTE PUBLIQUE.

Intérêts perpetuels,	125,600,000	francs,	or	L.5,024,000
Intérêts viagers, (liférents,)	81,400,000		or	3,256,000
				Total, 207,000,000 francs, or L.8,280,000

—NECKER, ii. 356.

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any attachment to a succession of nobles whom they never saw—except, perhaps, for a flying visit of a day or two at the interval of years. Their very names even would have been unknown to them, except for the constant and grinding requisitions for rent or services with which they were associated. The *campagnarde noblesse*, or rural nobility, whose fortunes were too inconsiderable to permit of their following the general bent to Paris, had no ideas in common with the elegant but frivolous seigneurs, to whom they were an object of contempt, who spent their time in the saloons of the capital, or the antechambers of Versailles. The nation, in an age of increasing knowledge and vehement aspirations, could feel no respect for a body of privileged aristocrats who monopolized all the elevated and honourable situations in the kingdom, without possessing any other qualifications for them but their insinuating manners, or address in intrigue, and who increased, by the pensions which they enjoyed from the crown, the burdens of the country, without contributing any thing in return, at least in a direct form, towards the public revenue.¹

¹ Necker, Rév. Franc. i. 158, 161. Scott's Napoleon, chap. i. vol. i. 37, 42. Segur, i. 76.

The influence of the nobility was also weakened, in a most serious degree, by the great number of persons belonging to that order who were to be found in all parts of the country in destitute circumstances, or discreditable employments. Four-fifths of the eighty thousand noble families who existed, were in extreme poverty: the young men of these families were ignorant, idle, and dissolute, lounging away an ignoble existence in provincial theatres, coffee-houses, or billiard-rooms: the young women, for the most part, consigned to the hopeless seclusion of the convent. All public respect was lost for a body, the great majority of which was composed of such characters; while it rigidly excluded all persons of inferior birth from the principal situations in the country. Although, too, the old families of historic names and extensive possessions still enjoyed great influence, and some of the greatest men in France had sprung from their ranks, yet the highest nobles, as a body, were far from possessing the talent, information, or habits, requisite to have enabled them to take a decided or beneficial lead in public affairs. Trained in the antechambers of a palace, perfect in the elegances of a court, pre-eminent in the graces of a drawing-

95.
Inefficiency of the noblesse as a political body.

room, they were but little qualified to struggle in public debate with the aspiring leaders, accustomed to legal contest, who were rising out of a robust democracy. They had never been habituated to the habits of business, the ready elocution, the coolness in argument, which is acquired in England by the aristocracy on the hustings, in conducting county business as grand-jurors, in either house of parliament, or in the public meetings which characterise a free country. Hence their marked inferiority in the hour of trial to a similar class in this country, and the extraordinary facility with which the French monarchy was overturned, when contrasted with the protracted, and in the end successful struggle, which, during so many ages, the aristocracy of Great Britain have maintained with the enemies of the throne.¹

¹ Necker, i. 161, 163. Scott's Napoleon, i. 39, 41. De Staël, Rév. Franc. i. 81.

Nor was this all: the aristocracy itself was divided in France to a most calamitous degree, by the jealousy between the old families and the new noblesse, who had obtained patents of nobility by holding certain official employments,* or had purchased them, during the necessities of former reigns, from the crown. Such had been the distressed state of the royal treasury on many occasions, particularly during the War of the Succession, that patents of nobility were openly sold to the richer bankers and merchants for two thousand crowns (L.500) each. Although these *nouveaux annoblis*, as they were called, were far from enjoying the consideration or influence of the descendants of the great historic houses, yet they were their equals in privileges of every kind; and their great number, amounting as it did to a half of the whole noble families, as well as the great riches which some of them possessed, rendered them too important to be passed over by the old families with silent contempt. Hence an implacable feud, an inextinguishable jealousy, between these two classes of the nobility, which permanently prevented them from adopting any measures for their common defence, and which not even the prospect of dangers which

96.
Fatal division in France, between the old families and the *nouveaux annoblis*.

* Nobility was for the first time attached to the holders of the higher situations in the magistracy, and of course to their descendants, in 1644, by a royal edict, passed under the direction of Cardinal Mazarine. The same prerogatives were successively granted in subsequent reigns, under certain restrictions, to public offices of lesser importance, and the descendants of those who held them.—NECKER, *Sur la Révolution Française*, i. 165.

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threatened both with destruction, was able to allay. The old families regarded with aversion the upstart nobles, some of them descended from the stewards and factors of their ancestors, who now equalled them in privilege and often eclipsed them in fortune; the *nouveaux annoblis* were jealous of the lustre of historic descent, and envied a consideration which all their modern riches were unable to acquire. The latter were so numerous, in consequence of the great number of channels by which nobility had during the last two centuries been reached,* that the king was obliged, out of regard to the great families, to establish regulations at court, making a distinction between them and the old noblesse. This again led to another evil of a still more serious kind. Though these rules related only to the matter of presentation at levees, entries, admission in carriages, and the like, yet they gave rise to incessant heartburnings, and alienated those from each other whose united strength was hardly able to contend with the increasing weight of the *Tiers Etat*.¹

¹ Necker, i. 165, 166. Bouillé, 51, 54. De Staël, *Rév. Franc.* i. 217, 219.

97.
Distracted state of the clergy.

While such was the divided state of the noblesse on the approach of the national crisis, the clergy were if possible still more alienated from each other; and the effects of that ruinous system, which threw all the labour upon the plebeian, and reserved all the honours for the aristocratic portion, of the church, were fatally conspicuous. A large portion of the prelates, all persons of high birth and aristocratic connexions, lived habitually in Paris, to the frequent neglect of their dioceses, and too often spent their time and fortunes in the dissipation of the capital. The *prestige* of their situations, the respect due to their sacred character, was thus weakened, and the aristocracy of the church came to be considered as subject to the same weakness as the lay nobility. The dignities in the cathedrals and elevated offices in the hierarchy were also entirely in the hands of the aristocratic clergy, who were chiefly to be found in Paris or the provincial capitals; while the

* "Près de la moitié de l'ordre de la noblesse, tel qu'il existait à l'approche des derniers Etats-Généraux, était composée de familles annoblies depuis deux siècles, par des charges de conseillers aux parlements, de conseillers à la cour, des aides d'auditeurs, des correcteurs, et de maîtres des comptes, de conseillers au châtelet, de maîtres des requêtes, trésoriers de France, de secrétaires du Roi, du grand et de petit collège, et par d'autres charges encore, comme aussi par des places des capitouls d'échevins, et par des brevets émanés de la faveur des rois, des ministres, et des premiers commis."—NECKER, *Sur la Révolution Française*, i. 164, 165.

immense body of curés, or country clergy, toiled in obscure usefulness among their flocks, hardly distinguishable in fortune or education from the burghers and peasants by whom they were surrounded. This numerous class, the representatives of which composed three-fourths of the clergy in the States-General, all sprung from the *Tiers Etat*, had no sympathy of feeling, and still less identity of interest, with the high and dignified clergy. On the contrary, they considered them as their bitterest enemies; because, belonging to the same profession, they monopolized alike its emoluments and its honours, without discharging the heaviest parts of its duties. The bishops had no influence over them, because their plebeian birth precluded their rising to any of the dignities of the church. It will appear in the sequel with what fatal consequences this preponderance of the plebeian clergy was attended, on the opening of the States-General. But the evil was inherent in the state of the church, as it was constituted in France, and would not have been remedied by keeping its representatives in a separate chamber from the *Tiers Etat*; for the number of the curés was so considerable, that it greatly preponderated over the representatives of all the noble clergy put together.^{1*}

¹ Necker, i. 156, 157.

The extraordinary preponderance of the CAPITAL was another circumstance which contributed, in the most powerful manner, to endanger the government, and weaken the national strength which the king might summon to his support in defence of the monarchy. In every age, great cities have been found to be the centres and foci, as it were, of democracy; and what would not *a priori* have been expected, this passion is generally strongest in those situations where the aristocracy or the court have had their habitual residence.† The reason is,

^{98.}
Disastrous effect of the great influence of Paris.

* In the Constitutional Assembly there were of the clergy—

Archbishops and bishops,	48	Curés, 210
Abbots and canons,	35	

83 —See *infra*, chap. iv.

† The universality of this tendency in a free community, is clearly demonstrated by the present state of the representation under the Reform constituency in Great Britain. London has seventeen democratic members out of twenty; in Brighton and Bath, solely supported by the aristocracy, the whole members are liberal; Windsor itself can with difficulty return one member in the interest of the crown. Edinburgh, long the seat of the landed and legal aristocracy of Scotland, returns two liberals by an overwhelming majority; in Glasgow, Conservative principles are

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that the middle class are there brought into close, and to them vexatious, proximity with the higher, by whose pride they are insulted, with whose weaknesses they are familiar, of whose superiority they are jealous. The advantages of their expenditure, and the profits of their custom, are unable to check this strong propensity: on the contrary, they rather increase it; because for one that obtains these benefits, many more are rendered envious by being refused them. If this is the general and well-known tendency of mankind in every age, when the minds of the people are set in a ferment by democratic passion, it may be conceived with what prodigious and unprecedented force it operated in Paris, during the anxious years which preceded, and the bloody times which followed the Revolution; containing as it did the concentrated energy of all France drawn into a focus by the policy of preceding reigns, redundant in numbers, gorged with wealth, squalid with want, abounding in talent, overflowing with profligacy, fervent in ambition, dead to religion.¹

¹ Necker, i. 160, 162.
De Staël, Rév. Franc. i. 80.

99.
The element of rural loyalty was wanting, or very weak in France.

When other countries have been convulsed by revolutionary passions, it has been in the steadiness, loyalty, and tenacious adherence to custom of the country, that government has ever found a counterpoise to the vehemence of urban democracy. It was the counties of England which maintained so long and gallant a struggle, in the time of Charles I., with the forces of the Parliament, which were all recruited in the great towns; it was in the mountains of Scotland that the exiled family, a century afterwards, found those heroic supporters, who fearlessly threw themselves into a contest to all appearance hopeless, and all but overturned, by the mere force of chivalrous devotion, the whole power of the Hanoverian family. But in France, this invaluable element in the social system was in a great measure wanting; and, where it did exist, its importance was unknown. An absent nobility had little influence over their vassals; an oppressed and squalid peasantry no inducement to take up arms in defence of their govern-

much more generally diffused among the working-class, because there, on the one hand, an aristocracy is unknown, and on the other, the evils of democratic ascendancy are periodically brought home to the most prejudiced mind, in the shape of trades' unions and strikes, which, in every season of distress, consign thousands and tens of thousands of industrious persons, anxious to work, to compulsory idleness for months together, at the dictation of an often unknown, and always despotic, committee.

ment. Thus the monarchy, to all practical purposes, was reduced to the metropolis. The grand distinction founded on the representation of the country, between ancient and modern civilisation, had passed away; again, as in Athens and Rome, tumults in the capital had become revolution in the state. In La Vendée and Brittany alone, a different state of society existed; and there, in subsequent times, the king might have found the means of saving the monarchy: but the *noblesse campagnarde* of the Bocage were unknown in the capital; its seigneurs had never figured in the *Œil-de-Bœuf* at Versailles; and France, ignorant of its only means of salvation, neglected the heroic provinces of the west, and followed the capital into the gulf of perdition.

When so many concurring causes existed in France to excite discontent amongst the people, and paralyse resistance on the part of the government, it is not surprising that the higher class of writers foresaw the coming storm, and descried the causes of alarm, where the inconsiderate multitude saw only reason for congratulation. Rousseau had long prophesied that the American war was the opening of a new era—the *era of revolutions*; and twenty years before, an English nobleman, well versed in history and the human heart, had thus expressed himself on the symptoms of social disorganization which had appeared in France:—"Inform yourself minutely," said Lord Chesterfield, in writing to his son in 1753, "on the affairs of France: they grow serious, and, in my opinion, will grow more and more so every day. The people are poor, and consequently discontented: those who have religion are divided in their notions of it, which is saying that they hate one another: the clergy will not forgive the parliament, nor the parliament forgive them: the army must, without doubt, in their own minds at least, take different parts in all those disputes which upon occasion would break out: armies, though always the supporters and tools of absolute power, are always the destroyers of it too, by frequently changing the hands in which they think proper to lodge it. The French nation reasons freely, which they never did before, upon matters of religion and government, and begin to be, as the Italians say, *spregiudicando*—to have got rid of all their prejudices: the officers do so too:

100.
Remarkable
observation
of Lord
Chesterfield
on the state
of France.

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¹ Chesterfield's Letters, Dec. 25, 1753.

in short, all the symptoms which I have ever met with in history, *previous to great changes and revolutions in government, now exist and daily increase in France.*"¹ Nor were these gloomy but just forebodings confined to British statesmen: the same truths were clearly perceived and boldly expressed on the other side of the Channel; and there exists a letter written on the subject to Louis XV., in 1761, which well deserves a place in history, from the lucid view which it presents of the impending dangers.*

101.
Louis XV. foresaw the dangers of the French monarchy.

Louis XV., who, amidst all his profligacy and sensual habits, was by no means destitute of penetration, and could occasionally be roused to great firmness in the execution of his designs, as well as good sense in avoiding difficulties, was fully alive to the dangerous aspect which society had assumed in France, both from the irreligious tendency of the philosophers and the independent spirit of the parliaments. "These people," he used to say, alluding to Voltaire and the Encyclopedists, "will destroy the monarchy." On another occasion he declared—"The Regent Orleans was wrong in restoring to the parliaments the right of petitioning: they will end in ruining the state." "Sire," replied the Duc de Choiseul, "it is too strong to be overthrown by a set of magistrates." "They are an assembly of republicans," replied the king; "however, things will probably last as long as I shall." "I have had great difficulty," said the same monarch in his latter years, "in extricating myself from the contests with the parliaments during my whole reign: but let my grandson take

* ——"Your finances, Sire, are in the greatest disorder, and the great majority of states have perished through this cause. Your ministers are without genius and capacity. A seditious flame has sprung up in the very bosom of your parliament; you seek to corrupt them, and the remedy is worse than the disease. Open war is carried on against religion. The Encyclopedists, under pretence of enlightening mankind, are sapping its foundations. All the different kinds of liberty are connected; the Philosophers and the Protestants tend towards republicanism, as well as the Jansenists; the Philosophers strike at the root, the others lop the branches, and their efforts, without being concerted, will one day lay the tree low. Add to this, the Economists, whose object is political liberty, as that of others is liberty of worship: and the government may find itself, in twenty or thirty years, undermined in every direction, and will then fall with a crash. Lose no time in restoring order to the state of the finances; embarrassments necessitate fresh taxes, which grind the people, and induce them afterwards to revolt. A time will come, Sire, when the people shall be enlightened, and that time is probably approaching." It was no common man who, in 1761, wrote this anonymous letter. It produced a great impression on the king, his minister the Duc de Choiseul, and Madame Pompadour.—See *Mémoires de MAD. HAUSSET, (Femme-de-Chambre à Mad. Pompadour),* p. 37.

care of them, for it is more than probable they will endanger his crown." Naturally indolent, however, averse to any restraint upon his costly debaucheries, and irritated at the long-continued resistance which the parliaments had made to his authority, Louis XV. saw no way of extricating himself from these embarrassments but by a *coup-d'état*, which should at once dissolve the refractory assemblies. He had too much penetration not to see that such a violent proceeding, in the present temper of the people, could not permanently arrest the national movement; but he thought, and the event showed with reason, that it might stop it for his own lifetime; and, like most other systematic voluptuaries, he cared little for any thing which might occur after he himself had ceased to bear a part in sublunary affairs.¹

¹ De Staël, *Rév. Franc.* i. 43. Smyth's *French Revol.* i. 81. *Soulavie*, ii. 29. *Introd.*

An opportunity occurred before the close of his reign for putting these principles into execution. It had been the policy of the Duc de Choiseul, who for many years had been prime minister to the king, to attach himself to the party of the parliaments, and to endeavour to render those bodies docile to his will, by the infusion into their ranks of a majority of the nobles attached to his interests. But after the overthrow and exile of that minister in 1771, it was resolved by his successor, the Duc d'Aiguillon, a dissolute and unprincipled, but bold and vigorous man, to abolish those refractory assemblies altogether; in the hope that he would thus at once destroy the stronghold of the dispossessed minister, and the only serious restraint upon the authority of the crown. This plan was warmly supported by Madame du Barri, who was extremely anxious to get quit of these disagreeable obstacles to her extravagance, and saw no limits to the prodigality in which she might indulge, if the king could impose new taxes at pleasure, without the necessity of having them registered by any other authority.^{2*} The Chancellor Maupeou, an able and intrepid, but arbitrary courtier,† supported the same

102.
Overthrow of the parliaments resolved on by Louis XV

² *Soulavie*, *Règne de Louis XVI.* i. 99, 103. *Ann. Reg.* 1770, 47, 51

* Madame du Barri brought all the remonstrances of the parliaments to the king with these words—"Sire, here is another representation to strip you by degrees of your authority, and at last effect your dethronement."—*SOULAVIE*, *Histoire de la Règne de Louis XVI.* i. 103.

† Maupeou, to pay court to Madame du Barri, used to demean himself so far as to play with Zamore, her favourite black servant. Zamore, two-and-twenty years afterwards, treacherously divulged the place of his mistress's retreat, and brought her to the scaffold.—*WEBER'S Mémoires*, i. 46, note.

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design with all the weight of his knowledge and experience. Such was the trio by whom the destruction of what remained of a constitution in France was effected: a tyrannical minister, an abandoned prostitute, and a sycophant chancellor.

The mode of proceeding was soon resolved on. Maupeou suggested a *coup-d'état*, which "should, at once and for ever, deliver the royal authority from the constant opposition which, during fifty-five years, has never ceased to traverse it." The king had been involved in a vehement contest with the chief parliaments of his kingdom during the year 1770, in order to secure the Duc d'Aiguillon, then a court favourite, from the consequences of malversations in his province; and no sooner was that nobleman himself in power, than their entire destruction was determined on. In the course of this contest the court carried their pretensions to such a height, as to require the whole parliaments of France to register a resolution, declaring that they were legally bound to register any edict the king addressed to them. This was in effect to declare themselves denuded of all real authority, and they, most properly, refused to register such a suicidal mandate. The king reiterated his commands; but they persisted in their refusal, with these noble words—"Your edict, sire, is destructive of all law: your parliament is charged to maintain law; and the law perishing, they would perish with it. These, sire, are the last words of your parliaments." They, accordingly, closed their sittings, and all judicial business in the capital was suspended. The king gave them warning, that if they did not resume the discharge of their judicial duties, he would dissolve them. As the parliaments showed no disposition to recede, the *coup-d'état* was fixed for the night of the 19th January. At midnight on that night, all the magistrates of the parliament of Paris were wakened at the same hour by royal officers, accompanied by musketeers of the guard, who served each with a summons, ordering him to resume his functions, and requiring a peremptory answer, "yes or no." Some, during the first moments of alarm, yielded; but the next day, being assembled, they unanimously retracted their consent. In consequence, early on the following morning, they were all arrested, their functions declared at an end, themselves entirely

103.
Destruction
of the par-
liaments,
21st Jan.
1771.

dispersed, and sent into banishment in different towns and villages at a distance from Paris.* A new court, composed of the creatures of the sovereign, was established, to discharge the functions of the old parliament; and soon after a bed of justice was held, dividing into six new jurisdictions the ancient jurisdiction of the parliament of Paris, which had extended from Arras to Lyons. Shortly after, the parliaments of Rouen, Besançon, Bordeaux, Aix, Toulouse, and Brittany, which had adhered to the parliament of Paris in this contest, were suppressed, their members exiled, and new courts of law established in their room.¹

Feb. 22.

¹ *Soulavie*,
i. 104, 110.
Ann. Reg.
1771, 90, 93

104.
Mr Burke's
reflections
on this
event.

“Thus,” says Mr Burke, “the noble efforts of that faithful repository of the laws, and remembrancer of the ancient rights of the kingdom, terminated in its own final dissolution. Its fall was not more glorious from the cause in which it was engaged, than from the circumstances that attended it; several of the other parliaments having become voluntary sacrifices at its funeral pyre. That ancient spirit, from which the Franks derive their name, though still gloriously alive in the breasts of a few, no longer exists in the bulk of the people. Long dazzled with the splendour of a magnificent and voluptuous court, with the glare of a vast military power, and with the glory of some great monarch, they cannot now, in the grave light of the shade, behold things in their natural state; nor can those who have been long used to submit without enquiry to every act of power—who have been successfully encouraged in dissipation, and taught to trifle with the most important subjects—suddenly acquire that strength and tenor of mind which is alone capable of forming great resolutions, and of undertaking arduous and dangerous tasks. Thus has this great revolution in the history and government of France, taken place without the smallest

* The noble and disinterested conduct of the parliament of Paris, and the other parliaments of France, on this occasion, will not be properly appreciated unless it is recollected that these assemblies, though numerous, were legal courts, which determined nearly the whole of the legal business of the country, and that many situations in them, thus sacrificed at the altar of patriotic devotion, were attended with great emolument, and had been purchased for very large sums of money. In particular, Gilbert de Voisin, principal clerk to the parliament of Paris, had bought his office for 1,000,000 francs (L.40,000,) and it brought him in 100,000 francs (L.4000) a-year. He was ordered by the king to resume his office in the new tribunal; but he replied he had taken his oath to the parliament, and could not act but in conjunction with it. His place was in consequence confiscated, and he was banished to Languedoc.—See *Ann. Reg.* 1771, p. 91.

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¹ Ann. Reg. 1771, 89, by Burke.

² On Jan. 21, 1793.

105.
Conquest of Corsica, which made Napoleon a French citizen.

June 1769.

commotion, or without the opposition that in other periods would have attended an infraction of the heritable jurisdiction of a petty vassal."¹ These were the desponding reflections of the greatest political philosopher, and most far-seeing statesman, of modern times; but a more memorable instance never was exhibited of the danger of judging of the final result of events by their immediate consequences, or applying to the slow march of human affairs the hasty conclusions of impatient observation. On that day two-and-twenty years from that on which the parliaments were exiled, Louis XVI., the grandson of the arbitrary monarch, ascended the fatal scaffold.²

Another event, of apparently little general importance, but interesting from the heroic spirit which it developed, and of incalculable moment in its ultimate results, took place during the declining years of Louis XV. Corsica had long been an object of ambition to the French Government, from its proximity to the shores of Provence, and the command which it seemed probable it would give them in the Mediterranean; and in 1768, the Duc de Choiseul conceived a favourable opportunity had occurred for carrying his designs into execution. The Genoese had formerly exercised a sort of sovereignty over this interesting island; but the strength of its mountain fastnesses, and the independent spirit of its inhabitants, had rendered it so difficult to maintain their authority, that they were glad to transfer their rights to France for a considerable sum of money. The Corsicans, when the bargain was completed, and the French troops came to take possession, evinced the utmost indignation at being thus ceded to a foreign power without their knowledge or consent, and under their gallant leader PAOLI, maintained a protracted and heroic defence in their mountains; but the contest was too unequal between an island in the Mediterranean and the monarchy of France. England, disquieted about her American possessions, stood aloof, though the cause of the brave mountaineers excited the warmest sympathy in the nation; Austria had no fellow-feeling for a people resisting the cession of its government; Paoli was compelled, after incredible efforts, to embark and come to England, and Corsica was subdued. But little did the French Government suspect the awful

retribution which was to fall on them for this aggression, or the citizen whom they embraced in the nation by this extension of its territory. Seventeen months before this conquest was completed, a boy had been born in Corsica,¹ then beyond the French dominions, but who by its annexation became a French citizen, obtained an entrance to its armies, and ultimately became master of every thing it contained. His name was NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE.^{2*}

Louis XV. did not long survive the destruction of his old and persevering antagonists, the parliaments. His constitution, long enfeebled by excess of licentious indulgence, was unable to withstand the shock of any serious disorder; and the smallpox, which he took by the infection of a girl of fourteen, who had been introduced to his embraces from the *Parc-aux-Cerfs*, carried him off, after a short illness, on the 10th May 1774. Such was the state to which his body had been reduced by a long course of dissolute habits, that he saw his limbs literally putrefy and drop off before he himself expired. The odour was so dreadful, that the whole wing of the palace where he lay was deserted. As his latter end approached, he was strongly awakened to a sense of the abandoned life he had led, and expressed the greatest apprehensions of punishment in the world to come. The deathbed of the dying profligate was haunted by the terrors of the awful gulf of flames which he supposed to be opening to receive him.† His conduct had long exhibited a strange mixture of superstition and sensuality: when exhausted with his revels in the *Parc-aux-Cerfs*, he used to pray with its youthful inmates that they might preserve their orthodox principles.³ None of his favourites attended his dying couch: Du Barri even had fled. The dread of infection had banished all the inmates of the harem; but it had no terrors for his three daughters, the princesses, who, long strangers to his court, were found at his deserted

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¹ On 5th
Feb. 1768.
² Ann. Reg.
1769, 46.
Salgues, i.
42, 43, 64,
65. Smyth's
Lectures, i.
68, 70.

106.
Death of
Louis XV.
May 10,
1774.

³ Dulaure,
viii. 217.

* Napoleon was born at Ajaccio on the 5th February 1768. He subsequently gave out that he was born on the 15th August 1769, his saint's day, in order to make it appear that he had been born a French citizen, as Corsica was annexed to France in June 1769. He was christened *Napoliône Buonaparte*. This appears from his baptismal register still existing in the second arrondissement of Paris, on occasion of his marriage with Josephine in 1796.—See SALGUES, i. 64, 65; and *Quarterly Review*, xii. 239.

† “Le Roi ne voyait que la mort en perspective, et ne parlait que de l'abîme de feu qui allait s'ouvrir, disait-il, pour punir une vie jusqu'à la fin si luxurieuse.”—SOULAVIE, i. 160.

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II.

bedside at the approach of the angel of death, and remained there, braving the pestilence, till he expired. Meanwhile the courtiers disappeared in crowds to pay their court to the Dauphin: the sound of their footsteps, rushing in a body across the *Œil-de-Bœuf*, to announce the death of the late monarch, "was terrible," says a spectator, "and absolutely like thunder." But Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette were impressed with a very different sense of the duties and difficulties which awaited them; for they fell on their knees when the news was brought, and with eyes streaming with tears, exclaimed, "Guide and protect us, O God! for we are too young to reign."¹

¹ Soulavie, i. 160, 162. Bésenal, i. 209, 308. Dulaure, viii. 217.

107.
Advantages of the French system of government.

From this account of the old French government prior to the Revolution, it is evident that, amidst much that was iniquitous and oppressive, it contained several institutions which were worthy of admiration, and some of which were decidedly superior to the corresponding system in this country. Among these particulars, the following are in an especial manner worthy of notice.

108.
Excellence of the parliaments as courts of law.

In the *first* place, The parliaments or courts of law in France, were decidedly superior to the ambulatory courts of Westminster Hall, and the unpaid justices of England. The French courts, indeed, were subject to one signal defect—the result of the amalgamation of their different provinces at successive times with the monarchy of Clovis; viz. that they were not subject to any fixed review of the supreme courts at Paris; and thus the parliaments of Bordeaux, Orleans, Aix, Lyons, Rouen, and other places, ran in many particulars into separate usages and customs, which acquired the force of law, and rendered it different in different provinces of the kingdom. But with this exception, the parliaments were in the highest degree admirable. The magisterial class, from which their members were chiefly taken, a link between the aristocracy and the people, above the *Tiers Etat*, but inferior to the old noblesse, constituted perhaps the most respectable and enlightened body in France. They were infinitely superior to the unpaid and unprofessional magistracy of England. Almost all its statesmen and ministers arose from their ranks. And although the decisions of the different parliaments were at variance on

several points, yet being all founded, not on statutory enactment so much as consuetudinary usage, drawn from that inexhaustible mine of wisdom the old Roman law, they were in the main consistent with each other, and constituted an extraordinary monument of legal ability and just adjudication. If any one doubts this, let him read Pothier's incomparable treatises on contracts, and the various personal rights, which are in a great degree drawn from their decisions, and he will at once perceive its superiority, on all points save commercial, to the English law.* A decisive proof of this superiority, how unwilling soever the English may be to admit it, has been afforded by one circumstance. The Code Napoleon, which now gives law to half of Europe, and has survived, in the countries where it was established, the empire of its author, is in almost all points, at least in the ordinary law between man and man, a mere transcript of the decisions of the French parliaments, as they were digested and arranged by Pothier; a clear indication that they were founded on the principles of justice, and the experienced necessities or convenience of mankind. But, we have never heard of any such retention by an independent state, unconnected by descent with England, of its statute or common law.

Secondly. The circumstance which, to English ears, appears most strange, perhaps contributed more than any other to this result; viz. that the situations in the parliaments were acquired by *purchase*, and were consequently not liable to removal by the crown. Without pretending that this mode of acquiring judicial situations and power is so good as that which takes place under a free government, where they are the reward of tried ability and established learning, it may safely be affirmed that it was infinitely better than any known in England prior to the Revolution. We must not confound the purchase of the *office* with money with the swaying of the decision by bribes; the one makes the judge independent, the other proves him venal. Situated as France was before the Revolution, with no national representation, and hardly any restraint

109.

Advantages
of seats in
them being
acquired by
purchase.

* The English commercial law, as it has been founded on the civil law, and matured by those great masters in jurisprudence, Lords Hardwicke, Mansfield, Kenyon, Ellenborough, and Abbott, is the first in the world.

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II.

on the prerogative of the crown, it is difficult to say where a counterpoise to the power of the sovereign could have been found if it had not been in the independence, the weight, and the patriotic spirit of the courts of justice. In England, before 1688, as the king could not, by his own prerogative, imprison or destroy an obnoxious subject, he had no resource but to make the courts of law the instrument of his fears or his vengeance. Hence the judges for long held their situations only during pleasure; and the English state-trials exhibit, prior to the Revolution, as Hallam has remarked, "the most appalling mass of judicial iniquity which is to be found in the whole annals of the world." In France, a *lettre-de-cachet* at once settled the matter, and too often destroyed the victim; but the courts of law, at least, were not prostituted, and the members of the parliaments, who held their situations by the tenure of purchase, remained in sturdy independence—neither seeking to be gained, nor capable in general of being seduced by the court.

110.
Difference
in conse-
quence be-
tween the
independ-
ence of the
courts of
law in the
two coun-
tries prior
to their
Revolu-
tions.

This difference has appeared in the most remarkable manner in the history of the two countries. Down to the Revolution of 1688, the courts of law in England were constantly made the instruments of legal or parliamentary oppression. Each party which gained the mastery of the crown, alternately made them the instrument of its oppression or its terrors; the cruel injustice of the Popish and the Rye-house plots, were alternately practised by opposite parties by means of the same instrumentality of judge and jury; and the name of Jeffreys remains an eternal monument that the Revolution itself, which, for the first time, really purified the British ermine, was brought on by the base subservience of the most exalted judges to the passions and mandates of the crown. In France, on the other hand, the parliaments in every part of the country had been, for two centuries before the Revolution of 1689, in almost constant opposition to the royal authority; their judgments were sometimes unjust, their punishments often inhuman, but this was the result of the temper of the times, of the cruelty of the clergy, or of the prejudices of the aristocracy, not of their subservience to the mandates of the sovereign. The most

severe and hazardous contests in which the crown was ever engaged were those with the parliaments of the kingdom, and the immediate cause of the Revolution was the experienced impossibility of getting the parliament of Paris to register even those new taxes that were essential to pay the public creditors, which, as a last resource, compelled the king to convoke the States-General. In England, the Revolution was brought on by the base subservience—in France, by the sturdy resistance, of the courts of law to the mandates of the throne.

Thirdly. The system of intendants of provinces which obtained in France, and the custom of selecting the ministers of the crown from the ablest of their number, was one admirably calculated to provide a succession of experienced and competent statesmen to direct public affairs. The intendants of provinces were selected from the most distinguished of the magisterial officers; and from these, after twenty or thirty years spent in the public service, the ministers of the crown were in general appointed. In this way there was secured for France, in almost every department, that invaluable quality in statesmen, a practical acquaintance with the country. In this respect the old French custom may furnish much to envy, both to the constitutional monarchy of Great Britain and that of modern France. In England, as the practical direction of affairs is placed in the House of Commons, and its vote determines which party is to obtain the reins of power, oratorical skill has come to be the great passport to greatness. Efficiency in debate is the one thing needful in a cabinet minister. In this respect the statesmen of England have acquired an extraordinary, perhaps an unprecedented, degree of ability. But power in debate is not statesmanlike wisdom, though it may coexist with it; on the contrary, the education and habits which produce it are often fitted to preclude the acquisition of that practical acquaintance with affairs which is the only sure foundation of beneficial legislation. The French statesmen of the eighteenth century, trained in the actual government of the provinces, often brought to the helm of affairs that knowledge, derived from their own experience and observation, which our ministers, trained in the debates of parliament, only acquire at second-hand, through the

111.
Excellence
of the
French sys-
tem of in-
tendants of
provinces.

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doubtful and often deceptive channel of parliamentary commissions. France can boast a succession of statesmen, Sully, Colbert, Louvois, Turgot, Calonne, Vergennes, Necker, to whom England, at the same period, could exhibit no parallel. What it wanted was not wisdom in its statesmen to discern the proper course, and patriotism to correct evils, but national support to counteract the aristocratic influence which sought to govern the state for the benefit chiefly of the privileged classes.

112.
Reflections
on the
causes
which pre-
ceded the
Revolution.

Minute as the details recorded in the preceding pages may appear to many, they will not, by the reflecting reader, be deemed misplaced, even in a work of general history, and their consideration leads to conclusions of much more real importance than the more interesting and tragic catastrophes, in which the great social conflict of the eighteenth century is so soon to terminate. When the conflict is once begun, when irretrievable faults have been committed on the one side, unpardonable crimes perpetrated on the other, the period for instruction to the statesman, for examples to the patriot, is past; it is the soldier who is then to learn greatly to dare, the citizen nobly to endure. The period which it really behoves the inhabitants of a free state, and still more of one advancing to freedom, to study, is that which *precedes* the collision: the social evils, the moral sins, which alienate the different classes of society from each other, or disable them for the discharge of their duty: the long-continued causes which, inducing a thirst for change on the one side, and a disability to resist on the other, at length bring about an irretrievable convulsion. In that stage the malady is still susceptible of cure; the diseased parts may be healed, the festering wounds closed; but if this period is allowed to elapse without the proper remedies being applied, it is generally a very doubtful matter whether any human wisdom can, at a future stage, avert the catastrophe. This period is generally considered as the one which it especially behoves the holders of property to investigate, in order to learn in what way the evils which menace their possessions, or undermine their influence, may be avoided; but, without disputing the importance of such a study, it may safely be affirmed that it is one which it still more behoves the lovers of freedom to consider, in order to

prevent, ere it is too late, the shipwreck of all their hopes in the stormy sea of Revolution.

Selfishness and oppression in the higher classes, tyrannical exactions by kings, invidious privileges of nobles, the obstinate retention in one age of the institutions originating in the necessities and suited to the circumstances of another, are commonly considered as the causes of revolutions. That they have a material share in aggravating them, will probably be disputed by none who have considered the social state of France anterior to 1789, even as it is portrayed in the preceding sketch. But they are not, taken alone, their cause. A revolution is the result of a *diseased state of the national mind*; the spirit which gives rise to it issues from the selfish recesses of the heart; it is wholly distinct from the passionate love of freedom which springs from the generous affections, and is founded in the noblest principles of our nature. The latter is based on virtue, the former on vice; the latter on the love of freedom, the former on the passion for licentiousness; the latter on generosity, the former on selfishness. Hypocrisy is the invariable characteristic of the revolutionary principle; it borrows the glow of generosity to cover the blackness of selfishness; ever using the language of freedom, it is ever prompting the actions of despôtism. A profound sense of religion has in every age, from those of the Roman republic to that of the English commonwealth, been the foundation of the latter principle; a total and avowed irreligion, from the days of Catiline to those of Robespierre, has characterised the former. The lover of freedom is willing, if necessary, to sacrifice himself for his country; the revolutionist has seldom any other object but to sacrifice his country to himself; and if he can elevate his own fortunes, he is ever willing to fall down and worship the most frightful tyranny that ever decimated mankind. If we would ascertain the causes of the establishment of liberty in any country, we must look for them in the circumstances which have produced in the general mind a predominance of virtue over vice; the secret springs of revolution are to be found in those which have given vice an ascendancy over virtue.

That France, when the great convulsion broke out, had serious grievances to complain of, great evils that loudly

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114.
It was the national vices, not the national sufferings, which produced the Revolution.

called for remedy, is apparent on the most superficial observation; but these causes alone never have, and never will, produce a *revolution*. They often have produced, and might then have produced, *civil warfare* and social contests, but not that total overthrow of all institutions and principles which occurred on the triumph of the Jacobins. The energy of Roman democracy chafed for three centuries against the galling fetters of its proud patricians; but it was not till public virtue and private morality had been sapped by the spoils of conquest and the selfishness of ambition, that a democratic revolution was effected by the successive efforts of the Gracchi, Marius, and Cæsar. The flagrant abuses of the Romish church induced the fervour of the Reformation, which naturally led to the insurrection of the boors; but the great fabric of German society was unaffected even by that dreadful convulsion, coming as it did in the wake of a religious schism which had rent asunder the world. The extreme principles of Jacobin fanaticism were roused in England by the oppression of the barons in the time of Richard II., but the feudal monarchy of the Normans was hardly shaken by the armed bands of Wat Tyler. The desolation occasioned by the English armies, the disunion and cruelty of their own noblesse, brought on the frightful horrors of the Jacquerie insurrection in France; but its effects were confined to local massacre and ruin, and produced no permanent change on the structure of French institutions. Religious fervour combined with old established habits of freedom in producing the Great Rebellion in England; but the dreams of the fifth monarchy men vanished in airy speculation, and the fundamental features of British government were concealed, not changed, by the usurpation of Cromwell. The change of dynasty rendered necessary by the Romish tyranny of James II., has been erroneously styled a revolution; it was only a new settlement of the government upon the old, and, as the event has proved, a still more aristocratic basis than that on which it formerly rested.

It is not, therefore, social evils, but the loss of national virtue, which converts the struggle for liberty into the horrors of revolution; and the one will never be turned into the other, till the love of freedom has been converted into the thirst for plunder among the poor, and the bravery

It is the loss of public virtue which produces a revolution.

which won property has been extinguished by the enjoyments to which it has led, among the rich. It was neither the *taille* nor the *lettres-de-cachet*, the privileges of the noblesse nor the sufferings of the peasantry, the disorder of the finances nor the contest with the parliaments, which produced the French Revolution. Great as these evils were, they might have been remedied without the overthrow of society; serious as were these sufferings, they have been in innumerable cases exceeded, without inducing the slightest public disturbance, and as often removed without producing an irretrievable convulsion. It was the coincidence of these evils with a total disruption of the moral and religious bulwarks of society, which really occasioned the disaster; for that produced a selfish thirst for criminal advancement in one class of the people, and a base disinclination to resistance in the other. Voltaire and Rousseau stand forth as the real authors of the Revolution; it was they and their followers who made shipwreck, in the first of European monarchies, of the noblest of causes—that of public freedom; for it was they who tainted the mind, in both its assailants and defenders, with the fatal gangrene of individual selfishness. It was the dissolute manners of Louis XV., the corruptions of the Regent Orleans, the orgies of *Egalité*, and the infamy of Du Barri, which dissolved the power of resistance in the monarchy, by corrupting the natural defenders of the throne. It was the tyranny of the priesthood, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which, by removing the only effectual check on the vices of the hierarchy, and inducing a reaction even against religion itself, overturned the altar.

CHAPTER III.

PROXIMATE CAUSES OF THE REVOLUTION.

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III.

1774.

1.
Birth of
Louis XVI.,
and charac-
ter of the
Dauphin,
his father.

LOUIS XVI., born on the 23d August 1754, was the grandson of Louis XV. His father, the Dauphin, son of that monarch, died at the age of thirty-six in the year 1765, and left him heir-apparent to the throne of France. The character of his father, for whom Louis XVI. always entertained a profound veneration, contributed powerfully to the formation of his own, and exercised in this way a material influence on the history of France. His habits afforded the most striking contrast to the general license with which he was surrounded. With all his vices, Louis XV. was not, at least till his later years, destitute of a sense of propriety; and he, in consequence, kept his son at a distance from his person, and the corruptions in which he himself so freely indulged. The Dauphin, in the midst of the magnificence of Versailles, lived almost the life of a hermit, surrounded by books, and delighting only in the society of a few chosen friends, men older than himself, and possessed of talent and information. The events of past times were his favourite study: the "Esprit des Loix" his constant companion. "History," said he, "teaches many lessons to the sons which it would not have ventured to give their fathers." He was strongly attached, like all the princes of his family, to the Roman Catholic religion—perhaps too rigid an observer of its forms; and profoundly afflicted by the banishment of the Jesuits: circumstances which render it doubtful how far his turn of mind was suited for the stormy scenes to which his son

was called. His severity of morals and rectitude of principle preserved him free from reproach in the midst of the seductions of a dissolute court, from which he lived in a great measure estranged, and communicated the same habits to his son, whose early years were spent in domestic privacy with his parents under the splendid roof of Versailles.¹

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III.

1774.

¹ Droz, Hist. de Louis XVI., i. 115, 116. Soul. ii. 1.

The Dauphin left three sons, all of whom became kings of France: the Duc de Berri, afterwards Louis XVI.; the Count de Provence, who succeeded on the fall of Napoleon by the title of Louis XVIII.; and the Count D'Artois, who ascended the throne on the death of Louis XVIII. in 1826, and was driven from it by the revolt of the Barricades in 1830. The eldest, who became the Dauphin, was eleven years of age on his father's death, so that he was old enough to have received his earliest and most durable impressions from his example. The choice which had been made of his preceptor was not a fortunate one: the Duc de la Vauguyon, who was entrusted with the chief place in that important duty, was devout rather than enlightened; adroit as a courtier more than skilful as a statesman. The young princes were carefully and equally instructed in the elements of general knowledge; but the difference of their character soon displayed itself. The Dauphin, like his father, was reserved and studious; his manners were shy and modest, his figure was heavy and ungainly; and distrust in himself early appeared in his demeanour. The Count of Provence, though fond of books, was at the same time observant of men; he had more vivacity in his character, and soon became a great favourite with the courtiers. The Count D'Artois, volatile, impetuous, and ardent, seemed to have inherited his grandfather's love of pleasure, and entered with all the thoughtless avidity of youth into all the amusements of the palace. He had ample subject for serious reflection before he closed his life, dethroned and exiled, in a foreign land.²

^{2.}
Early characters of the Dauphin's three sons.

² Soul. ii. 42, 43. Droz, i. 116, 117. Camp. i. 123.

During his youth, the character of Louis XVI. still more clearly developed itself. He was a good scholar; read Latin and English with facility; was an excellent geographer, and evinced an accurate and tenacious memory, for which he continued remarkable through life. But his recollection was of facts, or persons, and dates, rather than

^{3.}
Early disposition of Louis XVI.

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principles; and he early showed a tendency to rely on the judgment of others, in matters of opinion, in preference to his own: a disposition in which he was unhappily encouraged by his earliest minister Maurepas, and which proved the principal cause of the calamities in which he was afterwards involved. He was so early impressed with a horror at the dissolute pleasures of his grandfather, and the insatiable avidity of his courtiers, that when told that he was called by the people Louis "Le Désiré," he said he would rather be called "Louis Le Sévère." He had no disposition to gallantry, and kept at a distance from all the seducing beauties of the court; a peculiarity which rendered him an object of undisguised aversion to Madame du Barri, and was the cause of no small surprise to the ladies of the capital.* The Parisians, however, consoled themselves by the recollection that Louis XV. in early youth had been the same, and said, "For all that, he is a Bourbon, and he will show it at the age of forty, like the others, when he is tired of the Dauphiness." He was strong, however, in body, abundantly endowed with physical courage, and passionately fond of the chase, which amusement he continued regularly till his imprisonment during the Revolution. He had an extraordinary fondness for athletic occupations and mechanical labour, insomuch that he frequently worked several hours a-day with a blacksmith of the name of Gamin, who taught him the art of wielding the hammer, and managing the forge. He took the greatest interest in this occupation, and loaded his preceptor in the art with kindness, who returned it by betraying to the Convention a secret iron recess, which they had together worked out in the walls of his cabinet in the Tuileries, to deposit his secret papers during the storms of the Revolution.^{1†}

Of all the monarchs who ever sat upon the French throne, Louis XVI. was the one least calculated to provoke, and worst fitted to subdue, a social convulsion. Firm in principle, pure in morals, humane in feeling, beneficent in

¹ Bertrand de Molleville, i. 24, 25. Soul. i. 39, 47. Droz, i. 116, 119. Campan, i. 123.

^{4.}
His character.

* Madame du Barri used to call him "le gros enfant mal élevé."—Droz, i. 117. note.

† "Le Roi," disait Gamin, "était bon, tolérant, timide, curieux, ami du sommeil. Il aimait avec passion la serrurerie, et se cachait de la reine et de la cour pour limer et forger avec moi. Pour porter son enclume et le mien, à l'insu de tout le monde, il nous fallait user mille stratagèmes dont l'histoire ne finirait pas."—SOUAVIE, Règne de Louis XVI., ii. 47.

intention, he possessed all the dispositions calculated to adorn a pacific throne, or which are amiable and estimable in private life ; but he had neither the genius to prevent, nor the firmness to resist, a revolution. Many of his qualities were calculated to have allayed the public discontents ; none to have stifled them. The people were tired of the arbitrary powers of their monarch, and he was disposed to abandon them ;—they were provoked at the costly corruptions of the court, and he was both innocent in his manners and unexpensive in his habits ;—they demanded reformation in the administration of affairs, and he placed his chief glory in anticipating their desires. Such was his anxiety to outstrip the general passion for reforms, that he caused a box to be placed at the gate of his palace, to receive suggestions from all persons who might concur in the same views. But, in accomplishing great changes in society, it is not only necessary to concede to one party, but to restrain their violence and control another ; and the difficult task awaited the French monarch, of either compelling the nation to submit to abuses, or the aristocracy to agree to innovation. To accomplish either of these objects required more firmness and decision of character than he possessed. Irresolution was his great defect ; and hence, in difficult periods, his conduct vacillated between the nobility and people, and led both parties to abandon his interest ; the former because they distrusted his constancy—the latter because they were doubtful of his sincerity. His reign, from his accession to the throne down to the meeting of the States-General, was nothing but a series of ameliorations, which did not succeed in calming the public effervescence ; of concessions which only added to the ambition of the people. He had the misfortune to wish sincerely for the public good, without possessing the firmness requisite to secure it ; and with truth it may be said, that reforms were more fatal to him than the continuance of abuses would have been to another sovereign.¹

¹ Mign. i.
 12, 13.
 Thiers, i.
 6, 8. Lab
 ii. 4, 5.

It is not to be imagined, however, that this irresolution of character, which proved so fatal to this virtuous monarch, was the result of any defect of physical temperament, or of natural timidity of disposition. On the contrary, he was by constitution hasty in temper, and sometimes abrupt

5.
 To what
 this irreso-
 lution was
 owing.

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in manner, an infirmity of which he was never entirely cured—abundantly endowed, when he saw his way clearly, both with mental firmness and physical resolution. It was the neglect of his education, joined to the purity of his intentions, and the benevolence of his heart, which was the cause of the evil. He had studied “many books, but not much.” He had never learned to reflect, or trust to his own judgment; and both his preceptors and Maurepas had, for their own purposes, sedulously impressed upon his mind that the first duty of a sovereign is to be guided by the majority of his council. Hence he yielded when his reason was not convinced; he had often not sufficient information to oppose the arguments used by his ministers to overcome his difficulties, and yet good sense enough to see when they were wrong; but he had too much conscientious feeling to trust to his own judgment, in opposition to theirs, when he could not assign sufficient reasons for the difference. Maurepas also inspired him with a general distrust of men; and this opinion falling in with the natural reserve of his character, and the boundless selfishness with which he was surrounded, produced such an impression on his mind, that he never yielded an entire confidence to any of his ministers, nor even to the Queen, during the whole of his life. But he was endowed with strong natural sagacity, had an intuitive perception of what was right and wrong, and evinced, both at the council board and in the notes he wrote on the memorials laid before him by his ministers, abundant proofs of uncommon clearness of understanding.* It was not in intellectual strength, but determination of will, that he was defective, and this arose from excess of conscientious feeling. It was over-anxiety to do right which so often made him do wrong; for it surrendered him to the guidance of men inferior to himself both in intention and understanding.¹ He would have made the best possible constitutional monarch, but he was perhaps the last that would be selected to meet the crisis of forming a constitu-

¹ Bertrand, de Molleville, i. 23, 26, and 221.

* He used frequently, when a discussion was going on at the council table, to pull a memoir out of his pocket, and read it, making marginal annotations as he went along, and show at the end of the discussion by his observations that he had perfectly apprehended both at the same time. This Bertrand de Molleville justly remarks as a proof of no common power of attention: those who have any doubt it is so, are recommended to try the experiment.—See BERTRAND DE MOLLEVILLE, i. 221, 222.

tion ; and history must confess with regret, that if he had been a worse man, he would have been, for his times at least, a better king.*

Louis XVI. was married on the 16th May 1770, to MARIE ANTOINETTE JOSEPHE JEANNE, archduchess of Austria, daughter of Francis I., emperor of Germany, and the illustrious Maria Theresa. This princess, whose heroism and sorrows have rendered her immortal, was born on the 2d November 1755, the day of the earthquake at Lisbon, so that at her nuptials she was not yet sixteen years of age. Her marriage had long been the subject of anxious negotiation on the part of the cabinets of Paris and Vienna, and its completion was regarded as a masterpiece of policy on the part of the Duc de Choiseul, then prime minister of Louis XV., as laying the foundation of a family alliance between the houses of France and Austria, and uniting, to their mutual advantage, the forces of the two monarchies. To prepare the young princess for her future destiny, her education was from the first, in a great measure, entrusted to the Abbé de Vermont, an adroit and accomplished ecclesiastic, selected for that purpose by the Duc de Choiseul, and who remained with and retained his influence over her, during her whole life. Under his able tuition she made rapid progress in French, Latin, German, and Italian ; unhappily she imbibed at the same time from his councils a spirit of levity, a dislike of form, a contempt for etiquette, which proved to the last degree pernicious to her on the throne of France. Her disposition was lively, her talents remarkable, her heart affectionate, and her mother early impressed her with the necessity of cultivating that firmness and decision of character, by which she herself had risen superior to all the storms of fortune. "My daughter," said the aged empress to her frequently, "in adversity remember me." Marie Antoinette did not forget her counsel when her own evil days came, nor prove unworthy of her race.^{1†}

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6.

Birth and
early years
of Marie
Antoinette.

¹ Weber, i.
1, 17. Sou-
lavie, i. 72.
Campan, i.
35, 45.

* Malesherbes said of him to Bertrand de Molleville, with equal truth and feeling—" Cette extrême sensibilité, cette humanité si tendre, et presque toutes les vertus modérées, qui, dans les temps ordinaires, font les bons rois, deviennent, dans les temps de révolution, autant et plus funestes que des vices."—BERTRAND DE MOLLEVILLE, *Mémoires sur la Règne de Louis XVI.*, i. 24.

† When Marie Antoinette left Vienna to be married, Maria Theresa addressed the following letter to Louis XVI., then the Dauphin:—" Votre

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7.

Grief for
her depar-
ture from
Vienna, and
splendour
of her re-
ception in
France.

So much had the winning manners and rising beauty of the young princess endeared her to the citizens, that the day of her departure from Vienna was one of universal gloom and depression; all the satisfaction which they felt at beholding her Dauphiness of France was forgotten in the melancholy foreboding that they would see her no more. Her entry into her future kingdom brought the Dauphiness at once into enchanted ground; she literally trode on air all the way from Strasburg to Paris. Every where the peasantry quitted the neighbouring fields, crowding to the road-side to get a glimpse of their destined sovereign; triumphal arches were erected in all the towns and villages; the streets were strewn with nosegays; rows of maidens, dressed in white, and adorned with garlands, awaited to present her with the choicest flowers of spring. Her youth, her beauty, her benignity, the radiant joy which beamed from her countenance, diffused an universal feeling of enchantment.* "How beautiful she is, our Dauphiness!" was the remark of all. The general admiration was augmented when she was heard to answer the deputations of the towns in elegant French; of the schools and colleges, in the purest Latin. She was received with unparalleled demonstrations of joy at Compeigne, where she was met by the king; and at Versailles all that art and genius could combine were prepared to add to the splendour of her nuptials, which were celebrated in the chapel of the palace, amidst the brightest sunshine, and with extraordinary magnificence.¹ Shortly after she left the altar, however, the heavens darkened, the clouds collected, rain fell in torrents, violent peals of thunder dispersed the crowd

¹ Weber,
i. 17, 21.
Campan,
i. 45, 53.

épouse, mon cher Dauphin, vient de se separer de moi; comme elle faisait mes délices, j'espère qu'elle fera votre bonheur. Je l'ai élevée en conséquence parceque depuis longtemps je prevoisais qu'elle devait partager vos destinées. Je lui ai inspirée l'amour de ses devoirs envers vous, un tendre attachement, l'attention à imaginer et à mettre en pratique les moyens à vous plaire. Je lui ai toujours recommande, avec beaucoup de soin, une tendre devotion envers le Maître des Rois, persuadée qu'on fait mal le bonheur des peuples qui nous sont confiés quand on manque envers celui qui brise les sceptres et renverse les trônes, comme il lui plait. Aimez donc vos devoirs envers Dieu. Je vous le dis, mon cher Dauphin—je le dis à ma fille, aimez le bien des peuples sur lesquels vous regnerez toujours trop tôt. Adieu, mon cher Dauphin; je suis baignée de larmes."—MARIE THERESE à M. LE DAUPHIN, 20 Avril 1770; WEBER, i. 17, Note to *Revolutionary Memoirs*.

* One country curé, near Chalons, awaited her on the road-side at the head of his flock. The worthy pastor had prepared a studied harangue, but at the sight of the Dauphiness it all escaped his memory, and he could only fall on his knees and articulate, "Madame, ne soyez pas surprise de mon peu de mémoire: Pulchra es et formosa."—WEBER, i. 21.

assembled round the palace, and shook the walls of the august structure. It was emblematical of her destiny: at the close of the path, thus in its outset bestrewed with flowers, there awaited her the Temple, the Conciergerie, the scaffold.

A splendid fête on occasion of the marriage was given by the city of Paris, at which the Dauphin and Dauphiness were present. It was a day of triumph to her at every step; nothing seemed capable of adding to her felicity. Her beauty was ravishing, her grace won every heart. The brilliant chariot which bore her and the Dauphin, could scarcely make its way through the dense masses of the people, who were never wearied with gazing on her, admiring and blessing her. From Nôtre-Dame, where she went to return thanks to heaven for its gifts, she proceeded to the Hôtel de Ville, where old Marshal de Brissac, at the head of a splendid staff, was ready to receive her. She ascended the stair which led to the municipal hall, afterwards the centre of the Revolution, from whence the mandates issued which sent her husband and herself to the scaffold. "Madame," said the old Marshal, as he showed her the countless sea of uncovered heads which appeared before her in the Place de Grève, when she came to the window,—“The Dauphin may well be jealous. You behold before you two hundred thousand persons in love with you.” The happy expression flew like lightning through the crowd; redoubled acclamations rent the sky; it expressed the universal feeling. At the Tuileries she walked with her young husband in the gardens, with a countenance beaming with delight at the enthusiasm with which she was surrounded. Louis was as joyful, but anxious lest some accident should happen to the people, and repeatedly desired the guards to take care that no one was hurt. They frequently said to each other, amidst the general acclamations, “What a good affectionate people!”¹

A disastrous event disturbed these scenes of festivity, and added to the sinister presentiments already felt from her birth, on the day of the earthquake at Lisbon, and from the storm which had succeeded her nuptials. An unfortunate assertion of ancient privilege was the cause of this catastrophe. The provost of the merchants of Paris, in conformity with former usage, claimed the right of keeping the ground, and regulating the arrangements on the occasion,

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8.
Magnificent
fête at Paris
on the mar-
riage.

1 Weber,
i. 49, 51.

9.
Dreadful
accident
which oc-
curred on
this occa-
sion.

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which would have been more fitly entrusted to the experienced ability of M. de Sartines, the head of the police. This demand was acceded to, from a fear of offending the citizens on such a joyous occasion ; and the civic functionaries, in splendid dresses, but almost entirely inexperienced, appeared to keep the ground in the Place Louis XV., where the fireworks were to be let off. They proved wholly unequal to their duty. Already the crowd of persons desirous of leaving their places, and of others striving to get in from the Boulevards Italiennes, had broken through their feeble barriers, and a violent struggle was going on between the two contending streams, when the scaffolds whereon the fireworks were exhibited accidentally took fire, the rockets lying horizontally upon them, discharged themselves in great numbers into the crowd ; and the fire-engines, with their huge horses and heavy carriages, advanced at rapid pace, with rattling din through the mass, to extinguish the flames.¹

¹ Weber, i.
27, 28.

10.
General
panic, and
melancholy
catastrophe.

An universal panic now seized the people around the scaffolds, who rushed with frantic violence towards the entrance of the Rue Royale, where they were met by as dense a multitude, which, ignorant of what had occurred, and seeing so many persons leaving the square, was making the most strenuous efforts to get in to occupy their places. The terrors of the issuing, however, prevailed over the eagerness of the entering column ; the latter was pushed back, after a desperate struggle, and vast numbers, thrown down, were trodden under foot by the prodigious multitude which rolled over them. Fifty-three persons were killed on the spot. two hundred and fifty more, for the most part mortally wounded, were dragged with difficulty from beneath the feet of the throng ; and the ghastly spectacle of the dead bodies and mangled remains of the yet living, ranged in rows along the Boulevards to await the recognition of their relatives, diffused an universal consternation. The Dauphin and Dauphiness won general esteem by the earnest sympathy which they evinced on the occurrence,* and the splendid liberality with which they relieved the

* Marie Antoinette was so afflicted with this catastrophe, that her grief continued for several days ; and she frequently burst into tears. She sent her whole allowance for a month to relieve the victims ; and the Dauphin did the same, accompanied by a letter to the Chief of the Police, couched in the most touching terms.—WEBER, i. 29.

sufferers : but the mournful catastrophe, occurring on such an occasion, told on every heart, and inspired very generally the most gloomy forebodings. It was afterwards noticed as remarkable, that the disaster was owing to the presumption and inexperience of the chiefs of the *Tiers Etat* of the capital, and the undue facility with which the direction of affairs had been surrendered to them by the constituted authorities—and that the bodies of the victims killed on the Place Louis XV., were deposited in the Church of the Madeleine, which afterwards received the headless remains of the very prince and princess who were now the objects of such universal adoration.¹

Time, however, at length made this disaster be forgotten ; but Marie Antoinette soon found that her path was not to be for ever strewn with flowers. The thorns early began to show themselves. Madame du Barri, jealous of the beauty, and apprehensive of the influence of the young Dauphiness, spared no pains to alienate the old King from her :* the usual animosities of the palace at a foreign intruder, were not slow in displaying themselves ; senseless disputes on matters of etiquette, kept several of the most illustrious of the nobility at a distance from her ; she already found that “ l’Autrichienne,” as she was called in the highest circles, had many difficulties to encounter, and jealousies to get over, at the court of France. The open ascendancy and constant presence of Madame du Barri, at all the fêtes, which seemed to be arranged only for her diversion, and to afford opportunity for a display of the homage with which she was surrounded, induced the Dauphin and Dauphiness to live in a great measure retired, during the first years which succeeded their marriage. This conduct was as much in conformity with the tastes and wishes of Louis XVI., as the course which the strict-

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¹ Weber, i.
26, 28.
Campan, i.
55, 56.

11.
Jealousies
at court,
which make
the Dauphin
and Dau-
phiness live
retired.

* At the banquet given at Versailles on the first reception of Marie Antoinette, Madame du Barri sat at the same table with her. Ignorant of her character, and struck with her beauty, the young Dauphiness said she was “ charmante.” The Dauphin, however, better instructed in the mysteries of the palace, carefully kept her at a distance from the seducing favourite, who was surrounded by the homage of the whole court. Struck with this circumstance, and the great influence which Madame du Barri evidently possessed, Marie Antoinette said to the Duchess of Noailles—“ Will you tell me what are the functions of Madame du Barri ?” “ To please and amuse the king,” replied the Duchess. “ In that case,” rejoined the Dauphiness, “ I will try and be her rival.”—It may readily be conceived what amusement this ingenuous answer afforded in the court circle at Versailles.—SOULAVIE, ii. 67, 68.

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¹ *Soulavie*,
ii. 60, 76.
Weber, i.
37, 39.
Campan,
ii. 42, 63.
Biog. Univ.
xxvii. 73.
Marie An-
toinette par
Michaud.)

ness of his principles and correctness of his judgment dictated.* The Dauphiness, though passionately fond of amusement and all the excitements of her age, acquiesced without a murmur in her husband's determination; and the Parisians, accustomed to the ceaseless round of diversions devised to amuse the court, were astonished to hear of the heir and heiress of the throne enjoying the privacy of domestic life, walking in their gardens together, mingling in select circles of chosen friends, entering the cottages of the poor in the neighbourhood of Versailles, and making themselves known only by never-failing deeds of beneficence to the unfortunate.¹ †

12.
Mr Burke's
picture of
Marie An-
toinette.

The spirit of chivalry guiding the pencil of genius, has left the following portrait of Marie Antoinette, at the period of her accession to the throne:—"It is now," says Mr Burke, in a passage which will live as long as the English language, "sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she had just begun to move in; glittering like the morning star, full of life and splendour and joy. Oh! what a revolution! and what a heart must I have, to contemplate,

* In the first instance, after his marriage, Louis XVI. was, by the arts of his preceptor, the Duc de Vauguyon, who was in the interest of Madame du Barri, for a considerable time estranged from the Dauphiness, and evinced a coldness towards her which touched her to the quick. Physical causes, on his part, which deprived France, for several years, of an heir to the throne, increased this embarrassment. But this unhappy estrangement, the result of base intrigues, gradually yielded to the graces, amiable temper, and uniformly correct deportment of the young Queen, who never let a murmur escape her lips during its continuance; and after she became a mother, Louis loved the Queen with the most passionate attachment.—See MADAME CAMPAN, i. 60, 72, and 186.

† On one occasion, when Louis XV. was hunting in the park of Fontainebleau, a stag, wounded and furious, leaped the wall of the forest, and making at the first person he met, plunged his horns into the entrails of a gardener, who was pruning his vines. His wife, alarmed by the noise, rushed out of the house, uttering piercing shrieks, and fell down senseless beside her bleeding husband. On reviving, she was astonished to find herself in the arms of a young and beautiful woman, who, with tears in her eyes, lavished on her all the consolations which were possible in the circumstances. It was the Dauphiness, who, happening to pass at the time in her open carriage, alarmed by the cries, stopped the horses, alighted, leaped the hedge, and reached the unfortunate woman before any one of her attendants. She was immediately placed in the carriage beside the Dauphiness, who carried her, with her wounded husband, to the palace, and bestowed on her the most liberal bounty. The poor man, beyond all expectation, recovered, received a pension, and was comfortably settled in a cottage, often afterwards visited by the royal couple."—WEBER, i. 32, 36.

without emotion, that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream, when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her, in a nation of gallant men—in a nation of honour and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look which threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone; that of sophists, economists, and calculators has succeeded, and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never more shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex—that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiments, is gone. It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound; which inspired courage, while it mitigated ferocity; which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.”¹

These are the words of glowing genius, of reflecting observation, and prophetic foresight; and cold indeed must be that heart which would withdraw one touch from the picture. They paint with beauty, and to a certain extent with truth, not only an individual, but an age, which terminated with her life. Yet must the truth of history in some respects dispel the illusion, and present Marie Antoinette with all these beautiful and interesting, with many great and heroic qualities, yet not destitute of the weaknesses of humanity. Contemplated at a distance, she was in truth the resplendent vision which captivated Mr Burke; but a nearer approach revealed the woman, and displayed many of the foibles, some of the errors, of her sex. Her heart was pure, her manners captivating, her conduct upright, her spirit noble; but these very virtues, by inspiring her with the consciousness of her own innocence, led her into imprudences, which, in one of her exalted station, became faults. She had little education in matters of serious import, though highly accomplished in those which are personally attractive. Her taste was

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¹ Burke's Works, v. 149. Reflections on the French Revolution.

13.

Character of the Queen.

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refined, and she was no common proficient in music, danced elegantly, and was passionately fond of theatrical representations. But she read hardly any thing but romances or plays; and the Queen, who was called to duties so difficult that an archangel might have shrunk from encountering them, had never in her whole life had a book of history put into her hands.* Hence she was not aware how much, amidst all the homagè with which they are surrounded, the great are really the object of envy to their inferiors; with what ceaseless jealousies they are environed; and with what avidity, especially in troubled times, the slightest and most innocent imprudences are seized on, by court jealousy or popular malignity, to blast the happiness of those to whom, in appearance, every mark of respect is shown.†

¹ Mad. Camp. i. 40, 41, 73. Lac. v. 8. Weber, i. 63, 68.

14.

Her imprudences, and the falsehoods to which they gave rise.

This purity of heart, joined to inexperience of the world, led her into many imprudences which those more versed in its ways, or more habituated to its vices, would have sedulously avoided. During the early years when Louis was estranged from her, she preserved the most studious correctness of deportment, and never suffered a complaint to escape her lips, though a tear often fell from her eye. But when she found herself secure of his affections, and blessed by a rising offspring, the buoyancy of her disposition led her to mingle in amusements with an ardour which, though always innocent, was often indiscreet, sometimes blamable. Accustomed to the simple life of the imperial palace at Vienna, the minutæ of etiquette at Versailles, which fettered every action, even the most inconsiderable, of life in the king and queen, were to her a perfect horror,‡ and she gladly fled from its frigid circles and senseless formalities, to enjoy in privacy the ease of unrestrained intercourse, and the charm of confidential friendship.‡ The intimacies to which these habits gave

* "L'Abbé de Vermond venait chez elle tous les jours, mais évitait de prendre le ton imposant d'un instituteur: et ne voulait même, comme lecteur, conseiller l'utile lecture de l'histoire. Je crois qu'il n'en a pas lu un seul volume, dans toute sa vie, à son auguste élève; aussi n'a-t-il jamais existé de princesse qui eut un éloignement plus marqué pour toutes les lectures sérieuses."—MADAME CAMPAN, i. 73; see also the BARON DE BESENVAL, ii. 207, 208.

† See a very curious account of this ceremonial and etiquette, now a relic of past times, in MADAME CAMPAN, i. 309, 320.

‡ "Dès qu'elle eut pris le parti de se soustraire à l'ennui du cérémoniel, cette Princesse se livra sans contrainte à tous les charmes de la vie privée. 'Enfin je ne suis plus Reine,' disait-elle avec délices, en rentrant au milieu

rise, especially with the Countess Polignac, excited the jealousy of the old nobility; the theatrical representations, in which she so much delighted, and sometimes bore a part, gave rise to malignant reports; and the charming seclusion of Trianon, where she sought a retreat from the cares, and a compensation for the anxieties of royalty, was converted, by the voice of popular malignity, into the gardens of Armida, where rank was lavish of its favours, and beauty prodigal of its seductions. But if the French nation at that period had been capable of reflection, they would have seen that vice seldom appears in the open and almost childish amusements which were there carried on. Conscious of evil, it seeks seclusion, or pays to virtue the homage of hypocrisy. And while those who loved her most have often lamented the imprudent levity which sometimes prevailed in her private circle, those who knew her best are unanimous in affirming that the queen's conduct was uniformly as irreproachable as her manners were dignified.* Her very air was too pure to permit impropriety to be thought of. Beloved by all, she was approached by none.^{1†}

When the growing dangers of the kingdom, and the increasing cares of royalty, drew her from those scenes of amusement into a more active part in the administration of affairs, she showed herself the daughter of Maria Theresa. Undaunted in courage, quick in discernment, decided in determination, she was fitted to have acted, if she had stood alone, at the head of faithful followers, the part of Zenobia,

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¹ Senac de Meilhan, 74. Wraxall, i. 115. Weber, i. 461, 464. Campan, i. 143, 195.

15.

Her heroic qualities and domestic virtues.

de ses amis, après de longues cérémonies qui l'en avaient éloignée trop longtemps. Elle venait de se depouiller à la hâte de ses ajustemens, et l'activité de ses femmes ne repondant pas à son impatience, elles les avait arrachées de ses mains et dispersées dans l'appartement.—MICHAUD, in Art. MARIE ANTOINETTE, in *Biographie Universelle*, xxvii. 74.

* So delicate was her perception of the boundaries of female decorum, especially in elevated stations, that she said, alluding to Garat, a celebrated singer at the time, who was often at Versailles, "Je devais entendre chanter Garat, et ne jamais chanter de duo avec lui;" and declared she would never allow her daughters to sing with professional singers.—CAMPAN, i. 266.

† "Sa prétendue galanterie," says the Prince de Ligne, one of her intimate circle, "ne fut jamais qu'un sentiment profond d'amitié, et peut-être distingué pour une ou deux personnes, et une coquetterie générale de femme et de reine, pour plaire à tout le monde. Dans le temps même où la jeunesse et le défaut d'expérience pouvaient engager à se mettre trop à son aise vis-à-vis d'elle, il n'y eut jamais aucun de nous qui avions le bonheur de la voir tous les jours qui osait en abuser, par la plus petite inconvenance. Elle faisait la reine sans s'en douter; on l'adorait sans songer à l'aimer."—PRINCE DE LIGNE, quoted in WEBER, i. 462, 463.

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or rivalled, in devotion to her husband and children, the perseverance of Agrippina. Yet were these very qualities, situated as she was, more disastrous to her than the opposite set of weaknesses would have been; for they led her into hostile measures when the king was set on conciliatory: they prompted bold counsels when prudence recommended temporizing ones; and often inclined her to draw the sword, when her faithless followers were not prepared to stand by her side. She was in a great degree uninformed on public measures, and still more on public men, as the king for long never conversed with her on affairs of state, and hence her interference in administration was often ill-judged and pernicious. Yet did the native clearness of her understanding lead her not unfrequently to discern the wisest course, when almost every head around was reeling; and if her counsels had been followed on some important occasions, it is probable that the disasters of the Revolution would have been avoided.* But it was in domestic life, and in the scenes of affliction, that she stood pre-eminent; and there a more faultless character never existed. Though fond of dress, and not insensible to the magnificence which her rank on public occasions required in her attire, she indulged in no unseemly extravagance in that particular; the strictest economy pervaded her establishment; and the sums, often very considerable, which she saved off her allowance as Queen of France, were invariably devoted to deeds of beneficence.† In the circle of her intimate friends she was easy and affable, even to a fault: the distinction of rank was almost for-

* She from the first, and throughout, strenuously opposed the war with America, as unjust towards England, as taking advantage of the distresses of a friendly power, and dangerous to France, as encouraging revolt; and she as firmly contended against Necker's determination to assemble the States-General at Versailles, insisting they should meet at least forty leagues from the capital.—MADAME CAMPAN, i. 234, and ii. 35.

† In the dreadful famine of the winter of 1783-4, Calonne, then Prime Minister, proposed to her that 1,000,000 francs (L.40,000) out of the 3,000,000 francs (L.120,000), which the king had set apart for relief of the poor, should be distributed in her name. She declined this, as interfering with the King's beneficence, adding, that she had enough of her own to answer the purpose without burdening any one. In effect, she bestowed 300,000 francs (L.12,000), the fruit of her economy, on the poor on that occasion; and 600,000 francs (L.24,000), which she saved off her allowance for pin-money, received the same destination at different times. To inspire her daughter with the same feelings, she put at her disposal 10,000 francs (L.400), and made her direct its distribution in person.—CAMPAN, i. 270.

gotten in the uniform affability of her manner ;* if she had any failing in this respect, it sprung from the warmth of her affections, which led her to form intimacies with a few friends of her own sex, of which they made sometimes an improper use, and which induced requests to the king on behalf of their relations which she never made for her own, and afterwards regretted. Her attachment to her husband and children was unbounded and unchangeable : it only strengthened with the misfortunes in which they were involved, and shone forth with the brightest lustre in the solitude of the Temple. Finally, she preserved through life, and equally in the sunshine of the palace as in the gloom of the dungeon, the strongest sense of religious duty ; and this supported her through all the changes of her eventful career, and enabled her to bear a reverse of fortune, unparalleled even in those days of woe, with a heroism which never was surpassed.¹

The first act of the king upon his accession to the throne was to order 200,000 francs, (L.8000,) to be distributed among the poor of Paris ; his next, to forbid his brothers to call him Your Majesty, or King. " I would lose too much," said he, " in renouncing the name of brother." At the same time he remitted a tribute amounting to a very large sum, usually paid to sovereigns on their accession, entitled, " Le joyeux avènement." Marie Antoinette, in a similar spirit, renounced an offering of considerable amount which custom had long sanctioned to the Queen of France, on the same occasion, entitled " The girdle of the Queen." Having learned that the tax from which this payment was drawn, fell with peculiar weight on the humblest classes,

* " Our young and charming Queen, by resolving to live without ceremony, has abolished from the private life of the court all the ancient etiquette. Every evening that amiable princess is to be seen traversing the palace, leaning on the arm of the King, attended only by a single valet. The new custom introduced of small suppers, with lords and ladies, titled or not, has been adopted not less from the taste of the Queen for private retired society, than from a sense of the danger of the King supping, after returning from the chase, with the nobles who attended him there, without the princesses ; a custom to which all the disorders of the reign of Louis XV. are to be ascribed. At present the King is never absent from the Queen, but when he is at the chase or the council-room ; and the vile courtiers who would attempt to corrupt him can no longer find an opportunity for doing so."—*Correspondence Secrète de la Cour pendant le Règne de Louis XVI.*, p. 99. Such was the ease of manners which prevailed in the intimate circle which frequented the Queen's charming retreat at Trianon, that when she entered the room the ladies did not rise from the piano, or leave the tapestry they were working, nor the gentlemen stop their game of billiards.—*MADAME CAMPAN*, i. 227.

¹ *Corresp. Secrète de la Cour de Louis XVI.* 99. *CAMPAN*, i. 270, 227, 257. *WEBER*, i. 270, 271, 291, 298.

16.
Popular acts of the King and Queen on their accession.

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she besought the king that it might be remitted; a request with which he gladly complied, and which gave rise to an elegantly turned compliment, that she had no need of the girdle of the queen, for she already possessed that of Venus.* The selection of a prime minister was a more difficult matter, and the intrigues of the court instantly commenced in reference to that important point. It was generally supposed that the choice would fall on the Duc de Choiseul, long the favourite minister of Louis XV., and only overturned in his later years by the combined efforts of Madame du Barri and the Duc d'Aiguillon. This appointment was deemed the more probable, as he had been the author of the Austrian alliance; and it was naturally imagined that the queen would use her influence in favour of the minister to whom her elevation to the throne had been owing. The same belief gained ground from the fact, that Madame du Barri had already received intimation that she should remain at her country residence of Pont-aux-Dames, whither she had retired on the illness of Louis XV.† But Marie Antoinette took no part in the affair; the king was indisposed towards the Duc de Choiseul, from the representations of his aunts, and the character given of his immoralities, in a secret memoir which his father, the Dauphin, had bequeathed to him on the subject. M. de Machault, formerly Keeper of the Seals, was first fixed on, and the letter containing his appointment was actually sent off, when the representations of the Princess Adelaide obtained a change in favour of M. de Maurepas, formerly Minister of Marine, and the letter to M. de Machault was intercepted before the page who bore it had left the royal stables.¹ The destiny of France and of Europe hung on that occurrence; for M. de Machault was a man of profound thought and enlightened observation, who would

¹ Weber, i. 42, 45.
Soul. ii. 139, 147.
Campan, i. 79, 80.

* "Vous renoncez, charmante souveraine,
Au plus beau de vos revenus;
A quoi vous servirait la ceinture du Reine?
Vous avez celle de Venus."

—WEBER, i. 3.

† It was indispensable to remove Madame du Barri from the court, both to restore its character and break the influence she had acquired in public affairs. But she was allowed to retain her fortune and jewels, which were very considerable, and was treated with such kindness and consideration, though always kept at a distance from Versailles, by the king and queen, both then and in after years, that she felt and expressed the most unbounded gratitude for it. Her name, long unheard in history, will appear again in the darkest days of the Revolution.—MADAME CAMPAN, i. 83. *note*.

probably have done as much to avert, as Maurepas did to bring on, the Revolution.*

The choice which the King thus made, on his accession to the throne, of Maurepas for prime minister, was in every point of view prejudicial to his reign. This old man, though not destitute of good, and with many pleasing qualities, was in no respect adapted for the duties of a minister in such arduous times. He accustomed the King to half measures, and a system of temporization, and contributed early to fix that character of irresolution upon his proceedings which was already too much the defect of his own disposition. Having suffered a banishment of nearly twenty years from court, in consequence of some satirical verses on Madame de Pompadour, he returned to power with no other principle but that of maintaining his ascendancy. Frivolous in all his ideas of government, he neither formed his opinions of men by their conduct, nor of measures by their utility, but of both by their tendency to uphold his own influence at court. His ideas were all half a century back; he was an old courtier of Versailles, but not a minister of France. His character has been thus delineated by the able hand of a contemporary observer:—"Superficial, and incapable of serious and profound attention, but gifted with a facility of intelligence and apprehension, which seized in an instant the thread of the most complicated

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17.
Character
of Mau-
repas.

* The Queen at the same time gave a striking proof of the generosity of her disposition. The Marquis de Pontecoulant, major of the gardes-du-corps, had given offence to her soon after her arrival in France, on a point of etiquette, and her resentment had been such, that, with girlish vivacity, she said she would never forget it. This expression became known to the Marquis, who, deeming himself obnoxious to her, sent in his resignation, on her accession to the throne, by the Prince of Beauveaux, his superior officer, who first took it to the Queen, to explain the motive of such an unexpected proceeding. "Tell M. de Pontecoulant," said the generous Princess, "that the Queen does not recollect the quarrels of the Dauphiness, and that I request him to retain his situation." —WEBER, i. 44.

The Queen was much attached to the Duc de Choiseul, to whom she with reason ascribed her elevation to the throne of France. "Je n'oublierai jamais," said she, when she first saw him at court after the death of Louis XV.,—"Je n'oublierai jamais que vous avez fait mon bonheur." "Et celui de toute la France," was the happy reply of the Duke. It was a great misfortune for Louis that his original appointment of M. de Machault had not taken effect, for he was the very reverse of Maurepas, and possessed the qualities necessary to supply the defects of the King's mind, and give vigour and solidity to his councils. He was distinguished by profound thought, extensive foresight, and unshaken firmness, qualities of which the monarchy never stood more in need than in that eventful crisis. Had he become the prime minister of Louis XVI. he would soon have been his Mentor.—WEBER, i. 116.

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affairs, he supplied in council, by skill and dexterity, what he wanted in study and meditation. Insinuating and mild in manners, flexible and fertile in resources, alike for attack or defence, inexhaustible in anecdotes and bon-mots, to lead the serious into pleasantry, and turn aside an onset which he could not openly withstand; he possessed a lynx eye to seize the weak or ridiculous in men, and an imperceptible art to draw them into a snare, or wield them to his purposes; a power, still more formidable, to make sport of every thing, even of merit itself, when he wished to bring it into contempt—in fine, the faculty of enlivening every thing, and simplifying, to an inconceivable degree, the labours of the cabinet. He was believed to be a great man, because he had written four cutting verses on a detected favourite.”¹ The king was not ignorant of his weaknesses when he made choice of him for prime minister, but he trusted that age, misfortune, and exile, must have given more firmness and solidity to his character, when, in truth, they had just done the reverse. He did not possess the mind on which solitude or adversity could act with any salutary effect. Naturally indolent and fond of ease, he returned to power with no other feeling but a determination not again to fall into the error by which he had been formerly driven from it. Regarding politics merely as a game of hazard, he looked upon every profession of disinterested virtue as folly or boasting, which was absurd or insincere. Desirous of retaining the helm of affairs during the remainder of his life, and conducting the government, at least during his own time, without shock or collision, he made it his principal care to study the signs of the times; and, regulating himself by convenience, not principle, he carefully abstained from every act, whatever its ultimate consequences might be, which threatened to induce present opposition or embarrassment.²

With these talents and dispositions, Maurepas was not long of acquiring the entire direction of the king’s mind. His system was, to study his disposition, and secretly or unobservedly discover his wishes; never to contradict him openly, but to give him the appearance of deciding himself upon every thing, when, in truth, he was only yielding to the statements and representations which he had previously, and with sedulous art, laid before him. Accus-

¹ Marmontel, *Mem.* ii. 196.

² Weber, i. 115. Boissey d’Anglas, *Vie de Malesherbes*, ii. 37. Michaud, *Biog. Univ.* xxvii. (Maurepas.)

18.
His system of government.

tomed to economy and simplicity of life during his long retreat, he affected no pomp or state as minister, was easy of access to all, and gave in readily, so far as he was personally concerned, to the plans of economy which the king had so much at heart. Aware of the growing influence of public opinion, and the philanthropic ideas which were generally afloat, as well as the sincere desire for reform which animated the breast of the sovereign, he at once encouraged those dispositions on the part of the monarch, and constantly represented him to others as the lover of justice, order, and peace; as animated by a sincere love for his people, and ready to sacrifice every thing to the public good. His great object was to avoid difficulty, and prevent collision, by bringing the system of government into unison with the spirit of the age. With this view he even outstripped the wishes of the people, and placed the ministers in correspondence with the principal learned societies in Paris, and the other great towns, in order to suggest measures that might acquire popularity and give present satisfaction, without any consideration of their ultimate consequences. This change, inconsiderable as it may appear, was in reality vital, and attended with the most important consequences. It was no longer the court of Versailles which governed the existing generation, but the existing generation which governed Versailles: a system of government better calculated to insure present tranquillity, and bequeath future danger, than any that could have been devised.¹

¹ Soulavie, ii. 151, 156.

The new system speedily appeared in the measures of government. Hardly had the king ascended the throne, when the Duke of Orleans, with his son, the Duke of Chartres, presented to him memorials, having for their object the recall of the old parliaments, exiled by Louis XV. Louis hesitated what part to take in this important affair. On the one hand, the recall of the magistrates was warmly supported by the Orleans family, part of the nobility, by Maurepas, the whole philosophers of the capital, and the queen, who was induced to espouse their side by the influence of the Duc de Choiseul: on the other, it was strongly opposed by the Princesses Adelaide and Louisa, and the king's brothers. The princesses threw themselves at the king's feet, besought him not to blast their father's me-

19.
Dismissal
of Abbés
Terray and
Maupeou,
and recall
of the Par-
liaments.
Oct. 21,
1774.

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mory by so decided a condemnation of his measures, and represented the recall of so heated and factious a body as likely to overturn the monarchy. In this they were supported by the great body of the courtiers, the Chancellor Maupeou, and M. Vergennes, who had recently been admitted into the ministry, and had already become distinguished by his abilities. Maurepas, seeing the king thus beset on all sides, and still remaining undecided, while the majority of the council inclined to range itself on the side adverse to the parliament, took the bold step of overturning altogether the ministers of the late king. The Abbé Terray, M. de la Vrillière, and the Chancellor Maupeou, the leading ministers in opposition to Maurepas, were dismissed, and the project adopted of restoring the parliaments. This decisive step was taken on the anniversary of the massacre of St Bartholomew. The Parisians, transported with joy, called it "the St Bartholomew of the Ministers;" and openly insulted the fallen statesmen in the streets. Still, however, the resistance continued; the Count d'Artois and the princesses renewed their entreaties and remonstrances, and invoked the shades of his august ancestors to dissuade the king from adopting a measure which could not fail to prove fatal to his house. TURGOT, Miromesnil, and MALESHERBES, who had been introduced into the ministry, in the room of the Abbé Terray, La Vrillière, and Maupeou, strongly maintained the opposite opinion. The king, sensible of the importance of the question, and unable to make up his mind on the subject, had it repeatedly debated, both orally in the council, and in written memorials of no common ability.¹* At length, Maurepas, Malesherbes,

¹ Soulavie, ii. 180, 229
Weber, i. 115, 120.

* On the part of the parliament, it was urged by the Abbé Mably and others, "That the noblesse of the kingdom, the princes and peers of the blood-royal, were entitled to be judged only by the first body of an immovable, indestructible, and national magistracy: that, under whatever form that magistracy had existed in France, whether under that of an assembly called *champ-de-Mars*, *cour-plenière*, states-general, or parliament, it had been, in all ages, an essential part of the monarchy, the concurrence of which was indispensable to the completing and publishing the law: that immovability was the essential quality of a magistracy to which functions thus supreme and important were intrusted: that it had been regarded in all ages as the chief safeguard of the public liberties, and rampart against arbitrary power: in fine, as an inherent part of the fundamental laws of the state. That functions so august imperatively required in the magistrates, peers, and princes of the blood, the greatest security in their exercise, in order that they might be the better enabled to administer justice to the people, and not have to fear the influence of authority in deciding according to their conscience: that the most valuable part of the public law of France was that which secured to *immovable* bodies, recognised at all times both by the

and Turgot prevailed, and on the 21st October 1774, the circular was signed by the king, which recalled the exiled parliament of Paris.

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20.

Importance
of the step
thus taken.

This great victory of the popular party deserves to be especially marked as the first step in the chain of causes and effects which ultimately overturned the monarchy. For the first time since the days of the Cardinal Richelieu, the court had now openly receded: the ruling authority was felt to be elsewhere than at Versailles: a power had risen up greater than the throne. It was not, however, behind the throne, and overshadowing its determinations; it was in front of the throne, and intimidating it. As may well be supposed, the king acquired unbounded popularity by this act. His name was repeated with enthusiasm in the streets; the queen became more popular than ever; the exiled parliament was the object of universal enthusiasm; and the dismissed ministers were assailed with cutting couplets and sarcasms. More sagacious observers, however, prognosticated little good from a revolution in

king and the nation, the stability necessary to the preservation of the general law of the realm, and of individuals to the sanctioning of such enactment, the reclamation of rights, and the consideration of the bearing of new edicts on the existing rights of individual or public bodies. On these principles, the exiling of the late parliament was an arbitrary stretch of power which never should have been made: the confiscation of offices by which it was followed was a still more iniquitous measure: the nobles and princes of the blood can legally sit in no other parliament but the parliament of Paris: their presence in any other assembly is forced and illegal: the new parliament of M. de Maupeou has no legal foundation; the true and only parliament is that which is composed of the King, the princes of the blood, the peers, and the members whose offices had been arbitrarily confiscated, without forfeiture or legal process, by the late monarch."

To these weighty and able arguments, it was answered, by Monsieur and the Count d'Artois—"The exiled magistracy had reared up in the state a rival authority to counterbalance that of our king's, and establish a monstrous equilibrium, or rather a dead-lock, which must necessarily paralyse administration, and plunge the kingdom into anarchy. What would become of the authority of the king if these magistrates, linked together in every province by a general association, form a united body, determined to suspend at will the royal functions, stop the registering and execution of the laws, and even suspend at pleasure the administration of justice between man and man? It is said the dismissal of the late parliament was an arbitrary act; admitting it was, what rendered it necessary? Why, an universal resolution on their part to cease performing their functions, and thereby paralyse the whole administration of justice throughout the kingdom. Is the late king to be blamed because, resisted by so unparalleled and factious a combination, he met it by an unwonted act of vigour suited to the exigencies of the moment? For ages the parliament have maintained a *sourd* but incessant warfare against our kings. Their pretexts have always been the public good and the interest of the people, objects which they constantly sacrificed; and now it is gravely proposed to reinstate these magistrates in functions which they have so scandalously abused, and of which they were so justly deprived. Shall the late king be virtually convicted of having exiled and despoiled faithful magistrates,

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government, which commenced by the Crown openly receding before a popular body in a contest for power, instead of effecting a redress of the grievances which were complained of; and did not hesitate to prophesy, that in recalling the parliament the king had signed the warrant for his own eventual dethronement.* Certain it is, that the members of that body were not slow in showing that they entertained little gratitude towards their benefactor, that their ambition was not likely to diminish with their success, and that they regarded themselves as victors in a conflict in which no alternative remained to the crown but submission.¹

1 Weber, i.
118, 120.
Soul. ii.
172, 221.

21.
Ingratitude
of the par-
liament.
Oct. 22,
1774. Dec. 2.

The first act of the parliament of Paris was to protest, the day after its re-establishment, against the very edict which had re-established it—against the *lit de justice* in which its life had been restored, and against all the precautions and restraints by which Miromesnil had fondly imagined he had erected a perpetual barrier against its encroachments; and soon after, the princes and peers were when he only broke up an illegal combination which proposed to take the crown off his head by universally stopping the administration of justice? What an example to the firmness of kings! What an encouragement to the violence of the people! To preserve his crown, to continue the administration of affairs, Louis XV. created new magistrates in lieu of the factious body of whom he had got quit: shall they be now confiscated and removed as a reward for having replaced the crown on his royal head? Shall the kingdom be anew exposed to the calamities consequent on the ambition of a magistracy, the enemies of the clergy and rivals of the noblesse, the only true support of the throne—which carried political passion into the judgment seat, and even universally stopped the discharge of their duty to extort a concession from the crown? Let it not be supposed that the exiled magistrates will be either grateful or reasonable if they are restored to their functions. They will return as gentle as lambs; they will soon become as rampant as lions: for all their acts of disobedience, they will allege the interest of the state, the people, and their lord the king. In their most flagrant acts of disobedience they will say they are obeying their constitution: the populace will fly to their succour, and the royal authority will one day sink under the weight of their resistance. Such will be the consequence of sacrificing the submissive magistracy which does its duty, to the rebellious magistracy which does not.”—*Mémoires du M. Le Duc D'ORLEANS, et de MONSIEUR FRERE DU ROI, Sept. 1774, given in SOULAVIE, ii. 206, 214.* Nothing can be more curious and instructive than these able arguments, which throw so much light on the great constitutional question at issue in France in their debate, and which lay bare that awful question of where the supreme power is really to reside, which it is one important object of a constitutional monarchy to shroud from public gaze.

* Monsieur Count of Provence, afterwards Louis XVIII., made a last effort to dissuade his brother from taking this step, in an able memoir, which concluded with the following words:—“Je resume les services du parlement actuel et les crimes du parlement exilé. Le parlement actuel a remis sur la tête du roi la couronne que le parlement en exil lui avait oté, et M. de Maupeou, que vous avez exilé, a fait au roi le procès que les rois vos aïeux soutenaient contre les parlements depuis deux siècles; le procès a été jugé, et vous, mon frère, vous cassez le jugement pour recommencer la procédure.”—*MONSIEUR au ROI, Sept. 23, 1774; SOULAVIE, ii. 221, 222.*

recalled by an act of their own, which restored all their former consideration. Maurepas himself was not long of experiencing their gratitude. On the evening before their installation he had been at the opera, where he was received with thunders of applause by a crowded audience. Next day he went to the hall of the parliament, expecting to meet with the same reception from the exiled members. "You must retire, sir," said M. d'Aguesseau, their chairman; "you have no right to be here."—"Do not disturb yourself," replied the imperturbable minister; "I have not come here to sit down, but only on my way to the lanterne."* The important consequences of the irretrievable step thus taken were fully appreciated at the time by the opponents of the measure. "Read," said they, "the history of England; you will there see the parliament for long at issue with the king: the popular party prevailed at last. Dastardly ministers persuaded the monarch to abandon the defenders of his authority: they were destroyed. The parliament was only rendered thereby the more audacious: the king became sensible he must resume his rights, but it was no longer in his power; and the throne fell under the strokes of republican ambition. A monarchical government becomes republican when the depositaries of the royal authority abuse the power intrusted to them of making themselves obeyed in the name of the laws, *by setting the first example of rewarding those who disobey them.*"¹

¹ Mémoire du Maréchal de Richelieu. Jan. 1775. Soul. ii. 263, 264.

The revolution in the system of government which followed the recall of the parliament was more important than that recall itself, which was in truth only a symptom, and the first effect, of the previous change. The system of government hitherto pursued had been, in Cardinal Fleury's words, "to allow France to follow its own course; to surrender it without constraint to the bent of the national genius, and only to take care that that genius was not altered." But that system was no longer practicable; for the national mind itself had changed, and changed to such a degree as to render it no longer possible to carry on the government on the old maxims. Necessity in such circumstances prescribed change, wisdom counselled it; but it counselled at the same time such change only as

^{22.} Change in the system of government.

* Corresponding to the lantern of the old House of Commons, where ladies heard the debates.

CHAP. should be founded on experience and observation, and as
 III. little as possible at variance with existing habits and insti-
 1774. tutions. Instead of this, Turgot and the Economists pro-
 posed to remould France entirely after a model drawn
 from the schools of philosophy; to disregard alike custom,
 prejudice, experience in their innovations; and recast a
 kingdom of a thousand years' standing as they would found
 a colony landed for the first time on an uninhabited shore.
 It is not surprising that in such an attempt they over-
 turned the monarchy.¹

¹ Soul. ii.
267, 269.

23.
Birth and
early history
of Turgot.

TURGOT, who took the lead in this great scheme of
 general change, was born in Paris in the year 1729: so
 that he was forty-seven years of age when he was admitted
 into the ministry. He was the son of a public functionary,
 who had rendered his name respectable by the probity of
 his administration in an important situation in the capital;
 and even from his earliest years, the future minister was
 distinguished by his thirst for knowledge, and the gravity
 and severity of his manners. At first destined for the
 church, he passed with distinction through the schools
 of the Sorbonne; and at that period pronounced an
 eloquent oration on the blessings which mankind had
 derived from the Christian religion.* It would have been
 well for him and his country if he had adhered through
 life to the wise and enlightened views which he then
 entertained. The next discourse which he delivered, two
 years after, showed, however, the new bent which his
 mind had taken: it was on "The successive advances of
 the human mind," and gave indication of uncommon
 power of thought, accompanied, at the same time, by an
 undue estimate of the nature of men. He soon evinced a
 distaste for the ecclesiastical profession; said he could not
 consent to "wear a mask through life on his face," and,
 leaving the church, devoted himself to the magistracy as a
 profession, and at the same time applied, with the utmost
 vigour, to the study of almost every branch of knowledge.

* "La morale des payans," said he in this oration, "n'avoit connu que
 l'art de former des citoyens d'une telle nation, ou des philosophes distin-
 gués par la prééminence de leurs maximes, supérieurs à celles de leurs con-
 temporains. La morale Chrétienne, au contraire, avoit pour base des max-
 imes et des devoirs obligatoires, et créoit dans l'homme un nouvel homme.
 Elle étoit la protectrice de l'égalité des droits, elle travailla à la destruction
 de l'esclavage domestique et detelus de la glebe; elle contribua par la
 douceur de ses maximes à fléchir l'esprit inquiet et turbulent des peuples
 de l'antiquité."—*Mémoire de L'ABBE TURGOT, given in SOULAVIE, ii. 274.*

In 1752, he obtained the official situation of councillor of parliament, and in the course of the vehement disputes between the Jesuits and Jansenists, which then agitated the kingdom, published a pamphlet, entitled, "Letters on Toleration," which had a great influence at the time, and procured him immediate admission to the literary circles of the capital. Though he continued his philosophic labours, and translated a great many works, both in prose and verse, from several languages, yet the bent of his genius led him strongly to the cultivation of political science, and he soon became a devoted worshipper of Quesnay and the sect of the Economists. In 1761 he was appointed intendant of the Limousin, which office he held till 1773, and in that situation he had ample opportunity of putting in practice his numerous benevolent and philanthropic projects. The seclusion of that province, however, at length became irksome to one who thirsted so ardently after intellectual society; he returned to Paris, and was soon after appointed comptroller-general of finance, in room of the Abbé Terray.¹

Though the measures which Turgot carried, or attempted to carry when minister, and still more the principles on which they were founded, had the most fatal effect on the royal authority; yet he was far from being republican in his ideas, or connected with any of the refractory parties in parliament, who were so long at issue with the throne. On the contrary, he uniformly supported the crown in these contests, strove to allay the general fervour, and kept aloof from all the opposition which excited so vehement an interest in all classes of society. He did this from principle, not from interest. He sincerely desired the predominance of the crown. According to the French constitution, a royal edict was, in his eyes, a sacred thing, and it was precisely from the use which he hoped one day to make of these decrees, that he looked on them with such veneration. He did not propose, like Gracchus, to degrade the executive and elevate the commons, by systematic warfare: he aspired to mould it, like Antoninus, according to the dictates of an enlarged philosophy. Malesherbes said of him—"He has the head of Bacon and the heart of L'Hôpital;" and, in truth, his character of mind rendered him singularly qualified to act the part of a patriot minister. Profoundly versed in political science, as well as in

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¹ Dupin, Mém. sur Turgot, en tête des Œuvres de Turgot, i. 28, and Biog. Univ. xlvii. 63, 71 Soul. ii. 276, 278.

24.

His character as a Minister.

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¹ Senac de Meilhan, 98. Weber, i. Biog. Univ. xlvii. 63, 65. Mounier, ii. 34, 62. Dupont, Notice sur Turgot, 54, 67.

almost every branch of knowledge ; severe in his principles, irreproachable in his manners ; ardent in the pursuit of speculative improvement, and yet capable, as his administration in the Limousin demonstrated, of the most minute attention to practical details ; a passionate friend of improvement, and yet a steady supporter of justice : he was precisely the man for whom the benevolence of Louis longed, in order to reduce into a practical shape his warm aspirations for the good of his people. He soon acquired, accordingly, a very great influence over his royal master ; and Louis frequently said, mournfully, after he had been driven from Paris, "There was none but Turgot and I who loved the people."¹

25.
Fatal errors
in his prin-
ciples.

Had this able man united to these great and good qualities an adequate knowledge of human nature, and a correct view of the quarter in which all reform, to be effectual, must commence, he would have been an invaluable minister, and better adapted than any other man, by cautious and salutary, yet unflinching reforms, to have prevented the Revolution. But unhappily he laboured under one great defect, which not only proved his own ruin, but rendered him the most dangerous guide that could have been selected for that crisis. He was only the more so, that there was really so much estimable in his character, and beneficent in his intentions. He was entirely ignorant of human nature, rigid and unaccommodating in his ideas, and pursued his designs without any consideration of the effect they were to produce, either upon the persons likely to be injured, or those intended to be benefited by his reforms. "He operated," says Senac de Meilhan, "upon the body politic like an anatomist upon a dead subject, and never considered that he was acting upon living and sensitive beings. He thought only of things and principles, not men : regarding the latter either as virtuous, in which case they might be persuaded by reason, or as scoundrels, who were to be ruled only by force." A devout believer in perfectibility, and the indefinite progress of the human mind, when guided by the light of philosophy, he forgot that inherent corruption, when unrestrained by higher influences, speedily gets the mastery of all the means of general illumination, and converts the torch of knowledge itself into the delusive flame which lures its

followers to perdition. In a word, Turgot the philosopher entirely forgot the principles of Turgot the abbé: he sought for the means of improvement in external change of the structure of society, not internal purification of the heart of its members; in secret he was leagued with those who aimed at the overthrow of Christianity; he proposed to leave religion entirely to individual choice, and its support to the voluntary contributions of those who desired it; and trusted for the advance of society, and the eradication of all the evils with which it is afflicted, to the light of philosophy, the sway of reason, and the principles of justice.^{1*}

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¹ Soul. ii.
277, 279.
Condorcet,
Vie de
Turgot,
36, 57.
Senac de
Meilhan, 73,
84. Biog.
Univ. xlvii.
73, 75.

His principles of finance were unexceptionable, and announced in the famous letter which he addressed to the king on his appointment to office. "Point de banquerouté, point d'augmentation d'impôt, point d'emprunts," were the principles which he unfolded in this letter, which deserves a place in history from the upright, unflinching system of economy and foresight which it unfolded.† Few, probably, will be disposed to deny that these are the true principles of finance, if practicable: the difficulty always is to render them such. One of the

26.
Turgot's
finance mea-
sures, 24th
Aug. 1774.

* It may readily be imagined what exultation the elevation to the ministry of a man of these principles afforded to the philosophers of Paris; and their joy, which is strongly portrayed in their confidential correspondence at this period, is peculiarly instructive, as demonstrating what principles they understood to have really obtained, with Turgot's appointment, the direction of affairs. Voltaire, on 3d August 1775, wrote to the King of Prussia:—"Nous pardons le gout, mais nous acquérons la pensée. Il y a surtout un M. Turgot, qui serait digne de parler avec votre majesté. Les prêtres sont au desespoir. Voilà le commencement d'une grande révolution. Cependant on n'ose pas encore se déclarer ouvertement. On mine en secret le vieux palais de l'impoture fondé depuis 1775 années."—VOLTAIRE AU ROI DE PRUSSE, 3d August 1775; *Correspondence avec le Roi de Prusse*.

† "To accomplish these three points there is but one method, and that is to reduce the expenditure below the income; and so much below it as to lay by every year twenty million francs (L.800,000) as a sinking fund to reduce the debt. Till that is effected, the first cannon-shot will reduce the state to bankruptcy. I am asked, 'Where will I economize?' and every functionary, in his own department, will doubtless exclaim that the expenses are as low as possible. There may be much truth in that; but reason itself must yield to necessity. I foresee that I shall have numerous enemies to combat, whom I must withstand alone; I shall see arrayed against me the numerous classes who profit by the existing abuses; the strong prejudices which oppose every reform; which are so strong an engine in the hand of those who would perpetuate disorders; the natural goodness of heart of your Majesty, and those who are most dear to you; in fine, the people themselves, so easy to be deceived, will very probably be roused to fierce hostility against me. I would sink under the prospect of such antagonists if I did not rely on your Majesty's promise of support; and I rely on more than the promise of the king—the word of the man."

—TURGOT TO LOUIS XVI. 24th August 1774; SOULAVIE, ii. 234.

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first cares of the new minister was to draw up a statement of the condition in which he found the finances, from which it appeared that the receipts were 22,000,000 francs (£880,000) less than the expenses, besides revenues of the succeeding year anticipated to the amount of 78,000,000 francs, or £3,120,000; so that there was in reality a deficit for the year 1775 of 100,000,000 francs, or £4,000,000 sterling. It is no small credit to Turgot that, by the vigour and extent of his reductions, this huge deficit was in a great degree filled up in the next year, without any additions to the burdens of the people, or fresh loans contracted. At the same time, he gave an earnest of the fidelity with which he was about to discharge the just engagements of the state, by ordering immediate payment of 15,000,000 francs (£600,000) to the public creditors, who had received no interest on their debts for four years. During the nineteen months that he held the office of finance minister, the debts he discharged amounted to 100,000,000 francs, or £4,000,000,—a vast reduction to be made in so short a time, and affording decisive evidence of the ease with which even the great embarrassments of the French exchequer might have been overcome, if foreign wars had been avoided, by a firm adherence to the same system of unflinching economy.¹

¹ Soul. ii. 284, 288. Tableau de M. Turgot, 1775. Droz, i. 159. Bailly, Hist. Financeuse de la France, 194.

27. He establishes a free trade in grain, and tumults in consequence. Sept. 13, 1774.

The next great measure of Turgot's, was the establishment of absolute freedom in the internal commerce in grain, which had previously been fettered with numerous restrictions, amounting almost to a prohibition, in its circulation from province to province. Although no one can doubt that this measure was founded on the clearest principles both of justice and expediency, yet it gave rise immediately to violent complaints, on the part alike of the persons who had speculated, or were engaged in trade on the faith of the old restrictions, and of the people, who became exasperated at the sight of corn, when the price was already high, being transported away from their paternal fields. The bad harvest of 1774, known and felt throughout all Europe, added to these unfavourable impressions. The populace, instead of ascribing the dearth of grain to its true cause—a scarcity in the supply—universally imputed it to the arts of forestallers and regraters, who had bought up the corn to enhance its

price. As the price of provisions continued to rise through the whole winter, the public discontent became altogether uncontrollable in the spring following; and in April and May, serious riots broke out simultaneously in many different parts of France. In Burgundy, numerous disorders were committed. Pontoise, nearer Paris, was the centre of the insurrection, from whence it spread to Versailles, where the king sought in vain, by addressing them, to appease a clamorous multitude, who insisted upon a reduction of price. At length they were pacified only by obtaining the desired diminution.¹

This concession, as might have been anticipated, only augmented the public disorders. The tumult ceased at Versailles; but the mob moved in the night to Paris, where the bakers' shops were all broken into, and great quantities of grain plundered and thrown into the streets. Large bodies of military on the following day restored tranquillity in the capital, but the tumults in the neighbourhood continued; and in a combat between the insurgents and the troops on the road to Versailles, several lives were lost. With difficulty Turgot and Malesherbes prevailed on Louis to adopt rigorous measures. The troops in Paris were augmented to twenty-five thousand, and placed under Marshal Biron; martial law was proclaimed, the provost-marshal put in authority, and two ringleaders caught pillaging were hanged summarily on a gibbet forty feet high. Next day a general amnesty was proclaimed; and the king, overcome with scruples of conscience at this unwonted act of vigour, repeatedly said to Turgot—"Have we nothing to reproach ourselves with in the measures we have adopted?" This well-timed severity, however, put down the disturbances, but not before they had become really formidable, and done great local mischief. Two things were observed during their continuance, of much importance and sinister augury for future times. The parliament of Paris openly took the part of the insurgents, addressed the king to lower the price of grain, and were only subdued by a *lit de justice* held at Versailles, and a royal decree which took the prosecutions entirely out of their hands; and the disturbances were conducted with so much unity of design, and simultaneous violence in different places, as to leave no room for doubt that they

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1775.

April 26,
1775.

May 2, 1775.

¹ Soul. ii.
289, 293.
Droz, i. 164,
165.

28.

Violent
disorders
which en-
sued.

CHAP.
III.

1775.

¹ Droz, i.
164, 167,
170. Soul.
ii. 296, 298.
Biog. Univ.
xlvii. 77.
(Turgot.)

29.

History and
character of
Malesherbes.

were instigated with a common design, and directed by no ordinary leaders.* The disposition of the Parisians to make light of the most serious convulsions, was already conspicuous while they lasted. The theatres were open the whole time; Biron's "Campagne des Farines" was the subject of many witty couplets; and the mantua-makers immediately brought out "bonnets à la revolte."¹

GUILLAUME DE MALESHERBES, whose firmness mainly contributed to the suppression of these dangerous disturbances, was born of an ancient family of the magistracy in 1721; so that, when elevated by Louis to the ministry, he was fifty-five years of age. He was educated by the Jesuits, and early trained for the magistracy, which he entered at the age of twenty-three, and was soon after appointed substitute to the procureur-général before the parliament of Paris. In 1750 he succeeded, on the promotion to the chancellorship of his father, Lamoignon de Malesherbes, who had long held the office, to the situation of president of the "Cour des Aides," the chamber of the parliament which took cognisance of exchequer or tax prosecutions. In that important situation, which he held for the next twenty-six years, he had ample opportunities for displaying both the integrity and firmness of his character; and it is no small proof of both, that he was banished for four years by Louis XV. in 1771, for refusing to recognise the

* In the address to the curés, to be read in the parish churches during these disturbances, the king made use of the remarkable expression—"When the people shall be made acquainted with the authors of the sedition, they will regard them with horror." It was subsequently, however, and probably wisely, judged more prudent not to adopt any measure which might reveal the secret information which government had received on the subject. What confirmed the opinion that the disturbances had a deeper origin than merely the high price of provisions, and were in truth a political movement, was the extraordinary and systematic regularity of this outrageous movement. The keeper of the seals said to the parliament of Paris—"The movements of the brigands appear combined; their approach is announced before it takes place; public rumour indicates the place, the hour, where their violences are to be committed. It appears that a general plan has been formed to pillage the country, to interrupt the communications, to stop the transport of corn along the high-roads, in order to succeed in famishing the great towns, and especially Paris." In addition to this, it appeared that great numbers of the mob were drunk, and had money to distribute to others; and when they broke into the granaries and bakers' shops, instead of eating the grain or carrying it away, they destroyed it, or threw it into the streets. Turgot was convinced to the latest hour of his life that these riots were the result of a conspiracy formed by the Prince of Conti and the party in the parliament of Paris hostile to his designs; and the Duke of Orleans did not escape suspicions of being connected with the plot.—See Droz, *Histoire de Louis XVI.*, i. 168; and *Biographie Universelle*, xlvii. 76, (Turgot.)

suppression of the parliament. Many were the memorials which he addressed—great the efforts he made, during his long tenure of office, to shield innocence from oppression, or deliver wretchedness from detention; and it was in one of these remonstrances that he made use of the celebrated expression so characteristic of France under the ancient *régime*:—"No one is so great as to be beyond the reach of the hatred of a minister, nor so little as to escape the notice of a farmer of the revenue."* He was desirous, when brought back in triumph on the restoration of the old parliament in 1774, to resign his situation as president of the Cour des Aides, that he might pass the remainder of his life in study and retirement; and it was only on a third request, and as a personal favour to Turgot, for whom he had a great regard, that he could be prevailed on to accept the situation of minister of the interior upon the dismissal of La Vrillière in August 1774.¹

¹ Boissy d'Anglas, Vie de Malesherbes, i. 225, 249. Biog. Univ. xxvi. 359, 361. Droz, i. 177.

Turgot and Malesherbes were entirely at one as to the necessity of great reforms to restore stability to the monarchy, and eradicate the numerous abuses which had grown up under the despotic reigns of former sovereigns. But their principles of government were widely different; and if they had continued long in office together, this difference must have led to a schism between them. Both were upright in their principles, sincere in their character, and passionately desirous of promoting the general good. Both felt the necessity of great reforms to effect it, and were gifted with the moral courage and disinterested patriotism necessary to carry them into practice, in the face of the interested opposition of the most powerful corporations and individuals in the state. Both were liberal in their principles, intimately connected with the philosophical party in Paris, and imbued with the deistical principles, and prejudices against Christianity, then unhappily so prevalent in France. But here their union terminated. On the principles of the new government which they proposed to establish in the room of the old *régime*, they were widely at variance. Malesherbes was a reformer, but not an innovator. Descended of a legal family, and trained to legal habits, he had no intention of

30.
Malesherbes' principles of government.

* His first words on returning were—"Oublions le passé, excusons les faiblesses, sacrifions les ressentimens."—Droz, i. 174.

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subverting the fundamental laws and institutions of the state; he only desired to clear them of their abuses, and restore them to their efficiency for practical good, of which he still thought them capable. He proposed, therefore, to eradicate all oppressive powers and institutions, and provide safeguards against the recurrence of abuses, but to leave the general institutions of the monarchy unchanged. He made it the first condition of accepting office, that the king should sign no *lettres-de-cachet* but what he presented to him; and his first care was to visit in person the state prisons, and deliver half the inmates, many of whom had lingered for years in their dungeons. He proposed to restore gradually the States-General; to concede to accused persons the right of being defended by counsel; to remove the restrictions on the Protestants in the exercise of their religious worship; to abolish torture and the punishment of the wheel; to re-enact the Edict of Nantes; to remove the censorship of the press; and, without altogether abolishing *lettres-de-cachet*, to limit them to extraordinary cases, and give the person arrested the right, in all instances, of bringing his detention before an elevated tribunal created for that special purpose. He proposed, as he himself said, "to plead the cause of the people before the king;" but still it was before the king that the process was to depend. He little anticipated that he would be called on, in his old age, to plead the cause of the king before the people.¹

¹ Boissy d'Anglas, Vie de Malesherbes, i. 247, 249. Droz, i. 176, 179. Biog. Univ. xxvi. 360, 361. Lab. ii. 14, 15.

31.

Views of Turgot, and his general principles.

Bred in the school of the Philosophers, imbued with the principles of the Economists, Turgot took a bolder and more speculative view with regard to the regeneration of France. He proposed to remould its institutions according to a model framed by the hands of philosophy. He acted on the principle of human perfectibility, of which, in common with Condorcet, he was so strenuous a supporter. He began by giving a noble proof of disinterested virtue himself, by refusing the customary present of a hundred thousand crowns (£25,000,) which had always been paid by the farmers-general of the revenue to the finance minister when they signed their bail-bonds, directing it to be given to the hospitals and poor of Paris. This splendid deed won him public admiration and private enmity; the majority of men in secret ever hate a generosity which they feel themselves unable to imitate.

Though fully aware of the present selfishness and egotism of men,* he thought that it was the result of vicious institutions or antiquated prejudices; and that by the aid of the light of philosophy, social felicity might in the end be built upon the broad basis of general virtue. His ideas, in consequence, embraced a total change of society, as the only effectual means of eradicating the evils under which it at present laboured.¹

He conceived that religion should be left to the voluntary support of those who required it, and not supported by the property of the church; that the tithe should be gradually abolished, after making due provision for the existing incumbents; that the ecclesiastical property should be put at the disposal of the nation, and in part appropriated to instruction in the elementary branches of knowledge and morality; and that, to avoid the disputes of sects, no religious opinions or ceremonies should be inculcated at these schools, but the moral principles only on which all were agreed. In civil government, he held that the existence of separate orders of nobility and clergy was a fundamental error; that the right of making laws, however, should be limited to the class of proprietors, and votes be in proportion to the property held; † that all citizens should be alike eligible to every employment, civil and military; that all corporations, statutes of apprenticeship, and monopolies of whatever sort, should be abolished, so that the career of industry in every branch should be alike open to all; and that legislative assemblies should be formed in the provinces, chosen by and deriving their power from the general election of the people.¹

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¹ Soul. iii.
134, 137.
Biog. Univ.
xlvii. 74.
(Turgot.)

32.
His ultimate
designs.

¹ Condorcet, Vie de Turgot, 51, 78. Soul. iii. 135, 139. ii. 344.

33.
His designs
for immediate
change.

In a word, all the changes of the Constituent Assembly, which fifteen years afterwards overturned the whole fabric of society in France, had their origin in the ideas of Turgot for its regeneration. It was only as the final result, however, and after a long course of previous train-

* "Every one seeks to deceive the government, and to throw the social charges on his neighbour; the revenues of all are concealed, and cannot be discovered but very imperfectly by an inquisition, which puts the king, as it were, at war with his people."—TURGOT, *Mémoire sur l'Administration*, 1775; SOULAVIE, iii. 139.

† He proposed to the king, that freehold property to the extent of 1000 francs, or L.40 a-year, should be the requisite for a vote, and that inferior proprietors should only have a fraction of a vote.—TURGOT'S *Mémoire* to Louis XVI.; SOULAVIE, iii. 142.

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ing, that he contemplated the adoption of such extensive changes : his immediate projects were much more practical.¹ They were the abolition of *corvées*, or the burden of upholding the roads throughout the kingdom ; the suppression of the most oppressive of the feudal rights ; the imposition of the land-tax, called the *vingtième*, on the nobles and clergy ; the formation of a general and equitable cadastre, or valuation of heritable property, to be the basis of all territorial imposts ; the entire liberty of conscience and recall of the Protestants ; the suppression of the greater part of the monasteries ; the redemption of the feudal services, with a just regard to the rights of the present holders. He proposed further, to frame one civil code for the whole kingdom ; to establish an uniformity of weights and measures ; to suppress local privileges and corporations ; to ameliorate the condition of the working curés ; to establish a system of general instruction ; to form a magnificent system for interior communication by land and water ; to effect great economies in the collection of several of the taxes, of which nearly a half was intercepted in its progress towards the exchequer ; to render thought and the press as free as industry ; to call philosophers and men of letters to contribute their mite towards the enlightening of government ; and to prepare the people, by the use of provincial assemblies, for the exercise of the powers of sovereign legislation in the States-General.¹

¹Condorcet, *Vie de Turgot*, 62, 95. *Biog. Univ.* xlvii. 74. Turgot, *Lac.* v. 25. *Lab.* ii 41, 15, 27. *Soul.* iii. 135, 138 ; and ii. 344, 348.

34. *Transports of the philosophers in Paris at his administration, and appointment of St Germain.*

It may readily be conceived what a ferment of visions and hopes in one class of society, and of terror and hatred in another, the fact of ministers holding such sentiments being at the head of affairs must have raised in France. The philosophers were in transports ; they beheld in near prospect, not only the adoption of their principles by government, but what was to them still more material, the communication of the influence and emoluments of office to themselves. The aristocracy of mind was to supplant that of the sword. The clergy and nobles speedily took the alarm. Already M. Turgot had excited the jealousy of the church, not merely by his known connexion with the infidel philosophers of the capital, and the incessant eulogies with which they loaded him, but by a variety of edicts on the ceremonial parts of religion,

which, though not important in themselves, were justly deemed material, as indicating how the wind set in high quarters.* It had, in consequence, become the general opinion in the capital, though erroneously, as it afterwards appeared, that the King had been weaned by Turgot and Malesherbes from his early prejudices, and that he had adopted their deistical views of religion. The noblesse entertained the most rancorous feelings towards a minister whose integrity was proof against their seductions, while his austerity threatened to abridge their privileges, and abolish a large part of their emoluments at court. Matters were in this combustible state, when the former war-minister, the Marshal de MUY, died; and on the suggestion of Turgot, COUNT ST GERMAIN was appointed in his room. This change was attended with the most important consequences, and deserves particular attention, for it is intimately connected with the causes which, in the last crisis, paralysed the government and overturned the throne.¹

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1775.

Oct. 26,
1775.
1 Droz, i.
183, 185.
Soul. ii.
327, 349;
and iii. 2, 5.

This able and intrepid, but bizarre and intractable man, was born near Lons-le-Saulnier, on the 16th April 1707, so that when called to the ministry he was already sixty-eight years of age. Descended of an old and noble but decayed family, he was educated by the Jesuits, and at first intended for the church; but his ardent disposition soon broke through their trammels, and he entered first the provincial militia, and then the regular dragoons. His energetic temperament led him, as France was at peace, into the service of the Elector Palatine in Germany, and in 1738 he signalized his valour in the campaign of the Emperor against the Turks. France having, subsequent to this, declared war against Austria, he engaged in the service of its ally, the Elector of Bavaria, where his talents led to his rapid promotion. He was on the point of entering the Prussian service, but, deterred by the rigours of its discipline, he applied to Marshal Saxe, who procured for him employment in his own country. He served

35.
History of
Count St
Germain.

* He authorized the general sale of meat during Lent, hitherto monopolized by the Hôtel Dieu; altered the mode of travelling of the messageries, so as to enable them to travel during mass; suggested the coronation of the King at Paris, instead of in the Cathedral of Rheims; proposed alterations in the coronation oath, of which the clergy disapproved, and with reason insisted on the omission of the inhuman clause which bound the monarch to exterminate heretics.—See *Biog. Univ.*, xvii. 75. (TURGOT.)

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in the campaigns of Flanders from 1746 to 1748, and afterwards with distinction in the Seven Years' War, where he mainly contributed to save the wreck of the French army after the rout of Rosbach, and to cover the retreat from Minden. His temperament, however, was too ardent to permit of his continuing long in any service without quarrels; he was too little of a courtier to be a favourite at Versailles; * and, deeming himself ill used by the Duc de Broglie, his general, he threw up his command, and withdrew to Denmark, where he was appointed war-minister and commander-in-chief. After some years spent with great distinction in that country, he retired to Alsace, where he was living in retirement, when the bankruptcy of the banker whom he had trusted suddenly deprived him of his whole fortune. Sensible of his merit and services, the German regiments in the employment of France subscribed, and requested him to accept, a pension of 16,000 francs (£640) yearly; the war-minister, De Muy, forbade this, but settled on him a pension of 10,000 francs (£400) a-year on the part of the crown. St Germain lived happy on this pension, in retirement, writing his memoirs, cultivating his little domain with his own hands, and supporting his reverses with dignity, when, without the slightest communication with government, or application on his part, he received an intimation from Versailles that he had been appointed minister-at-war. He was busy, like Cincinnatus, planting a fruit-tree in his garden when the courier with his nomination arrived, and as he had no servant, a neighbouring peasant got ready his horse to convey him to the nearest post.¹ †

¹ Droz, i.
186, 189.
Biog. Univ.
xxxix. 581,
585. Saint
Germain.
Soul iii. 30,
58.

* Madame Pompadour used to call him the "Mauvais Sujet." His decision of character, the greatest element in military, as in all other greatness, strongly appeared; when Louis XV., in 1760, proposed to attach him as mentor to the Prince of Condé—a system well known in the French and Austrian service, where rank obtained command at a time when necessity called for ability. "Sire," replied he, "I know but of two things in war—to command and to obey: as to a council, I know nothing of it."—Droz, i. 185; and *Biographie Universelle*, xxxix. 593.

† Count St Germain's appointment, which, from the singular and romantic circumstances attending it, made a great noise at the time, was owing to the esteem in which he was held by the Abbé Dubois, an intimate friend of Malesherbes, and brother to an officer who had long been an aide-de-camp of the Count's. The Abbé Dubois suggested him to Malesherbes as an officer every way qualified to carry through the great reforms which Turgot meditated in the army, and for which he seemed better adapted than any of the high noblesse. This led to a memoir on the reforms in the army, which he had submitted to Maurepas on receiv-

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36.

Nature of
the reforms
in the army
which were
called for.

¹ Droz, i.
190, 191.
Biog. Univ.
xxxix. 585.
Soul iii.
61, 72.

The principal motive which led Turgot and Maurepas to suggest St Germain's appointment to the king, was in order that he might carry through, with unflinching rigour, the reductions in the expense of the army, especially of the household troops, which the distressed state of the finances had now rendered indispensable. They found him an ardent reformer; and his general plan for the remodelling of the troops was well conceived; but in many subordinate particulars he violently shocked the national feelings, and undid the bonds which united the soldiers of all ranks to the sovereign. The great evils were the prodigious number of officers on full or half-pay in proportion to that of common soldiers, and the promotion of young men to important military employments who had no acquaintance whatever with the duties of their profession.* These abuses, the consequence of the army being considered the mere appanage of the nobility, not the patrimony and safeguard of the state, at once burdened the treasury, and weakened the service.¹ They were to be regarded as the principal causes of the long train of disasters which in recent wars had tarnished the glory of

ing his pension, being looked at; and as it pleased Louis and Turgot, he received the appointment.—Droz, *Vie de Louis XVI.*, i. 188, 189.

* The French army in 1776 consisted in all of 217,000 men: and there were 60,000 officers on full or half-pay. By the regulations, 17th April 1772, each regiment of cavalry consisted of 480 men, of whom no less than 146 were officers, or non-commissioned officers, being nearly one officer to every three privates. In the glorious days of the French army under Turenne, a company was commanded only by a captain, lieutenant, and sub-lieutenant or ensign. It was during the calamitous last years of the reign of Louis XIV. that the prodigious multiplication of officers began; a system which at once afforded an immediate relief to the treasury, by the sale of the commissions, and gratified the nobility by their obtaining the salaries attached to them. When the pay of such a vast accumulation of officers came to prove a serious drain upon the exchequer, the only resource was to replenish its coffers by the creation and sale of additional military offices; and this of course soon aggravated the evil, and threw the finances of the army into inextricable confusion. When Count St Germain was made minister-at-war, every regiment was burdened with a train of useless supernumerary officers for whom we have no corresponding words in the English language, or in the military vocabulary of Napoleon, viz., "des colonels propriétaires, des colonels commandans, des colonels en second, des colonels en troisième, des colonels pas commissionés, des colonels à la suite des régimens, et des colonels attachés à l'armée." The same abuses existed with regard to captains, lieutenants, and all inferior grades. What peculiarly aggravated these evils was, that titles or rank alone gave a right to advancement; and these invidious and burdensome commissions were often purchased for money, or acquired by family influence, without the holder having ever seen a shot fired in the field, or even a regiment drilled on parade! Such are the abuses resulting from unchecked aristocracy—from the selfishness of human nature, when acting in a dominant noblesse. This History will show whether lesser evils grow up when a republic is established, and the selfishness of human nature comes to act in an unrestrained democracy.

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the French arms. St Germain applied the caustic with a firm hand to the gangrened limb; but he pushed it too far, and inflicted a deep, and, as it proved, an irremediable wound on the healthy part of the system.

37.
Changes
which he
introduced.

The obvious way to have remedied the abuse of supernumerary officers would have been, to have allowed the existing holders of the commissions to have enjoyed them during their lives, but prevented their being filled up afterwards. Instead of that, St Germain commenced his reforms by an immediate sweeping reduction in the household troops; the object, it is true, of excessive and prodigal favour to the higher branches of the aristocracy, but ennobled by the recollection of historic names and deeds of fame, and forming an essential part of the military force of the country. The mousquetaires gris, the mousquetaires noirs, and the grenadiers à cheval, of the Maison du Roi were suppressed: and he was meditating still further reductions, when the vehement resistance of the nobles at the head of the menaced corps obliged him to desist. He endeavoured to accomplish the diminution of the supernumerary officers attached to every corps; but at the very moment he was doing this, he perpetuated the abuse by creating "colonels en seconde," a certain mode of lowering the principal rank, and authorized the sale of a hundred supernumerary captaincies. Various salutary regulations for the military schools, and the mode of raising troops for the army, were made. But the good effect of the whole was destroyed by the new and fatal changes which he introduced into the discipline of the private soldiers. Enamoured of the severity of German discipline, unacquainted, from long absence, with the peculiarity of the French character, and yet sensible that the lax state of the army required a severe remedy to be applied to restore its efficiency, he introduced the German mode of punishing by strokes with the cane; and when the universal resistance of the army obliged him to abrogate that mode of chastisement, he substituted blows with the flat part of the sabre. This system, which continued for a considerable time to be enforced, gave hardly less dissatisfaction.¹ Mutinies broke out in several regiments: the soldiers burst into tears, or sunk down in swoons, on seeing their comrades subjected to such an

¹ Soul. iii.
60, 67.
Droz. i.
190, 197.
Biog. Univ.
xxxix. 585,
Saint Ger-
main.

indignity: numbers committed suicide to avoid it; and the celebrated saying of a grenadier, "Je n'aime du sabre que le tranchant," repeated from one end of France to the other, worked the indignation up to a perfect paroxysm.*

Another of his changes, little less grating to the feelings of the military, was the breaking up of the noble establishment of the Hotel des Invalides of Louis XIV., and distributing the veterans in their several parishes. This system might have answered well in England, where the soldier still retained his domestic attachments; but it was to the last degree distasteful to the French soldiers, who regarded themselves as banished when sent to the provinces with a pension; and shed tears on being conveyed in carts past the statue of Louis XIV., the founder of their establishment, in the Place Louis XV.; exclaiming, "We have no longer a father." An attempt next made to abolish the central military school at Paris, and establish six in the provinces in its stead, had no better success; the scholars revolted at the idea of being subjected to monks or provincial pedagogues; and, after it had continued for a year, the old system was restored. The innovations of St Germain, from being ill-directed, and at variance with the spirit of the nation, injured the cause of reform, and contributed to augment the growing discontent at Turgot's and Malesherbes' administration. He survived their ministry, however, and was not dismissed till September 1777; but his influence had previously ceased, and all parties were so inveterate against him, that all alike rejoiced in his fall. It was hard to say whether the courtiers who sighed for the restoration of the corps of guards which he had dismissed, or the soldiers who were indignant at the German punishments he had introduced, were most hostile to his measures. To such a length had the general discontent reached, that it had gone far to destroy the ancient loyalty of the French character;¹ and an officer high in command informed Louis XVI., that at

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38.

Breaks up
the Hotel
des Inva-
lides.Great dis-
contents
this excited
in the army.Sept. 3,
1777.¹ Soul. iii.
65, 67, 172,
188. Droz,
i. 196, 197.
Biog. Univ.
xxxix. 555.

* In the regiment of Laval, a private was ordered to be punished with strokes of the sabre; he declared himself a gentleman before the punishment began, and therefore exempt from that indignity; his protest was disregarded, and he underwent the sentence. After it was over, he proved his descent, withdrew from the service, as he was entitled on doing so, challenged his colonel, and ran him through the body.—SOULAVIE, iii. 63.

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39.

Turgot's
Six Edicts.
Feb. 1776.

the time of his dismissal there were not two regiments in the army which could be relied on.*

Turgot's power was brought to a test by the publication of his famous edicts, which at once raised up such a storm as ultimately occasioned his downfall. The two most important of these were, one for the suppression of the burden of *corvées*, or personal service on the roads, over the whole kingdom, and the formation of a tax to supply its place, borne by all landholders alike; the other the general suppression of *Jurandes et Maitrises*, (wardenships and incorporations.)† The actual importance of these changes, though in themselves by no means inconsiderable, was the least cause of the interest which they excited: it was the introduction of a *principle* which rendered them so vehement an object of contention. The first tended to throw a burden, hitherto borne by the peasantry in kind, on the shoulders of all landed proprietors indiscriminately; the second abolished at once the whole privileges of corporations and crafts, and rendered the young workman in every department of industry, who had just begun his labours, the equal in every legal privilege of the old craftsman who had spent his life in his vocation. The tendency of these changes was manifest: it was to remove the burden of taxes from the peasantry of the country and fix them on the land, and, abolishing all distinctions of rank among the working-classes in towns, to prepare the way for universal equality of privilege and suffrage. This was rendered still more manifest by a work published by Boucerf, a friend of Turgot's, and high in the administration of the finances, against the feudal rights, and recommending the experiment of their abolition on the domains of the crown,‡ which the parliament of Paris, on

* St Germain's character was perfectly portrayed by one circumstance. After he was made minister, he bought a demesne near Rainey: and the moment he acquired it, he set about the demolition of the old chateau, gardens, walls, and orchards, which had cost 100,000 crowns (L.20,000), to make way for new constructions. Not one stone was standing on another, nor one tree left in six months; and in six more he himself was dismissed from the ministry, and died of chagrin.—SOULAVIE, iii. 79.

† Turgot's six edicts were as follows;—1. For the suppression of the Caisse de Poissy; 2. For the suppression of the duties on grain in the markets; 3. For the diminution of the duties on the markets; 4. For the suppression of all charges on the harbours; 5. For the suppression of statutes of apprenticeships and incorporations; 6. For the abolition of *corvées*, and the imposition of a general land-tax in their room.—SOULAVIE, iii. 65.

‡ *Sur les Inconvenances des Droits Feodaux*, par BOUCERF, premier commis des finances. January 1776.

the motion of a young counsellor destined to future celebrity, D'Espremenil, ordered to be publicly burned. Such was their indignation against this work, that it was with the greatest difficulty that they could be prevented from ordering a prosecution against its author; and D'Espremenil's motion to serve an indictment against him was only got quit of by the side-wind of an adjournment; but it still hung over his head when the Revolution broke out in 1789.¹

It is surprising how quick-sighted men are, when their interests are, however remotely, concerned. It was hard to say whether the noblesse and parliaments, who beheld, or supposed they beheld, their feudal rights vanishing into air under the magic wand of the comptroller-general, or the merchants and tradesmen, who were threatened with an equality of privileges being conferred on their workmen, were most indignant at the proposed changes. The noblesse exclaimed, that as they were now compelled to contribute to the roads, the next thing would be, that the king would force them to labour at them, like the peasants, with their own hands. The merchants and manufacturers loudly protested against their workmen being raised to a level with themselves, and their birthright, or the fruit of their toil, being torn from them by novices in the crafts in which they had grown grey. The clergy, albeit not yet threatened in their influence or possessions, took the alarm at the inroad attempted on the exclusive privileges of the noblesse, and, joining the general cry, declared that Turgot and Malesherbes had made a philosopher and an infidel of the king. The farmers of the revenue, the financiers, and the whole tribes of speculators who were fattened on the public taxes, swelled the general discontent, and decried a system which they foresaw would ere long lay the axe to the root of their usurious gains.* Following the current of public opinion, which was entirely in unison with its own aristocratic predilections, the parliament of Paris registered the first edict, regarding the caisse of Paris, which was of no importance, and refused to ratify the others. Turgot, determined not to be defeated, caused the king to hold a *lit de justice*, and they were registered by force.²

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¹ Droz, i. 200, 202. Soul. iii. 85, 87.

40.

Universal combination against Turgot to resist the Six Edicts.

March 8, 1776.

March 12. ² Soul. iii. 84, 91.

Droz, i. 204, 207. Biog. Univ. xxxix. 81, 82. (Turgot.)

* One of them said with curious naïveté, "Pourquoi changer? nous sommes si bien."—Droz, i. 206.

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1776.

41.

Continu-
ance of the
contest with
the Parlia-
ment, which
occasions
his fall.

Thus was exhibited, for the first time in Europe, probably in the world, the extraordinary spectacle of the powers of a despotic government being exerted to force democratic reforms, partly salutary, partly perilous, on an unwilling country. Subsequent times have afforded more than one example of a similar prodigy; but it may well be imagined what a sensation it excited when it first occurred. Well might the Philosophers exclaim, that they had turned despotism by its source, and got into the redoubt by its gorge: property beheld itself assailed in the quarter where no danger had hitherto been anticipated, and where it was without defence. The parliament and privileged bodies, however, were not discouraged. They prolonged their debates during several nights successively; thundered forth eloquent and energetic protests against the threatened invasion, without compensation, of private property;* and ultimately succeeded in raising such a ferment in the country as proved irresistible.

* "One is tempted to believe," said they in their protest, "that there exists in the state a secret party, an unknown agent, who, by internal throes, seeks to overturn its foundations; like those volcanoes, which, preceded by successive subterraneous sounds and earthquakes, subsequently cover all that surrounds with a burning torrent of ruins, of cinders and lava, which is vomited forth from the entrails of the earth. Every people have their own manners, laws, customs, and usages. Institutions form the political system. To subvert that order is to shake the foundations of the government which all nations have adopted. Among every people laws are founded on their disposition, their character, their opinions. Every legislator should, in the first instance, consult the genius of the people whom he proposes to ameliorate. By what fatality has it happened that our writers and legislators at present make it their object to combat every thing—to destroy, to overturn every thing? The edifice of our ordinances, based on the spirit of the nation, accommodated to it, the work of so many ages, the fruit of the prudence of sovereigns, of the wisdom of the most enlightened ministers, of the experience of the most upright magistrates, is treated by these new preceptors of the human race with an insulting contempt, which could spring from nothing but the reveries of a disturbed imagination, stimulated by the enthusiasm of a false philosophy."—*Speech of M. Seguier, Procureur-Général of the Parliament of Paris, 1775*; SOULAVIE, iii. 88, 89.

"Turgot," said Monsieur, afterwards Louis XVIII., "says to the French, 'For a thousand years you have had laws, privileges, property, usages, and distinctions. They are all chimeras and barbarisms. Become a new people. Let the reason of the first age of the world enlighten you; let every thing be abandoned to instinct and self-government; let all obstacles be thrown down, all privileges abolished.' To accomplish these ends he furnished to Louis XVI. six skilfully drawn edicts, well purified in the fire of liberty, and involving all the elements of a general revolution. The evil genius of France, in the shape of an Anglomania, has got possession of the royal councils; it has misled the king, seduced the council, abused the nation. Observing the disorders of the finances, it has seized upon that as the lever wherewith to subvert the state; and its fatal influences will precipitate a revolution by putting France at war with itself, and in the end establish the lasting superiority of Great Britain."—What a prophecy! and these were the men whom the philosophers of the day

Malesherbes was the first who sank before the storm. Worn out with the opposition which his measures of reform had experienced, disgusted with the selfishness with which he was surrounded; despairing of effecting any permanent amelioration in a state where individual interest was the object of universal worship, he sent in his resignation, which Louis, a prey to similar vexations, mournfully accepted, observing at the same time, in touching words, "You are happier than I; you can resign." Turgot, endowed with more obstinacy of disposition, held out longer; but the public clamour became so violent, that at length he also felt the necessity of sending in his resignation.* Maurepas, who was no reformer in his heart, but had merely given in to the system of the Philosophers, to keep things quiet and win over their powerful voice to his side, was alarmed at the vehement fermentation which had been excited, and had for some time been skilfully sowing the seeds of doubt and distrust as to Turgot's designs in the king's mind. After some hesitation, accordingly, he accepted his resignation, and thus fell the Government of the Economists.¹

CHAP.
III.
1776.

March 17,
1776.

April 30,
1776.

May 12,
1776.
¹ Soul. iii.
160, 165.
Biog. Univ.
xxxix. 82.
Droz, i.
207, 209.

The fall of Turgot and Malesherbes is one of the most important of the many important phases which preceded the Revolution, and was intimately connected with that convulsion. That it accelerated the march of events conducive towards it, cannot be doubted; for the return to arbitrary government, and the continuance of abuses, is felt in a peculiar manner grating, when the minds of men have been heated by the taste for reforms, how visionary soever. Yet were the innovations contemplated by these eminent and well-meaning men, in themselves to the last degree perilous, and such as would have conducted France, by a path less bloody perhaps, but not less certain, than that which it actually followed, to a social revolution and military despotism. No other testimony is required to this, than that of Malesherbes himself, who thus, when taught by misfortune, expressed himself on the tendency

42.
Reflections
on the fall
of Turgot.

characterised as '*esprits bornés*,' incapable of raising themselves above antiquated prejudices.—*Mémoire par MONSIEUR FRERE DU ROI, Avril 1776*, p. 7, 8; and SOULAVIE, iii. 107.

* He said, in his letter resigning office. "The most decided combination of all parties against me, my absolute isolation, and the scarce disguised enmity of M. Meromnil, his influence with M. Maurepas, all convince me that I only hold by a thread."—SOULAVIE, iii. 164.

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1776.

of the reforms in which he had had too large a share. "M. Turgot and I," said he, in 1790, "were very honest men, well-informed, and passionately desirous of the public good. No one, at the time, could have believed that the king could have done better than to have trusted himself to our guidance. Nevertheless, I now see that, knowing mankind only from books, and wanting the judgment necessary for conducting public affairs, we conducted the administration ill. We wished to govern the French not as they were, but such as we wished them to be, and such as our hearts imagined they were. We were misled by our zeal; our principles having been introduced into the government, the use we made of our power to enforce them was clearly erroneous. I know not to what the changes in progress will lead; but I must admit that, stepping on from one system of supposed perfection to another, we have arrived, I grieve to say, at our present state. Strange to say, the nation has always thought it would right itself by making a further step in advance. Without perceiving it—without intending it, we have contributed to the Revolution."¹

¹ Soulavie, vi. 101, 102. Biog. Univ. xxxix. 83. (Turgot.)

43.
Causes of these disastrous results.

The principle which led the plans of reform adopted by Turgot, and many other great and good men who followed him, to these disastrous results, has now been clearly illustrated by experience. They proceeded upon an erroneous estimate of human nature, and a mistaken idea of human perfectibility. No one knew better, or felt more keenly than that upright minister, the unbounded selfishness of the aristocratic classes by whom the throne was surrounded, and by whom his plans of amelioration had been incessantly thwarted. But he imagined that these were the vices of the great only, and that if the invidious distinctions of society were removed, the community would no longer be oppressed by their influence. He saw the evils of the privileges of the dominant classes of society; but he did not see, what experience has now fully shown, the still greater evils resulting from the unrestrained ascendancy of the working masses. His plans shook the base of all good government, the security of property: professing to lay the social burdens equally on all classes of society, they in effect removed them from one class, hitherto unjustly left to bear them all, to lay them with

equal injustice on another. The *corvées* were to be taken entirely from the shoulders of the peasantry, and laid on those of the landed proprietors. This was not equalizing the social burdens, but changing the class which was to bear them.* The project of suppressing the privileges of incorporations, and leaving the career of industry open to all, in appearance so equitable, has been found by experience to lead to the most calamitous consequences; for it takes large bodies of men from the guidance of respectability and property, to range them beneath the mandates of violence and injustice. The working-classes must be combined in some way or other; the feeling of impotence to an isolated poor man, is insupportable. When so combined, human nature will ever prompt to some system likely, in appearance at least, to conduce to the general advantage. If not arrayed by law in guilds and incorporations, recognized and protected in their privileges, they will array themselves in combinations which will enforce their assumed rights by violence and intimidation, attended with the most dreadful results. The nation is little to be envied, which, having extinguished legal incorporations, where age predominates, industry is cherished, and misfortune alleviated, falls under the dominion of ruthless trades-unions, where violence directs, despotism commands, and cruelty executes; where the torch and the dagger are the instruments of popular vengeance, and which consign, for months together, twenty or thirty thousand of their fellow-creatures to compulsory idleness and real destitution.†

* The Roman maxim "*cujus est commodum ejus debet esse onus*," is the certain guide in the often complicated, and always vehemently contested matter of the distribution of the social burdens; and its justice is so apparent, that when it is strictly followed they are never complained of. Accordingly, the English tolls, falling on the persons who use the roads, though often imposing a far heavier burden on individuals than the French *corvées*, are never felt as burdensome.

† The author can speak here from personal information on this subject. The great cotton-spinners' strike in 1837, cost Lanarkshire and Glasgow L.452,000; that of the whole colliers and iron-miners in the same year, L.417,000, besides doubling the price of coals, which levied a tax to an equal amount on the community; the strike of the calico-printers in the West of Scotland in 1834, inflicted a loss of L.474,000 on the country; that of the colliers and iron-miners in 1842, cost Lanarkshire at least L.600,000. Nearly the whole of the loss arising from these strikes fell on the innocent and industrious labourers, willing and anxious to work, but deterred from doing so by the threats of the unions, and the dark menaces of an unknown committee. The mode in which these committees acquire such despotic authority, is precisely the same as that which made the Committee of Public Safety despotic. Terror—terror—terror.—“Every morning we asked each

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1776.

44.

The system
of the old
régime is
restored by
Clugny, who
succeeded
Turgot.

Aug. 11.

May 14.

April 30.
1 Soul. iii.
155, 169.
Droz, i.
210, 213.
Biog. Univ
xxxix. 83,
84

Maurepas supplied the place of Turgot by Clugny, formerly intendant of Bordeaux: a man of no distinction, but a courtier, and one whose character gave an earnest of a return to the old *régime* of aristocratic influence and abuses. Arnoldt succeeded Malesherbes in the Home Office—a man totally devoid of talents: indeed he was selected by Maurepas for that very reason; they had had enough of the men of letters.* An immediate change ensued in the conduct of Government. The six edicts registered by force on the 12th March, were repealed; and the edict as to the *corvées* was suspended: the promised ameliorations were so frittered away that they amounted to nothing. Everything returned to the old system. Maurepas addressed a hypocritical letter of condolence to Turgot on his dismissal, which drew forth an indignant retort from the fallen philosopher. “At least,” said he, “I retire without having to reproach myself with weakness, falsehood, and dissimulation.” Nevertheless, it was those three vices which retained Maurepas in power, and the opposite qualities of vigour, truth, and sincerity, which drove Turgot from it. Such are courts: except in those cases, unhappily so rare, when penetration and resolution, as well as virtue and good intentions, are at the head of affairs. If it is rare for a Henry to find a Sully, it is still more rare for a Sully to find a Henry. Turgot, a few days before his retirement, addressed an eloquent letter in justification of his conduct and designs, to Louis XVI.;¹ but he said, at the same time,

other why was nothing done last night?” “What did you mean by nothing done?” “Why was no one murdered by the committee?”—*Crown evidence, SWINTON'S Report of the Trial of the Glasgow Cotton-Spinners*, p. 88. See also *Evidence before Combination Committee, Commons*, 1838, pp. 128, 164. As a contrast to this, the united trades' incorporations of Glasgow spend above L.7000 a-year in charity, arising from funds they have accumulated during a long course of prudent management, and effectually prevent any of their members from being reduced to destitution, or falling as a burden on the community. From the report of that able and intelligent officer, Sir Charles Shaw, formerly superintendent of police in Manchester, now in the same office in London, it appears, that intimidation and murder constitute a part of the system of the trades'-unions in Manchester. “Money,” says he, “is voted to screen and send out of the country members who have committed legal offences, in obedience to the commands of the ruling committee. The following are some of the entries, ‘That L.13, 4s. be allowed to ——— for passage-money to America, after having murdered ———. That L.10 be given to ———, for outfit and passage-money to America, after the murder of ———.’”—See Sir CHARLES SHAW, *Replies to LORD ASHLEY'S Queries*, 1843, p. 17.—Such is self-government, and the rule of the masses in some of the manufacturing districts of Great Britain.

* “At least,” said Maurepas, “they cannot accuse me of having chosen him for his talents.”—Droz, i. 212.

of that prince, with profound and prophetic sagacity, that "the destiny of Louis XVI., under the guidance of the courtiers, would be either that of Charles I. or Charles IX.*

The obvious incapacity of Clugny for the arduous duties of comptroller-general of the finances, soon obliged Maurepas to look out for an assistant to him; and his choice fell on a man destined to immortal but melancholy celebrity in the history of the Revolution, M. NECKER. This eminent philosopher, but unhappy statesman, was born at Geneva, on the 3d September 1732, of respectable parents: his father, who was descended from an old family in the north of Germany, having been a professor of public law in that city. His own inclination prompted him to the study of philosophy and politics; but the wishes of his parents led him to follow commerce as a profession, and he early settled in Paris in the capacity of clerk, in the banking-house of M. Vernot. His abilities and assiduity soon raised him to a lead in that firm; and he afterwards became a partner in the great banking-house of M. Thelusson, where he was engaged in immense speculations, in the course of which he realized a large fortune. The chief sources of his fortune were vast transactions in the corn trade, and important finance operations under the Government, which commenced in the administration of the Duc de Choiseul. In proportion as he became affluent in circumstances, he gradually devoted himself more and more to his favourite political and philosophical pursuits, and several pamphlets which he published had already acquired for him a considerable reputation, when one he published in 1775, on the freedom of commerce in grain, at the time of the dreadful riots, owing to the scarcity of that year, at once raised him to the highest eminence. Such was the impression produced by this celebrated attack on Turgot's edicts for establishing freedom in the corn trade, that the friends of that statesman have not hesitated to ascribe those disorders to the machinations of Necker to effect his overthrow.† But, though the upright character of the

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1776.

45.

Early history of M. Necker.

* The author of the massacre of St Bartholomew. Francis Turgot died a few years after, on 20th March 1781, at the age of fifty-four.

† Necker's pamphlet was approved of by the censors on the 18th April 1775; its publication was sanctioned by the king: on the 25th it was published. Symptoms of the insurrection appeared at Dijon on the 28th April; and it broke out with extreme violence at Versailles and Paris on

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1776.

¹ Biog. Univ.
xxi. 9,
(Necker.)
Droz, i.
216, 217.
Soul. iv. 27,
29.

46.

Madame
Necker, and
the society
with which
she was sur-
rounded.

Swiss financier forbids the belief that he had any hand in the stirring up of that formidable insurrection, a comparison of dates demonstrates that he had no hesitation in taking the earliest possible advantage of the distress which produced it, to inflame the public mind against the minister to whose change of system he conceived the general calamities to be owing.¹

Necker's reputation at Paris was in great part owing to the celebrity of his wife, Madame Necker: there is no character so great in France as to be independent of female influence. It was the fate of this remarkable woman to be intimately connected with three of the most eminent persons of her own or almost of any other age; for in early youth, while still dwelling under her father's roof, a humble pastor in the solitudes of the Jura, she attracted the notice, and but for the refusal of his relations to consent to the connexion, would have been united to Gibbon, the greatest of modern historians.† Subsequently she married M. Necker, who, at the most critical period of its fate, was prime minister of France, and mainly contri-

the 2d May:—"La cause de l'émeute des blès est toute dans l'ambition de M. Necker, qui se pressait de faire renvoyer mon frère pour occuper sa place."—*Discours du Chevalier Turgot, (frère du Ministre);* SOULAVIE, iv. 28, 29.

† "The personal attractions of Mademoiselle Susan Curchod were embellished by the virtues and talents of the mind. Her fortune was humble, but her family was respectable. Her mother, a native of France, had preferred her religion to her country. The profession of her father did not extinguish the moderation and philosophy of his temper, and he lived content with a small salary and laborious duty in the obscure lot of minister of Crassy, in the mountains that separate the Pas de Vaud from the country of Burgundy. In the solitude of a sequestered village, he bestowed a liberal and even a learned education on his only daughter. She surpassed his hopes by her proficiency in the sciences and languages; and in her short visits to some relations at Lausanne, the wit, beauty, and erudition of Mademoiselle Curchod were the subject of universal applause. The report awakened my curiosity; I saw and loved. I spent some happy days at Crassy, in the mountains of Burgundy; she listened to the voice of truth and passion, and her parents honourably encouraged the attachment. But on my return to England, I found my father would not hear of this strange connexion; without his consent I was myself destitute and helpless; after a painful struggle I yielded to my fate—I sighed as a lover, but obeyed as a son. The minister of Crassy soon after died; his stipend died with him; his daughter retired to Geneva, where, by teaching young ladies, she earned a hard subsistence for herself and her mother; but in her lowest distress she maintained a spotless reputation and a dignified behaviour. A rich banker of Paris, a citizen of Geneva, had the good fortune and good sense to discover and possess this inestimable treasure; and in the capital of taste and luxury she resisted the temptations of wealth, as she had sustained the hardships of indigence. The genius of her husband has raised him to the most exalted situation in Europe. In every situation of life he has reclined on the bosom of a faithful friend; and Mademoiselle Curchod is now the wife of M. Necker, the minister, perhaps the legislator of the French monarchy."—GIBBON, *Autobiography, Miscellaneous Works*, i. 106-108.

buted, for good or for evil, to bring about its Revolution ; and she was the mother of Madame de Staël—the first of female, and second to few of male authors. The saloons of this accomplished lady, who, to a prepossessing person, united the solid acquirements of learning and talent, were not frequented by the nobility of the court circle ; but, even before Necker was made minister, they were the centre of union to a society much larger, and, as was soon felt, more influential. There were assembled that section of the noblesse, now by no means inconsiderable, which had embraced with ardour the new opinions, and was ready to adopt any projects of philanthropy or social regeneration which were suggested by fancy and supported by eloquence ; the higher class of persons in office, or connected with the administration of finances ; the richest and best informed of the bankers, merchants, and *Tiers Etat*, and all the persons of distinction in literature, science, and philosophy. There never had been formed in Paris a circle where so much talent, knowledge, and enthusiasm were combined, and it had a material influence, as will appear in the sequel, on the progress of the great convulsion. Yet was it sensibly different from the usual character of French society. It was more grave and sedate : abounded less with the brilliancy of wit, the elegance of manner, or the keenness of repartee ; and already gave token of the serious thoughts and profound passions, which were to agitate the country during the Revolution.¹

The continual embarrassment of the finances, to which the economy and reforms of Turgot had been able to apply only a temporary and most inadequate remedy, was the immediate cause of the elevation of M. Necker to the ministry. He had composed, and transmitted to Maurepas, in 1776, a memoir on the finances, in which he developed a plan for supplying the deficit, which he estimated, at that period, at 27,000,000 francs (£1,080,000) a-year. This plan was, in a peculiar manner, agreeable to the adroit minister, coming, as it did, on the eve of the war with England, to support the insurgent colonies of America, when extensive loans were indispensable, and from the man in France who, from his credit in the commercial world and his position as a financier, was best qualified, both to form a correct opinion on the subject, and to carry

¹ Gibbon, Misc. Works, i. 106, 108. Droz, i. 217, 218. Biog. Univ. xxxi. 9, (Necker.) De Staël, Rev. Franc., i. 56, 64.

47.
Causes which led to Necker's appointment to the ministry.

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his designs for the relief of the finances into execution. The idea of making him comptroller-general immediately presented itself to the mind of the prime minister; but such a choice, however desirable in some points of view, was not without grave inconvenience in others. Necker was a foreigner and a Protestant, neither noble nor of historic descent; and his connexion with the liberal party, notwithstanding his controversy with the late comptroller-general on the corn trade, threatened to revive that formidable coalition of vested interests to which Maurepas had been obliged to sacrifice Turgot and Malesherbes, and from the hostility of which he himself had made so narrow an escape.¹

¹ Soul. iv.
1, 16. Droz,
i. 221, 222.

48.

His appoint-
ment as
Finance
Minister.

Oct. 22,
1776.

The war, however, which it was foreseen was approaching, absolutely required money; Necker alone could revive the credit of the crown; and Maurepas fell upon the following plan to calm the jealousy of the church and privileged classes: A respectable man, of mild and inoffensive manners, long councillor of state, Taboureau des Reaux, but of no abilities, was named comptroller-general of the finances, and Necker had the subordinate situation of director of the treasury. It was understood that, in that capacity, he was to have the entire direction of the finances, though without a seat in the council. But his disposition was too aspiring to permit him to remain in a subordinate capacity; and Taboureau, finding that Maurepas coincided with the Swiss banker in his projects of reduction, resigned, and Necker was appointed director-general of the finances. The distinction between this situation and that of comptroller-general was more than nominal: the former had no seat in the cabinet, the latter had; and this it was hoped would allay the apprehensions of the privileged orders. The clergy, however, murmured at the appointment of a Protestant to an office of such importance. "I will give him up to you," replied Maurepas, "if you will pay the debts of the state."²*

June 29,
1777.

² Buchez
and Roux, i.
168, 171.
Droz, i. 220,
222. Soul.
iv. 16, 17.

* It was Necker's acknowledged talent as a financier, and the credit he enjoyed in the commercial world, which ultimately raised him to the ministry; but the manner in which he first became known to the King and Maurepas was curious, and not quite so creditable. An obscure intriguer, possessed of considerable address, named the Marquis de Pezai, had introduced himself to the king, by some anonymous letters on the means of promoting the happiness of the people, and afterwards obtained his confidence in some private interviews. Pezai was under pecuniary obligations to Necker, and, to promote his benefactor, he recommended him to Maure-

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1776.

49.

Necker's
first finance
measures,
and opposi-
tion against
them.

The accession of Necker to the ministry speedily made itself felt, not only in various reforms in subordinate matters of detail connected with the finances, but in an entire change of system. New regulations were made in the post-horse duties; the receivers-general and intendants of the finances suppressed; the administrators of the lottery reduced in number; and, by a simple letter of the minister, the vingtième was extended to heritable property of every description. All these measures, and particularly the last, excited violent opposition; the parliament of Normandy solemnly protested against them; and the clamour became so violent, that the author of an energetic pamphlet against the proposed changes was sent to the Bastille.* Monsieur, afterwards Louis XVIII., began to take an active part in this opposition, and declaimed in no measured terms against the director-general. But Necker's ideas of alteration went a great deal further; and, in truth, the state of the finances, on the eve of the breaking out of war with England, imperatively required an entire change of system. What he proposed rested on two bases—1. The establishment of a general estimate of the expenses of every department, to be laid, by the minister at the head of it, at the beginning of each financial year, before the king for his consideration and approval; and, 2. The introduction of a greater degree of publicity into the accounts of the nation, in order to reassure the capitalists as to the real extent of the national resources, and prepare the way for negotiating those extensive loans, without which it was evident that the prosecution of hostilities would be impossible.^{1†}

¹ Soul. iv.
43, 45.
Biog. Univ.
xxx. 9.

pas. Such are the obscure means by which, in a country without free institutions, talent is frequently made known to the throne.—See SOULAVIE, iv. 1, 17; and BUCHEZ and ROUX' *Histoire Parlementaire de France*, i. 169, 170.

* M. Pelesseri.

† It is a general survey of the financial state of the kingdom, which can alone lead to wise and salutary determinations; and it is because such a survey has been constantly avoided during the preceding reign, that the finest kingdom in the world is now unable to enjoy its resources. Influential ministers, governing respectively the foreign relations, the army and the navy of the kingdom, expended at will immense sums; and feeble comptrollers-general, vain of their office, and desirous of continuing to enjoy it, sought to provide for these expenses, sometimes by a loan, sometimes by a tax, sometimes by a bankruptcy; and the national prosperity of France, from which such resources might have been drawn, served only to repair in a certain degree the effect of these disorders. The first step in reformation is to establish it as a fundamental principle, that at a certain time in the year—in the month of October, for example—the respective

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1776.

50.

Character
of Necker,
and his plans
of finance.

Necker owed his appointment entirely to the embarrassments of the court, and the absolute necessity of negotiating loans on the eve of the American war. But being strongly attached, at once from early association, political principle, and religious impression, to free institutions, he endeavoured to make the difficulties of the Government the means of emancipating the people. His system was boldly to face the public accounts, to make no secret to the world of the excess of the expenditure above the receipts, and to reduce them ultimately to a level by a rigid system of general economy. He proposed to meet the public exigencies in ordinary periods by taxation, in extraordinary by loans; to familiarize the people to the former, by obtaining the consent of the provincial parliaments, and gain them over to the latter, by giving perfect publicity to the public accounts. Thus both parts of his system were favourable to the progress of freedom; the taxes by leading to the States-General, and the loans by compelling a publication of the accounts; the former by establishing a legal organ for popular influence, the latter by opening a channel for public opinion. His private character was unexceptionable. Possessed of immense wealth, he made a noble use of it. When appointed minister of finance, he went a step beyond Turgot's rejection of the free gift of the farmers of the revenue; he refused the whole emoluments of office; an example of disinterestedness which excited the jealousy, as it was beyond the power of imitation of the courtiers. His private charity was unbounded; his religious principles pure and sincere, alike removed from the rancour of Protestant sectarianism and the arrogance of Romish domination. A faithful husband, an upright man, liberal, without either pride or prodigality, he would have been a perfect private citizen. But as a statesman he had qualities to the last degree dangerous. He had a vein of ostentatious and secret vanity, joined to a devout faith in human perfectibility, and an extravagant belief in popular virtue and disinterestedness, which afterwards, by making him sacrifice every thing to his love of popularity, brought unheard-of disasters on the monarchy.¹

¹ Soul. iv.
40, 45. Mig.
i. 16. Lac.
v. 25, 32.
Lab. ii. 33.

ministers of departments should each submit a scheme of their proposed expenses to the king, to be considered and approved of by him as a whole, and with reference to the general resources of the revenue.—NECKER, *Mémoire à Louis XVI.*, 8th Aug, 1776; SOULAVIE, iv. 45.

The first subject of moment on which Necker was required to give an opinion, after he had been called to the royal councils, was the question, whether France should interfere to support the insurgents of America in their contest with Great Britain. Turgot had strongly opposed the proposal of going to war, and in a very remarkable memoir laid before Louis XVI., had given the clearest proof of the justice of his views and the solidity of his understanding. He resisted it on the ground, that the expense with which it would necessarily be attended, would prove entirely destructive to all other plans of economy which had been formed, and on which the ultimate extrication of the finances from their present difficulties was dependent; that the opinion so generally entertained, that the emancipation of the colonies would prove fatal to the mother country, was erroneous, inasmuch as, in such an event, she would from previous habit and present interest retain their commerce, while she would escape from the burden of maintaining and defending them; and that the strength of England would be much more effectually weakened by allowing the contest to be prolonged. In that case, if unsuccessful, she would be seriously tarnished in her reputation; if successful, burdened with a costly and discontented distant possession, which would give her the name of dominion and the reality of expense. Necker, when introduced into the cabinet, entirely concurred in this opinion, and in an especial manner insisted on the ruin which would inevitably ensue to the finances if a costly war were commenced, when the nation was unable to make head against its ordinary pacific expenditure. The other ministers concurred in these opinions, and it was unanimously determined in the cabinet to persevere in a system of neutrality, and to afford only secret and clandestine succour to the insurgents.¹

But the period had now arrived when, on great questions in which the public took a warm interest in France, the substantial direction of affairs was taken out of the hands of Government, and placed in those of the agitators of the capital. Various causes had recently combined to render the feelings excited in favour of the American insurgents peculiarly warm, and the desire to assist them in the end irresistible. There is a natural

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1776.

51.
Views of
Turgot and
Necker on
the American
war.

Sept. 1776.
¹ Droz, i.
234, 235.
Soui. iv.
40, 46.

52.
Growing
interest of
the French
in favour of
the insur-
gents.

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1777.

sympathy in all generous minds with the weaker party engaged in a contest with a stronger, and on behalf of people contending for their liberties against their real or supposed oppressors. This general feeling was strongly increased in the present instance by the calm and dignified deportment and language of the leaders of the Americans, and the enthusiastic admiration with which, in the excited state of the public mind on the subject of freedom, every popular insurrection against an established government was regarded. It was urged, that it was in a peculiar manner incumbent on the French government to interfere on the present occasion, as the aid to be tendered would, in all probability, dissolve the British colonial empire, destroy its maritime superiority, efface the disgrace of 1763, and by one single effort extinguish the rivalry of four centuries. All classes concurred in clamouring for the desired war with England. The philosophers and democratic party had a natural sympathy for every people, from whatever cause, engaged in a contest with an established government; the young officers of the army sighed for promotion, and made the saloons of Versailles resound with declamations in favour of a gallant nation struggling for its liberties; the commercial towns, already enriched by the consequences of the rupture of Great Britain with her colonies, anticipated still greater advantages from the participation of France in the contest, and loudly demanded the immediate commencement of hostilities.¹

¹ Droz, i.
235, 262.
Soul, iii.
347, 348.

53.
France joins
America,
and the war
with Eng-
land.

Pressed by so many concurring passions and interests, the king and the queen, who long held out almost alone in the court against the war, were obliged to give way. Maurepas, true to his uniform system of yielding to external pressure when it became violent, and thus avoiding the risk of all collision, got Vergennes, the minister of foreign affairs, to prepare a plan which he flattered himself would secure all the advantages of the proposed co-operation with the insurgents, without being exposed to any of its dangers. This was to conclude, in the first instance, only a treaty of commerce with the colonies which had revolted. England, it was urged, could not object to such a pacific relation with states which had, *de facto*, established their independence; and, accordingly, the French

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1778.

minister at London received instructions to represent that the cabinet of Versailles had no intention of injuring Great Britain by these measures.* As it was foreseen, however, that so flimsy a pretext would be speedily seen through by that great power, provision was, at the same time, made against its resentment, by the conclusion of a secret treaty, offensive and defensive, with the Americans, by which it was stipulated that neither of the contracting powers should conclude a separate peace, and that they should mutually assist each other, in the event of a rupture between France and England, with all their forces. Both treaties were signed by the French minister on the same day, and they led immediately to the result which was anticipated—the recall of the British ambassador at Paris. But Louis, who had been literally concussed, against his better judgment, into this decisive, and, as it proved, ruinous step, recorded his protest on the margin of the latest memorial presented to him by his ministers, in these words:—"What a situation! Is it necessary that reasons of state and a great warlike design should compel me to sign orders contrary alike to my heart and my opinions?"†

Feb. 6, 1778.

1 Soul. iii.
348. Droz,
i. 262, 263.
Camp. i.
234, 235.
Martens.

Unbounded was the enthusiasm which the long-wished for war with England excited throughout France. Such was the universal transport, that nobles of the highest rank, princes, dukes, marquises, and counts, solicited, with impatient zeal, commissions in the regiments which were to aid the insurgents. Not a few, of the oldest family and highest connexion, were fortunate enough, as it was then deemed, to obtain them—among whom were the Marquis Lafayette, who afterwards played so

54.
Universal
enthusiasm
which the
successes of
the American
War
excited.

* This is just what Great Britain did with the insurgent South American colonies in 1824. It is remarkable how exactly, in both cases, diplomatic astuteness, to disguise a disgraceful, but, as it was thought, profitable breach of national faith, resorted to the same flimsy and unworthy disguise. Both have since felt the full consequences of their injustice: France in the impulse thereby given to the causes which were inducing the Revolution of 1789; England in the wide spread distress consequent on the destruction of the South American mines, which terminated in the Reform Revolution of 1832.—*Vide infra*, Chap. LVI., §§ 87-89; and Tables in Appendix there referred to, where this most curious and important subject is explained.

† Joseph II., Emperor of Germany, as well as his sister, Marie Antoinette, clearly perceived the ultimate consequence of the King of France allying himself with the American insurgents. At the time the treaty was signed he was at Versailles, and on being asked his advice on the prospects of the Americans, replied, "I must beg to decline; my business is that of a royalist."—WEBER, i. 121.

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1778.

important a part in the history of the Revolution; the Count de Rochambeau, who subsequently commanded the French forces in the New World; the Chevalier de la Lucerne, the Count de Bouillé, the Duke de Crillon, and many others of the highest nobles and bravest men in France. The brilliant successes with which the American war was crowned; the return of officers adorned with the laurels won in the cause of freedom, with the star of the order of Cincinnatus, which the Americans had established, on their bosom, added to the general enthusiasm. Nothing seemed so glorious, so worthy of a really great man, as to have taken part in the overthrow of an established government. The government encouraged these feelings, and bestowed rewards on the officers whose exploits had excited them—regarding the contest as the means merely of humbling England. But Rousseau foresaw, in this universal delusion, the commencement of a new era in human affairs, and prophesied it would be the ERA OF REVOLUTIONS.¹

¹ Droz, i. 377. Segur, i. 100, 149, 189. Lab. ii. 4, 5. Lac. v. 92, 94.

55.
Great impulse it gives to Republican ideas.

The passion for republican institutions increased with the successes of the American war, and at length rose to such a height as to infect even the courtiers of the palace. Thunders of applause shook the theatre of Versailles at the celebrated lines of Voltaire,—

“ Je suis fils de Brutus, et je porte en mon cœur
La liberté gravée, et les rois en horreur.”

It was easy to see, from the general frenzy which had seized even upon the highest classes, that the era of revolution was not to be confined to the New World. The philosophers of France used every method of flattery to bring over the young nobles to their side; and the profession of liberal opinions soon became as indispensable a passport to the saloons of fashion as to the favour of the people. Even in foreign courts the same sentiments were rapidly gaining ground, from the extreme interest taken in the American contest; and Count Ségur found at St Petersburg his decoration of the republican order of Cincinnatus more an object of envy than any which he had obtained from the European monarchs. Emperors, kings, and nobles seemed at that period to have combined with a view to establish a new order of things, from the extravagant eulogiums they pronounced on philosophers and liberal opinions; and it was only after

having themselves erected the fabric, that they strove to pull it down—forgetting that the human mind, like time, is always advancing, and never recedes. They were astonished when they found that men had discernment enough to apply to them the principles they had inculcated in regard to others. Lafayette was hailed as a hero, a divinity, so long as he supported the cause of Transatlantic independence; but he was stigmatized as a rebel, when he endeavoured to maintain the same principles in support of European freedom.¹

But wars in support of the principles of révolution, as well as all other wars, require an expenditure of money; and the event soon proved the truth of Turgot's prophecy, that the French finances would be reduced to an inextricable state of embarrassment by the expenses of the American contest. Though the war with England lasted only five years, yet its expenses, as is always the case with contests carried on in such distant quarters, were enormous, and only rendered greater by the successes which raised such a tumult in the nation, as rendered it impossible for the Government to restrain it within due bounds. But the *Tiers Etat* was already taxed as heavily as it could possibly bear; and the slightest approximation even towards the imposition of any new burden on the privileged classes, was certain to produce such a ferment as had already proved fatal to the ministry of Turgot. In this extremity but one resource was left to the Swiss minister—namely, that of *borrowing*; and his great credit with the monied interest enabled him to make a skilful use of this seducing but dangerous expedient. He was far too able a man, and skilful a financier, not to perceive the dangers of such a system. But he erroneously imagined that these dangers arose entirely from the national finances being enveloped in mystery; and constantly affirmed that the example of England demonstrated, that if due publicity were given to the public accounts, it was possible for the state to borrow almost to an unlimited extent without any injury either to its own credit, or to the resources of its subjects.¹ Proceeding on this principle, having already resolved to publish the state of the public finances, he provided for the whole extraordinary expenses of the American war by successive loans, almost all contracted in the costly form

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¹ Lab. ii. 2,
3. Ségur,
i. 189, 252,
255; ii. 46;
iii. 38, 50.

56.
Financial
embarrass-
ments to
which the
American
war gave
rise.

¹ Soul. iv.
111, 117
Calonne,
sur les Fi-
nances de
France, 32,
39.

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III.

1779.

of life annuities; and their amount from 1776, when he commenced his operations, to 1781, when he retired from the administration, was no less than 530,000,000 francs, (L.21,200,000,) and the annual charge on this amount was 45,000,000 francs, or L.1,800,000!

57.
Great em-
barrassment
which the
loan con-
tracted oc-
casioned to
the finances.

So considerable an addition to the debt of the state was not made without adding greatly to the embarrassment, already sufficiently great, of the public finances. An attempt to uphold its credit by a partial and delusive statement of the public accounts, though for a time successful, in the end, as such attempts generally do, only aggravated the evil. From the *compte rendu*, published by Necker when finance minister in 1780, he made it appear that the receipts exceeded the expenses by 10,000,000 francs (L.400,000), and this announcement produced a prodigious sensation, from being so much more favourable than had been anticipated. In consequence, it increased greatly the minister's facility of borrowing. It might at the time, however, have been suspected that there was something delusive in this flattering account of the excess of revenue above expenditure, when, on the strength of his candid statement, and amidst an universal chorus of applause for his financial ability, M. Necker succeeded in borrowing in a few months after the publication of the *compte rendu*, no less than 236,000,000 francs, or nearly ten millions sterling, for the service of the state. In effect, Necker himself gave a very different account of matters when he was out of the ministry; for from his work on the finances of France, published in 1784, three years after his retirement, it appeared that the deficit, even as acknowledged by government, was already above 100,000,000 francs (L.4,000,000) annually.* And M. Bailly has affirmed, that taking into view the anticipations of the revenue of succeeding years, the real deficit of 1781 was 218,000,000 francs, or nearly L.9,000,000. Such a state of matters loudly called for a remedy; and Necker could see none but in

Francs.

* Viz.—Available revenue,.....	557,500,000	or	L.22,300,000
Deduct cost of collection,.....	58,000,000	...	2,300,000
			499,500,000
Expenditure,.....	610,000,000	...	L.20,000,000
			24,400,000
Annual deficit in 1784,.....	110,500,000	...	L.4,400,000

—See NECKER, *sur les Finances de France*, 1784, i. 92, 93, and ii. 517, 518.

diminishing the charge, which had always been so considerable, of collecting the revenue, and he proposed accordingly some rigorous reductions in that department. Forty-eight receivers-general were abolished: a reduction which met with vehement opposition at the court, from the influence of the persons struck at by it. At the same time he ventured on a much more questionable measure, and which savoured not a little of revolutionary confiscation. This was the sale of the property of such hospitals as produced less than three per cent revenue on their estimated capital, throwing their future maintenance as a burden on the state: an example too closely followed in after times by the National Assembly, in regard to the property of the church and whole remaining foundations for the poor.¹

Another favourite project of Necker's excited at this time general attention and interest, both at the court and in the country. This was the formation of provincial assemblies, or little states-general, in the several provinces, where matters of local interest and taxation might be discussed, and in which the landed proprietors and people might be gradually trained to the exercise of social and political duties. A model for such institutions already existed in the monarchy, in those states last annexed to the crown, in particular Languedoc, Burgundy, and Brittany, which had retained the right of having their taxation, and matters of local interest, regulated by their own estates. The king, in regard to them, fixed by royal edict the sum to be paid by the province. But the charge and mode of collecting it were left to its own assemblies; and as they in general claimed exemption from certain imposts which were levied elsewhere in the monarchy, this was one of the great causes of the inequality of taxation so generally complained of before the Revolution. Advantages and evils, as in all human institutions, had been

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III.

1780.
Oct. 19,
1780.

¹ Soul. iv.
118, 120.
Droz, i.
290, 300,
274, 282.

58.
Existing
States-Ge-
neral in
some of the
provinces.

Bailly's account of the matter was as follows,—

	Francs.		
Viz.—Ordinary revenue, 1781,.....	436,900,000	or	L.17,500,000
Expenditure,	526,600,000	...	21,000,000
	<hr/>		<hr/>
Nominal Deficit,.....	89,700,000	...	L.3,500,000
Borrowed on future years and lottery in 1781,.....	129,130,000	...	5,200,000
	<hr/>		<hr/>
Real deficit,.....	218,830,000	...	L.8,700,000

—See the Statements of Bailly in Droz, i. 297, 298.

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III.

1780. \

found to attend the practical working of these provincial assemblies. Taxation, in general, was lighter in the districts so governed than in the rest of the kingdom; the roads were in better order, and the public burdens more equally distributed over the inhabitants. On the other hand, these provincial assemblies, as is always the case with such bodies, were actuated by a narrow and parsimonious spirit. Minutely attentive to local interests, they were incapable of extending their views to the general good. Refractory and divided on every other subject, they evinced an united and determined resistance to increased taxation on every occasion, however urgent, which, if it became general, would obviously prove inconsistent with good government, and might endanger the very existence of the monarchy.¹

¹ De Staël, i. 76, 78.
Lab. ii. 71,
73. Droz, i. 283.

59.
Necker's
Provincial
Assemblies.

Necker, however, who conceived that a remedy, and the only remedy, for all social evils was to be found in the participation of the people in the duties of government, urgently pressed the king to follow this example, and establish provincial assemblies generally throughout the kingdom. He conceived, with reason, that however refractory such local assemblies might prove, especially in matters of taxation, they would be much less formidable than a states-general sitting at Paris, and assembled from all parts of the kingdom. He indulged a sanguine hope that the nation might be thus safely trained to the important duties of self-government, and those numerous abuses be gradually pointed out, and rectified, which could not, in the present temper of the public mind, be longer persisted in, without obvious danger to the stability of the throne. With this view he proposed that these provincial assemblies should be composed of four equal parts, one-fourth of deputies from the noblesse, one-fourth from the clergy, one-fourth from the *Tiers Etat* of the towns, one-fourth from that of the country. An able memoir was presented by him on this subject to the king, which elicited from Louis a variety of marginal notes, written with his own hand, evincing not only a rare sagacity, but the most profound political wisdom.*

* See the memoir of NECKER and notes of LOUIS, in *Correspondence inédite de Louis XVI.*, ii. 188—200; and in SOULAVIE, *Histoire de la Règne de Louis XVI.*, iv. 123—131.

Though impressed with the dangers of the proposed change, however, the king, with his usual distrust of his own judgment when opposed to that of others whom he respected, agreed to let the experiment be tried by degrees. It was commenced accordingly in two provinces; and assemblies on this model were established in Berri and Rouergue; and their success, notwithstanding various difficulties, was on the whole such as appeared to justify the views of the Swiss minister.* This measure deserves particular notice, as it was the model on which Necker subsequently framed the states-general, which was the immediate cause of the overthrow of the monarchy.¹

The period, however, soon arrived, when Necker was assailed by the same coalition of selfish interests, averse to change because their fortunes were made, dreading inquiry because their deeds were evil, which had already proved fatal to the ministry of Turgot and Malesherbes. His system of economy, which the state of the finances imperatively required, made reductions necessary in the pensions, offices, and gratifications bestowed on the nobility by the court; and this of course rendered him unpopular with that body.† The clergy were jealous of him because he was a Protestant, and lived surrounded by the literary men and philosophers, whose irreligious opinions were openly proclaimed. The people were tired of hearing him called the Just; and the overweening vanity which was perhaps his greatest weakness, furnished them with too many fair opportunities of turning him to ridicule. The financiers had recovered from the burst of enthusiasm with which his *compte rendu* had been received, and had already pointed out, in a multiplicity of pamphlets, the weak points of that skilful semi-exposure

60.
General coalition
against
Necker.

* They had suppressed the *Corvées* in their provinces, and collected in Berri alone 200,000 francs (L.8000,) in contributions for objects of local utility. But it was already observed, that their attention was fixed on local interests to the exclusion of any general objects.—Droz, *Histoire de la Règne de Louis XVI.*, i. 284.

† Necker, like all the French ministers before the Revolution, was perpetually assailed by women of rank, soliciting offices or pensions for themselves or their relations, and frequently insisting upon their claims as a matter of right. Necker heard them with politeness, but always insisted on the necessity of economizing the funds extracted from the earnings of the poor. He found it impossible, however, to make them enter into his ideas on this subject. "What is a thousand crowns," said they, "to the king?" "It is," replied the minister, "the *taille* of a village."—DE STAËL, *sur la Révolution Française*, i. 92.

¹ Soul. iv.
123, 129.
De Staël, i.
80, 82. Lab.
ii. 72, 73.
Droz, i. 284.

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of an insolvent exchequer. The Count d'Artois and the Count de Provence had sounded the alarm among the higher nobility, as to the dangerous tendency of the provincial assemblies, and the equal representation of the *Tiers Etat* with the two privileged orders: the parliaments viewed with jealousy the proposed institution of deliberative bodies, who might in the end come to overshadow their authority. The king himself had lost his confidence in the representations of the minister of finance as to the flourishing state of the revenue; he could not be brought to understand how an exchequer which was represented as enjoying a surplus, should be constantly reduced to the necessity of borrowing; and he had in secret consulted several persons as to their opinion of the accuracy of these representations. Influenced by these doubts, the king in April 1791 desired Vergennes, the minister of foreign affairs, to lay before him a memoir on the tendency of M. Necker's measures; and that memoir, as might have been expected, was any thing but favourable to the Swiss minister.¹

Matters were at length brought to a crisis, by the publication of a pamphlet by the treasurer to the Count d'Artois, in which he criticised, in terms of no measured severity, the statements contained in the *compte rendu*. Necker was not ignorant that this writer expressed the opinion of all numerous and influential classes in the metropolis, who had a share in collecting the revenue. He was in consequence deeply affected by the circumstance; and Madame Necker, with more ingenuousness than knowledge of the world, secretly made a visit to Maurepas to make him the confidant of her grief. The astute old man immediately foresaw the means of overthrowing a statesman whom he dreaded; and it was resolved by all the ministry, except M. de Castries, that they would resign if Necker obtained a place in the Council. This, however, the Swiss minister deemed indispensable; or at least, that he should have the privilege of appearing and defending his measures before that body, when they were the subject of deliberation; observing with justice, that when his measures were attacked on all sides, the king could not form an impartial opinion regarding them, if he were not permitted to be present

¹ Vergennes, Mem. in Soul. iv. 206, 215. Droz, i. 301, 303. Lab. i. 75, 76. De Staël, Rév. Franc., i. 91, 93.

61. Necker's resignation. May 19, 1781.

to defend them. "What! you in the Council room!" exclaimed Maurepas, "and you do not go to mass!" "Sully," replied Necker, "did not go to mass, and yet he was admitted to the Council." Afraid of pushing matters as yet to extremities, Maurepas agreed to make him a councillor if he would abjure his religion, but this he honourably refused to do. Finding that access to the council was resolutely denied him, Necker sent in his resignation, which the king mournfully accepted. But to the latest hour of his life, the Swiss minister regretted a step taken rather under the influence of pique than reason, and constantly asserted that if he had continued at his post, and been permitted to continue his progressive amelioration of the national institutions, he would have prevented the Revolution.¹

Great was the joy among all the parties who had coalesced to effect the overthrow of Necker, at his having anticipated their designs by a voluntary retirement. But it was soon discovered, as it ever is when serious financial embarrassment is the source of ministerial difficulties, that the change of the minister had done little towards improving the situation of the state. It appeared ere long that his popularity had not been the result of the influence of a cabal at Paris, but that it was founded in the general accordance of his system of government with the spirit of the age. So vast was the number of persons who went out of Paris to visit him at his country residence at Saint Ouen, two leagues distant, that the line of carriages formed for several days a continual procession, which extended over the whole distance. Above five hundred letters of condolence were received by him from persons of the highest rank—from magistrates, philosophers, literary men, and corporate bodies in France. Joseph II. of Austria, Catharine of Russia, and the Queen of Naples, hastened to offer him the direction of their finances, which he had patriotic spirit enough to refuse. A minister, who, by the mere skill of his finance operations, could, as it was ignorantly supposed he had done, extinguish a huge deficit, and meet the expenses of a costly war without imposing any new taxes, appeared an invaluable acquisition to the needy sovereigns of Europe.² A more honourable, because a more sincere tribute of regret, was

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1781.

May 19,
1781.
1 Marmon-
tel, Mém. ii.
219. Soul.
iv. 223, 224
Droz, i. 303,
304. Lab.
ii. 77, 78.
De Staël,
Rév. Franc
i. 82, 93.

62.

General re-
gret at his
leaving the
Administra-
tion.

² Soul. iv.
183, 185. De
Staël, i. 99,
105. Droz,
i. 303, 304

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paid to his character by the poor in the hospitals of Paris, whose condition, previously miserable in the extreme, he had essentially ameliorated, and who testified the most unbounded regret at his resignation of power.*

The members of the parliament of Paris had taken so remarkable a lead in the systematic war of pamphlets which at length effected the overthrow of Necker, that Maurepas deemed it advisable to take the next finance minister from that body. M. Joly de Fleuri was accordingly chosen—an ancient and respectable councillor, and an amusing retailer of anecdotes in conversation, but totally destitute of any ability in finance. He made it, accordingly, an invariable rule to follow out all Necker's plans; but the system of continually borrowing, without either laying on new taxes or providing any funds for the payment of the interest, is not likely to last long, even in the most skilful hand, and will soon break down under ordinary direction. In the seven months which remained to run of 1781, after Necker's resignation, he was obliged to borrow successively three loans of 20,000,000 francs (£800,000) each; and although he promised to the creditors an increase of taxes for security, yet such was the distrust produced by the retirement of the Swiss minister, that he was obliged to give a higher rate to obtain the loans than the former minister had done. This again involved the government in fresh difficulties; for to provide for the interest of 60,000,000 francs required the imposition of new taxes; and as they were ordered by a royal ordinance to be levied equally, the parliaments in several of the provinces refused to register

63.
Successor of
Necker in
the finance,
and increas-
ing difficul-
ties.

* "The day preceding that on which M. Necker had resolved to send in his resignation if he did not obtain what he desired, he repaired with his wife to the hospital which still bears their name at Paris. They frequently went to that respectable asylum to gather strength to sustain the difficulties of their situation. The Sisters of Charity, the most interesting of all religious communities, attended the patients: M. and Madame Necker, both Protestants, were the objects of their love. These devoted young women presented, and sung to them, verses taken from the Psalms, the only poetry with which they were acquainted; they called them their benefactors, because they strove to succour the poor. My father was more touched that day than I ever recollect him to have been before by similar demonstrations of affection: he felt the power he was about to lose, for it conferred such means of doing good."—DE STAEL, *Révolution Française*, i. 100, 101. Necker, as already noticed, like Turgot, had the disinterested virtue, rare in those corrupted days, to refuse the customary gift called the *pot-du-vin*, of 100,000 crowns, as usually given to the finance minister by the farmers of the revenue on-renewing their bail-bonds.—*Ibid.* i. 89

them, and thus the dangerous conflict was revived between the crown and these refractory bodies. During his whole ministry, Joly de Fleuri found himself unequal to the solution of the required problem, that of providing for an increasing war expenditure without any increase of taxes. Nor was the contraction of loans an easier matter. Necker's innovations had totally subverted the old system of raising money for the government by advances from the different persons employed in the collection of the revenue, and, in lieu of it, there had been substituted a general reliance upon the public resting on the strength of the published accounts. But the attacks on the *compte rendu* had shaken the resources at first acquired in this way; Necker's retirement destroyed them; and so low had the credit of government fallen, that it was with great difficulty, and only by constantly offering a higher rate of interest, that money could be raised for the ordinary expenses of the state.¹

It was in the midst of these internal difficulties, though surrounded externally with the lustre of the successes in the American war, that Maurepas died, on the 30th November 1781. Turgot was already no more; he had breathed his last on the 20th March in the same year. The king, thus left without a minister on whom he could rely in such a crisis of his reign, turned his eyes on M. DE VERGENNES, then holding the portfolio of foreign affairs, and he was accordingly appointed successor to Maurepas. The Philosophers were now entirely routed out of the cabinet; and the new minister was as capable a man as could have been selected to revert to the old system. His talents were of a very high order; he had for several years conducted with a firm hand the complicated details of French diplomacy; and to his address and exertions the formation of the armed neutrality in 1780, which brought England to the verge of ruin, was mainly to be ascribed. Louis, with consummate judgment, and in a truly patriotic spirit, followed up his designs. French diplomacy acquired the lead in Europe: the dreams of the philosophers were exchanged for the skilful combinations of experienced statesmen: Russia, Sweden, Denmark, were united in a hostile league; America, Spain, and France, in an armed confederacy against Great Britain: the combined fleets rode triumphant in the British Channel;² and, however

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1782.

1 Soul. iv.
262, 271.
Droz, i.
381, 385.

64.

Death of
Maurepas,
and appoint-
ment of
Vergennes
as prime
minister.
Nov. 30,
1781.

2 Capet.
l'Europe
pendant la
Révolution
Franc., i.
54, 55. Soul.
iv. 363, 374.

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III.

1783.

65.

Resignation of Joly de Fleuri.

Feb. 26,
1783.

March 18,
1783.

strange it may sound to modern ears, it is historically certain that England was more nearly subdued by the wisdom of Louis XVI., and the talent of Vergennes, than by the genius of Napoleon and the address of Talleyrand.*

But the real difficulties of the French monarchy, at this period, arose from its finances; and they only became the more embarrassing when the conclusion of peace with Great Britain, on the 20th February 1783, though on terms eminently favourable to France, left to its government the sad bequest of the expenses of the contest, without either its excitement or its glories. As Necker, unlike Pitt, had made no provision for the payment of the interest of the debts which he had so largely contracted, they fell with overwhelming force upon his successors, at the very time when his innovations had destroyed the credit in the official employés by which the wants of the exchequer had hitherto been supplied. The king vainly endeavoured to give a more uniform system to the public expenditure, by creating a committee of finance, of which Vergennes was president, and which was to control the accounts of all other departments. Joly de Fleuri, mortified by this mark of distrust in his resources, and unable to face the increasing difficulties of his situation, resigned his office; and so well were its embarrassments now understood,

* Vergennes received the portfolio of foreign affairs in July 1774; he was made prime minister on the death of Maurepas in November 1783, and died, when still in that elevated office, on 12th February 1787. His official correspondence exhibits the clearest proof of a powerful and sagacious mind.—CAPEFIGUE, *L'Europe pendant la Révolution Française*, i. 54. Note. He was born at Dijon in December 1717, so that he was fifty-seven when he was first appointed minister for foreign affairs. Like almost all the statesmen of France during the last century, he was descended from a legal family, which had been recently elevated to the magistracy. He commenced his career in the diplomatic line under the auspices of an uncle, M. Vergennes, who was in the suite of M. De Chevigny, ambassador of France at the courts, successively, of London, Lisbon, and Madrid. His singular ability in reducing to a narrow compass, and seizing the prominent points of a voluminous diplomatic dispute between the courts of Lisbon and Madrid concerning Monte Video, first brought him into notice; and he was in 1750 appointed minister to the court of the Bishop of Worms. Subsequently he was employed in several diplomatic situations in Germany; and in 1755 he accompanied the Baron De Tott in a most important mission to Constantinople: on leaving the Turkish capital in 1768, he bore with him the regrets of the whole French merchants in the Levant, who presented to him a golden sword in token of their esteem. In 1770 he was sent by the Duke de Choiseul as *chargé d'affaires* to the court of Stockholm; and the ability with which he then conducted a very delicate negotiation with the Empress Catharine, procured for him the appointment to the portfolio of foreign affairs in July 1774.—See *Biographie Universelle*, xlviii. 179, 182, (VERGENNES;) and CAPEFIGUE, *L'Europe pendant la Révolution Française*, i. 54.

that Louis had considerable difficulty in finding a successor. D'Ormesson, a young man of thirty-one, was at length selected, on account of his upright and irreproachable character: but he sought to excuse himself on the score of his youth. "I am still younger," replied the king, "and my situation is more difficult than that which I entrust to you." At length his scruples were overcome, and he accepted the onerous charge. But he proved altogether unequal to the task of stemming the torrent.¹

The courtiers blamed his economy; the ladies in secret deprecated his probity; the bankers were deaf to his applications. Matters at length came to such a pass, that he was under the necessity of issuing a royal edict, suspending the payment of treasury bills above 300 francs (£12) each, and at the same time ordering them to pass at par between man and man. This was in effect to proclaim a national bankruptcy. His honesty immediately became the object of reproach: he was declaimed against as wholly deficient in resources: talent, no matter how unscrupulous, was universally called for. Glad to be relieved of a burden which he had unwillingly undertaken, and which his rectitude of purpose rendered him little fitted to bear, D'Ormesson resigned his situation, after holding it only seven months. Since the retirement of Necker in April 1781, a period of only two years and a half, the loans contracted by the crown had amounted to the enormous sum of 345,000,000 francs (£13,800,000), and there remained at the retirement of D'Ormesson only 360,000 francs (£14,400) in the public treasury.²*

In this extremity it was universally felt that a man of talent and resources was imperatively required in the post of difficulty; and, by a singular coincidence of chances, the king's choice fell on M. CALONNE.† This able and

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1783.

April 5,
1783.
¹ Soul. iv.
266, 270.
Droz, i.
391, 394.

66.
D'Ormesson
appointed
Finance
Minister.

Sept. 27,
1783.

² Droz, i.
391, 396.
Soul. iv.
266, 273.

67.
Character
of Calonne.

* D'Ormesson was not a man of remarkable resources, but of the most upright integrity and disinterested virtue. Though not possessed of any considerable private fortune, he declined his retiring pension of 15,000 francs (L.600,) and bestowed it on the endowment for destitute young women at St Cyr. Soon afterwards he and his relation D'Ormesson de Noyseau were left 1,000,000 francs (L.40,000,) by a distant relation; they refused the succession, to let it descend to his heir-at-law.—Droz, i. 396.

† Charles Alexander Calonne was born at Douai on the 20th January 1734, his father having been president of the parliament of that place. Being intended for the magistracy, in which his father had borne a distinguished part, he was bred to the bar, and was soon appointed procureur-general, or public prosecutor, of the parliament of Douai. In 1763 he became *Maître des Requêtes* in that assembly; and in that situation he had

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intrepid, but profuse and inconsistent man, owed his appointment chiefly to women, with whom he passed his life. Bold, inconsiderate, and ambitious; brilliant in conversation, elegant in manners, ambitious of power, but disinterested in regard to money; fertile in resources, indefatigable in application, he knew, like Alcibiades, how to combine the dazzling but superficial accomplishments which captivate in society, with the more solid qualities which are essential to success in the business of life.* He had held several important situations under government, and in the post of intendant of Lille, which he had last occupied, had evinced decided and acknowledged talents for administration. But the king and queen, when he was first spoken of, were both averse to his appointment; and it was only by the force of repeated and urgent recommendations that this repugnance was overcome. The ladies of the court at that period, and indeed in every age of French history, had a great share in ministerial appointments, and they were unanimous in favour of M. Calonne. In addition to the talents which he unquestionably possessed, he was gifted with that quick, decided turn of mind which at once applies its force to the required point, and, by never making a difficulty, so often finds none—the quality, of all others, where advice is required, which is most desired by women. He was the known admirer of Madame D'Harvelay, wife of M. D'Harvelay, the banker of the court; and from her saloon, which embraced all the wealth and a large part of the nobility of the court, issued in all directions the fair supporters of the future comptroller-general.¹ M. D'Harvelay himself

¹ Soul. vi. 113, 115.
De Staël, Rév. Franc., i. 109, 110.
Droz, i. 397, 401. Smyth's Lectures, i. 119, 120.
Weber, i. 151.

an opportunity of showing his abilities, in a dispute which occurred between the parliament and clergy at that place. Subsequently, he was made procureur-general of a commission appointed to investigate the affairs of La Chalotais; but his conduct on that occasion did not escape imputation of a serious kind, though it in the end appeared that the complaints against him had been much exaggerated. In 1768 he was appointed intendant of Metz, from whence he was soon transferred to the more important station of intendant of Lille, which he held till his nomination as minister of finance, in 1783. He owed the latter situation, in a great degree, to the remarkable business talents which he evinced in the management of his province, and also not a little to the reputation which his talents for intrigue and conversation had gained for him in the saloons of some of the most distinguished ladies connected with the monied interest in Paris.—See *Biographie Universelle*, vi. 562, 563, (CALONNE.)

* "Cum tempus posceret, laboriosus, patiens; liberalis, splendidus, affabilis, blandus, temporibus callidissime inserviens; amore quoad licitum est odiosa multa delicate jocoseque fecit."—CORNELIUS NEPOS in *Alcibiade*.

strongly recommended him as the only man capable of grappling with the existing difficulties in the finances. Thus beset on all sides, the king, according to his usual system, surrendered his private opinion, and Calonne received the portfolio of finance on 3d October 1783.*

The system of M. de Calonne, in some respects at variance, was at bottom the same, with that of M. Necker. His plan was to encourage industry by munificence; to vivify the state by vigorous measures; to elevate credit by inspiring hope; to sustain the treasury by inducing confidence, and to look for the means of discharging debt rather in increased production by those who paid the taxes, than diminished expenditure on the part of those who received them. It may readily be conceived what transports of satisfaction the adoption of such a system excited among the courtiers and nobility, whose insatiable cupidity had chafed bitterly against the economy of former administrations. Magnificent fêtes, with his concurrence, succeeded each other in brilliant and rapid succession; noble works, particularly at Cherbourg, Paris, and several other towns, seemed to indicate that abundance reigned in the treasury. It was during his administration, and by the provident wisdom of Louis XVI., that those splendid docks were begun to be excavated out of the granite of Cherbourg, which afterwards became so threatening to the English navy, and the completion of which added so much to the lustre of the reign of Napoleon. No want of funds was for a considerable time experienced for these undertakings. Such was the confidence with which his talents inspired the capitalists, that loans, though at an elevated rate of interest, were procured without difficulty; and, under the magic wand of the great financial enchanter, it was for some years actually imagined that the deficit had fairly disappeared. To the queen, in particular, he paid

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III.

1784.

68.

His system
of finance.

* The revolutionary writers, after the disasters of Calonne's administration had become evident, endeavoured to fasten the responsibility of his appointment on the queen, in order to augment the general clamour which they made such efforts to excite against that high-spirited princess. It is certain, however, that Marie Antoinette was as averse to him as the king, and that he was forced on both by public opinion. "La reine," says Madame de Staël, "partagait la repugnance du roi contre M. de Calonne, quoiqu'elle fut entourée de personnes d'un avis différent; on eut dit qu'ils pressentaient. l'un et l'autre, dans quels malheurs un tel caractère alloit les jeter."—*Révolution Française*, i. 110; see also MADAME CAMPAN, ii. 109.

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1784.

¹ Weber, i. 301. De Staël, i. 110, 111. Th. i. 9, 10. Droz, i. 407.

the most assiduous and marked attention; all her wishes were anticipated; all her requests granted: the beautiful villa of St Cloud, then belonging to the Orleans family, was purchased for her use for 6,000,000 francs, (£240,000,) and furnished in an elegant, though not a sumptuous style; and his celebrated saying, "If what your Majesty desires is possible, it is done; if impossible, it shall be done," bespoke at once the finished courtier and the inexhaustible financier.^{1*}

69.
His exposition to the king of the real state of the finances

But amidst all these brilliant appearances, Calonne deceived neither himself nor the king as to the real state of the finances, and he laid bare their alarming condition in a memoir to the sovereign, remarkable for the unflinching courage with which the most unpalatable truths were told. From his statement it appeared, that the wand of a financial necromancer had indeed become necessary; for when he was called to office the credit of the crown was nearly gone, and there were only two bags, of twelve hundred francs (£48) each, in the royal treasury.† But no human ability could devise the means of putting the finances in right order, when the public clamour had forced on a costly war with Great Britain which had com-

* Vulcan is represented by Homer as using the same flattery to Thetis:—

“Τίπτει, Θετι τανυπεπλε ἰκανεῖς ἡμετερον δῶ.
Αἰδοῖη τε Φιλῆ τε; παρος γε μὲν ἔτι θαμιρῖεις
Αὐδὰ, ὃ, τι φρονεῖεις· τελεσαι δὲ με θυμὸς ἀνώγει
Εἰ δυναμὰι τελεσαι γε, καὶ εἰ τετελεσμενον ἐστί.”

Iliad, Σ. 424.

Calonne was styled by the ladies of the court “the Enchanter,” the “Model Minister.” A nobleman of high rank said, after he had been in power nine months, “I knew well Calonne would save the country, but I could never have supposed he would have done it so quickly.”—Droz, i. 454.

† “Je ne retracerai, Sire, l'affreuse situation où étaient les finances quand votre Majesté a daigné me les confier. On ne peut se rappeler sans permis, qu'il n'y avait alors ni argent ni credit; que les dettes exigibles étaient immenses, les revenus manqués d'avance, les ressources anéanties, les effets publics sans valeur, le numéraire appauvri et sans circulation, la caisse d'escompte en faillite, la ferme générale prête à manquer au payement de ses billets, et le trésor royal réduit à deux sacs de 1200 livres.”—*Mémoire de Calonne à Louis XVI.* given in SOULAVIE, *Louis XVI.*, vi. 118. Compare this with the Bank of England on the brink of ruin, and the nation on the verge of bankruptcy, in December 1825, and the coincidence of the results—the just punishment of both nations from similar acts of national delinquency: to France, for its iniquitous and successful attempt to dismember England, by joining in the American war; to England, for its iniquitous and successful attempt to dismember Spain, by insidiously aiding the South American insurgents. In seven years the punishment was completed to both: to France, by the revolution of 1789; to England, by that of 1832.—*Vide Infra*, Chap. LXVI., §§ 87–89.

pelled the borrowing of 400,000,000 francs, (£16,000,000,) no provision for payment of the interest of which had been made by preceding statesmen; when the selfish resistance of the parliaments made the imposition of any new taxes impossible, and the insatiable cupidity of the courtiers rendered any considerable reduction in the public expenditure out of the question; and when a yawning deficit of above 100,000,000 francs (£4,000,000) annually, could only be filled up by the continual contraction of new debt, even in time of profound peace. Calonne, in these circumstances, conceived, and perhaps wisely at least for present interests, that the only thing that could be done was to put a good face upon the matter, and support the public credit as long as possible, by the exhibition, even from fallacious sources, of deceptive prosperity. He thus gained the strength in the outset, and induced the weakness in the end, which is the invariable characteristic of credit derived from mere paper or fictitious resources.¹*

¹ Soul. vi. 117, 121. Droz, i. 403. De Staël, i. 112. Weber, i. 151.

Nothing can be more apparent, however, than that this living on forced and unsubstantial resources must, without the intervention of some unlooked-for piece of good fortune, lead to a crisis with nations as well as individuals. The contraction of debt went on progressively and with fearful rapidity; every year loans to the amount of from 80,000,000 to 100,000,000 of francs were contracted, (£3,200,000 to £4,000,000,) and up to the spring of 1787 no less than 380,000,000 francs (£15,200,000) had been borrowed by the crown, during a period of profound peace, since the accession of Calonne three years before.† This

70. Increasing loans of Calonne, who is at last driven to extremities.

* Calonne, with his usual *insouciance* and candour, made no attempt to conceal that his profuse expenditure was intended to disguise the real difficulties of his situation. "A man," said he, "who requires to borrow must appear rich, and to appear rich he must dazzle by his expenditure. That is the principle on which we must act in the public administration. Economy is doubly hurtful; for it at once intimates to capitalists that they should stop advancing their money, and it spreads languor through the branches of general industry from which the taxes are paid."—See Droz, *Histoire de la Règne de Louis XVI.*, i. 403.

† The dates of these loans were as follows:—

December 1783,	100,000,000 francs or L.4,000,000
December 1784,	120,000,000 do. or 4,800,000
December 1785,	80,000,000 do. or 3,200,000
September 1786,	30,000,000 do. or 1,200,000
February 1787,	50,000,000 do. or 2,000,000

In three years and two months }
of peace, } 380,000,000 francs or L.15,200,000

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state of matters could not long remain concealed; and when public attention was drawn to it, the greatest apprehensions began to prevail. Vergennes, in his situation of prime minister, and president of the court recently established for the general review of the finances, became acquainted with the existence of a huge deficit, which could alone account for the constant borrowing; and Calonne, in a memoir to the king, in October 1786, admitted it amounted to 100,000,000 (£4,000,000) annually, and that the nation was in truth subsisting on credit gained by artifice.* When it began to be whispered among the monied circles, that the deficit, notwithstanding all the deceptive fallacies of Necker, had reached this alarming amount, increased difficulty was experienced in getting loans; and Calonne, perceiving his financial bubble about to burst, deemed it hopeless any longer to attempt disguise, and resolved, after boldly admitting the magnitude of the difficulty, to propose a great measure for its removal.¹

¹ Weber, i. 161, 162.
Bucheze and Roux, Hist. Parl. de France, i. 174, 175.

71.

Calonne's plan for the convocation of the *Notables*.

Calonne's plan was a noble one, for it was based in justice, supported with courage, and perfectly adequate to extricating the state from all its embarrassments. He proposed to the king to follow the ancient practice of the crown in cases of difficulty, and convoke the *Notables*, or chief men, of all different ranks in the kingdom, and solicit their advice on the course which should be adopted. But it was no part of his design that the *Notables* should merely speak and deliberate, without taking an active and prominent part in the measures intended for the public relief. He meant to appeal to them to make a sacrifice of their private interests for the public good; a sacrifice considerable indeed, but nothing more than was just, and one which would at once have relieved government from all its embarrassments. This consisted in their making a voluntary surrender on the altar of their country of their exclusive privileges in the article of taxation. He proposed to allocate the *taille*, or land-tax, by a new

* "Il faut avouer, Sire, que la France ne se soutient en ce moment que par une espèce d'artifice; si l'illusion qui supplie à la réalité était détruite, si la confiance inseparable quant à présent du personnel venait tout-à-coup manquer, que deviendrait on avec un déficit de cent millions tous les ans. Sans doute, il faut se hâter de combler, si il est possible, un vide aussi énorme; ce ne peut-être que par de grands moyens; et pour qu'ils ne repugnent pas au cœur de votre majesté, il faut qu'ils n'augmentent pas le fardeau des impositions."—*Mémoire de CALONNE au ROI*, Nov. 1786; *Sou-LAVIE*, vi. 118.

distribution upon all heritable property of every description; to provide for the debts of the clergy in order to induce them to consent to the like equal contribution; to diminish by this means the land-tax upon all, in so far as was consistent with upholding the public revenue; to abolish the *corvées* in kind, establish entire freedom in the commerce of grain, and remove all the vexatious restrictions which at present impeded the internal commerce of the country. By this means he calculated that not only would the public receipts be brought to a level with the expenditure, but that he would have an excess of 30,000,000 francs (£1,200,000) to apply in relief of the most oppressive imposts; and with that surplus he proposed to take off the third *vingtième* from the whole lands of the kingdom. Assemblies were to be established in all the provinces to aid the sovereign in carrying out measures for the public good. There can be no doubt that this great and real reform would at once have relieved the nation from all its embarrassments, without adding to, but on the contrary diminishing, the burdens on the classes who were now most heavily loaded; for the *taille* in 1786 brought in 91,000,000 francs, (£3,600,000;) and not only would the levying it on the estates of the nobility and clergy have doubled its amount, but the general equalization of the burdens would have raised the revenue at least 125,000,000 francs, or £5,000,000 yearly; in other words, extinguished the whole deficit.^{1*}

It may be conceived with what satisfaction this intrepid and equitable proposal was received by Louis, who burned with anxiety to rectify the finances without adding to the burdens of the people, and was especially desirous of introducing a just and equal taxation, levied without distinction of rank, from his whole subjects. He was not

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¹ Calonne's Memoir in Calonne sur l'Etat de France, 438, 439; and in Soul. vi. 120, 121. Necker, sur les Finances, i. 35.

72.
Convocation of the Notables is agreed to by the King.

* Well might M. Calonne, in his Memoir, exclaim, in submitting this truly statesman-like project to the king, "What difficulties can for a moment be put in the balance against such advantages? What grounds are there for just opposition? 'We will pay more,' it will be said,—Doubtless. But who will do so? Those only who now do not pay enough; they will only pay their just proportion, and no one will be aggrieved. 'The privileges,' it will be exclaimed, 'are sacrificed.' Yes, justice demands, necessity requires it. Is it better to abolish unjust distinctions, or impose additional burdens on the unprivileged people? There will be great resistance made: it is expected; no general good without injuring individual interests which have grown up with existing evil, but the general sense of justice will overcome these selfish complaints."—CALONNE'S Memoir, given in CALONNE sur l'Etat de France, 438, 439. London, 1790.

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ignorant that so considerable a change would excite dissatisfaction in the privileged classes; but he concurred with Calonne in hoping that the obvious justice of the equal partition of the social burdens would prevail over these discontents, and that the patriotic spirit of the nobles and clergy would induce them to acquiesce without much reluctance in the projected change. The assembly of the Notables, accordingly, was at once agreed to; the form of their convocation was taken from the last occasion on which they had been assembled, in 1626; the number of members fixed was 144, including the princes of the blood, and a fair proportion of the nobles, clergy, magistrates and *Tiers Etat*, from the whole kingdom.* The ordinance for their convocation was issued on the 29th December 1786; and the period for their assembly fixed for the 22d February 1787. Great expectations were formed both by the Cabinet and the country as to the result of this assembly. The former looked to it as the means of thoroughly restoring order to the finances, and re-establishing a good understanding between the monarch and the nation: the latter as the first step towards the introduction of a new order of things, and the formation of representative government.† Every one congratulated the monarch on the felicitous step, fraught with such boundless advantages to the sovereign and the state. Old Marshal Ségur, the minister at war, was of an opposite opinion. "Every mind," said he, "is in fermentation: the Notables may prove the seed which is to produce the STATES-GENERAL; and if so, who can foretell the result?"¹

¹ Ségur, iii.
70. De
Staël, i.
123. Hist.
Parl. i. 117.
Calonne's
Mémoire au
Roi, Dec.
1786. Soul.
vi. 120, 135.

* The composition of the Notables was as follows:—

Princes of the blood,	7
Archbishops and Bishops,	14
Dukes, Peers, Marshals of France,	36
Councillors of State, &c.	11
Presidents and Public Prosecutors, &c.	38
Parliaments,	
Deputies of Pays d'Etat,	10
Municipal Officers,	28

—Droz, i. 471.

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† The King announced his intention to his council of convoking "une assemblée composée de personnes de diverses conditions et des plus qualifiées de son état, afin de leur communiquer ses vues pour le soulagement de son peuple, l'ordre des finances, et la reformation des plusieurs abus." On the following day he wrote to Calonne—"Je n'ai dormi pas de la nuit, mais c'était de plaisir."—See Droz, *Histoire de la Règne de Louis XVI.*, i. 474.

The more readily to induce the privileged classes to acquiesce in the sacrifices required of them, Calonne adopted the bold and manly course of laying before them a full and undisguised statement of the finances, not only at that period, but for forty years previously; in the hope that the revelation thus made of the long existence and unceasing progress of the financial embarrassments, under every change of administration, would demonstrate even to the most inconsiderate, and convince even the most selfish, of the necessity of a great change. Without attempting to disguise the magnitude of the present deficit, which he admitted amounted to 115,000,000 francs, (£4,600,000) yearly, he traced back its origin to the accumulating deficiencies of former administrations, and proved, beyond a doubt, that it was to the disastrous system of borrowing, without making any provision for the payment of the interest—the sad result of the extravagance of government, and of the obstinate resistance of the parliaments in former times to register any new taxes—that all the difficulties of the treasury had been owing. According to his statement, the deficit, which began with the expenses of the wars with England of 1739 and 1756, was already 41,500,000 francs (£1,660,000) annually in 1764; in 1781, when Necker rendered his famous *compte rendu*, which told the flattering tale of a surplus in time of war of 10,000,000 francs (£400,000) yearly, there was in reality a deficit of 56,500,000 francs (£2,260,000;) and this deficit had now so increased with the expenses of the three last years of the American contest, and the total want of any provision for the payment of interest, that the deficit for 1786 was 115,000,000 francs, (£4,600,000;) and for the current year it could not be estimated at less than 125,087,556 francs, (£5,000,000.) The debt borrowed during the American war, still unprovided for, was no less than 232,000,000 francs, (£9,300,000;) the total loans, since the accession of Necker in 1776, to the end of 1786, had reached the enormous amount of 1,250,000,000 francs, or £50,000,000, being at the rate of £5,000,000 sterling a-year.¹ Resting on these appalling facts, he called on the nobles and clergy to forego their exclusive privileges, and consent to an equal assessment with the other classes,

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73.

His candid
exposition
of the state
of the finan-
ces.

¹ See
Comptes
Rendus, in
Parl. Hist.
i. 206, 221,
and Sôul.
vi. 153, 157.

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74.

Noble
speech of
Calonne to
the Nota-
bles.

a step which would at once close the gulf which threatened to swallow up the monarchy.*

Calonne made a noble speech in introducing this great and just measure to the consideration of the Notables. "I received," said he, "the portfolio of finance in 1783, when the treasury was empty: there remained 220,000,000 francs (£8,800,000) of the expenses of the war with England to pay; 80,000,000 francs (£3,200,000) of floating

* Calonne gave the following account of the progress of the deficit, from its origin in 1746, to 1787, as taken from the accounts of the different comptrollers general, which I am inclined to think, after much examination of the subject, is very nearly correct:—viz.

	Francs.		
Capital of Public Debt in 1750,	2,210,177,216	or	L.88,467,000
	1759—SELBOUETTE, <i>Minister.</i>		
War	Expenditure, 503,847,141		
	Income, 286,547,037		
	Deficit, 217,300,104	or	L.8,680,000
	1764—M. BERTIN, <i>Minister.</i>		
Peace	Expenditure, 156,800,000		
	Income, 115,238,559		
	Deficit, 41,561,441	or	L.1,666,200
	1774—ABBE TERRAY, <i>Minister.</i>		
Peace	Expenditure, 234,220,000		
	Income, 196,901,557		
	Deficit, 37,318,443	or	L.1,492,730
	1775—TURGOT, <i>Minister.</i>		
Peace	Expenditure, 414,445,163		
	Income, 377,287,637		
	Deficit, 37,157,526	or	L.1,482,000
	1776—CLUGNY, <i>Minister.</i>		
Preparing for War	Expenditure, 417,574,651		
	Income, 378,381,069		
	Deficit, 39,193,582	or	L.1,567,700
	1781—NECKER, <i>Minister.</i>		
War	Expenditure, 283,162,000		
	Income, 236,833,000		
	Deficit, 46,329,000	or	L.1,853,160
	1787—CALONNE, <i>Minister.</i>		
Peace	Expenditure, 599,135,795		
	Income, 474,048,239		
	Deficit, 125,087,556	or	L.5,003,500

—See *Comptes Rendus*, pp. 50, 88, 89, 110, 164, 165, 172, 173, 183, 222, 223; and BUCHEZ and ROUX, *Histoire Parlementaire de France*, i. 205, 220.

The extraordinary fluctuations in the preceding table are owing to two circumstances—1st, Some of the *Comptes Rendus* exhibit the gross revenue—in particular, those of Turgot and Calonne; the others the net revenue only;—2d, In Calonne's account the interest of the public debt (then 190,000,000 francs, or L.7,600,000) is stated as part of the public accounts; the others embrace the other branches of the expense only.

debt to provide for: 176,000,000 francs (£7,000,000) of debt fixed by anticipation on the revenue of succeeding years; and all this in addition to the regular national debt. Now credit is re-established, money abundant; all arrears are discharged, confidence is restored. My only resources when the king entrusted me with the direction of the finances were to be found in credit. To re-establish it, all my efforts hitherto have been directed, and you will see with what success. But credit is dangerous: it becomes liable to fatal abuses if not based on solid and regular revenues. I am reproached with undue facility in expenditure. Recollect, gentlemen, the economy of a minister of finance may often be greatest when it shows itself least. Inexorable and decided in matters of real importance, it does not affect austerity where none is required: it allows what it gives to be made the subject of remark, and is silent on what it refuses. Because it shows itself accessible to demands, it is not readily credited that it withstands the greater proportion; because it strives to soften the bitterness of a refusal, it gains the character of being able to decline nothing. But it is not by such inconsiderable concessions or refusals that the state is either to be injured or benefited. It is in the abolition of abuses that the only means of providing for our necessities is to be found. The greatest of all abuses would be to attack only those which are of lesser importance; such only as, affecting the weak, may be considered as not likely, if reformed, to produce any material benefit. The abuses which we now require to abolish for the public good, are such as affect the strong: those which are most vigilantly guarded, but whose roots are the deepest and branches the most extended. Such are the abuses which press upon the laborious and industrious classes: the abuses of pecuniary privileges, of exceptions from the common law; and all those exclusive rights which aggravate the burdens of one class of society, by establishing an unjust exemption in favour of another. Let it not be said our resources are exhausted, and nothing remains to restore our finances. Gentlemen, our abuses remain; and in these abuses, which we have a right to reclaim, will be found a mine of riches which will at once satisfy our wants, and remove a stain on our institutions.”¹

¹ Droz, i.
480, 481.
Soul. vi.
132, 134.

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75.

Universal
storm
against Ca-
lonne on
these pro-
posals.

No words can convey an idea of the universal storm of discontent which these unexpected disclosures and proposals excited, not only among the Notables, to whom they were addressed, but the whole circles of Paris, to whom they were afterwards published. It was hard to say whether the nobles, the clergy, the philosophers, the courtiers, or the democrats, were most vehement in condemning the late popular finance minister. Such was the clamour raised that it was absolutely stunning, and at once so vehement and universal from the moment it commenced, that it was evident his projects must miscarry, and probably he himself be involved in their ruin. Yet his proposals were conceived in a noble spirit, founded in evident justice, supported by the king, in themselves safe, and perfectly adequate to relieve the state necessities. How, then, did it happen that measures so recommended should have excited so universal a spirit of resistance in the whole influential classes of France? Simply, because they were just and equal; because they pandered to no popular passions, and gratified no popular ambition; because the remedy they suggested for the public necessities was an equalization of the social burdens, not an elevation of a new class to their direction; because they tended only to save the country, not to make the fortunes of any set of men in it. To those who are practically acquainted with the workings of human selfishness in all assemblies, aristocratic or democratic, these considerations will appear perfectly adequate to explain the phenomenon.¹

¹ Droz, i.
483.

76.

Causes of
this general
combina-
tion.

But in addition to this fundamental principle, there was a peculiar concurrence of causes which induced this extraordinary combination of all classes against the finance minister. That his proposal to equalize the social burdens, and levy taxation over the whole community, should excite the most vehement resistance in the privileged class was nothing surprising; it is the usual effect of human selfishness all the world over. But the extraordinary thing was, that it met with equal opposition from the popular leaders who were contending for a class whom it went so directly to benefit. The secret cause of that circumstance was this. Calonne's disclosures revealed the real sources of the public embarrassments: they demonstrated that they were of very old standing; that the extravagance of the last few

years had added very little to their amount; that the habit of contracting debt without providing for its interest was the real origin of the evil, and that Necker's famous *compte rendu* in 1781 was not only illusory but deceptive. These disclosures thwarted the views of the whole liberal party in France. It was the great object of the popular leaders and their numerous allies in literature, to represent the financial difficulties as entirely owing to the profusion of the court, the extravagance of the queen, and the faults of the minister; and as having only grown up since the retirement of Necker and the philosophers in 1781. It may be conceived, therefore, what was their mortification when they saw it traced back to the wars and expenses of former reigns, and shown to have been brought to a climax by that very American contest which their own clamour had forced upon a reluctant government. Necker, and his numerous supporters among the liberals, were indignant at the exposure made of a deficit of 46,000,000 francs in that very year when he had boasted of a surplus of ten millions. All were to the last degree disappointed at finding a remedy, and what was evidently an effectual remedy, suggested for the whole public difficulties, not, as they hoped, by a change of the Ministry in power, or an infusion of popular principles into the general institutions, which might alter the class that was henceforward to rule, but by the homely and long-known method of putting their hands in their pockets to pay them. Thus, when traced to the bottom, it was the ambitious and interested views of all the classes in the state which thwarted this noble effort of Calonne and Louis, the last that could be made to extricate the nation from its embarrassments; and it was the selfishness of all, that overthrew the monarchy.

Calonne's plan, however, was so evidently founded on just principles, that the nobles and clergy among the

77.
Pretences
of the Not-
ables to
elude the
plan, and
finance con-
tests.

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before establishing such a maxim, they should examine whether no other means existed to repair the deficit, in order to make the extension of the land-tax as little burdensome as possible: and they insisted absolutely on two points: 1. That if the extension of the burden was determined on, its amount and duration should be previously fixed. 2. That the privileges of corporations and provinces should be maintained in the collection of it: a privilege which they hoped would enable them in these subordinate assemblies to evade the general imposition of the burden. The finance minister, who saw in these demands clear indications of a resolution to throw out the whole measure, spared no efforts both in public and in private to overcome the opposition. At his request, a committee consisting of six members from each of the four divisions of the Notables, met at the bureau of the Count d'Artois, in order to endeavour to arrive at an accommodation; and in that committee he conjured them in the most pressing terms, if they would avert the uttermost calamities from the monarchy and themselves, to co-operate with the monarch in this last effort to extricate the government from its embarrassments. In that debate, which was prolonged to a late hour of the night, Calonne displayed remarkable talents, and that earnestness of manner which always springs from honesty and elevation of purpose. But it was all in vain. He spoke to men who were deaf to every consideration of reason, justice, or patriotism; who were intent only on maintaining their selfish interests; and many of whom were in secret overjoyed at the disclosure made of the difficulties of the treasury, from the hope that it might overturn the Ministry and place them in their stead. All Necker's friends belonged to this latter class; and he himself immediately commenced a furious attack on the finance minister's exposure of his *compte rendu*, to which Calonne as warmly replied. From this acrimonious contention, the public drew the conclusion that the deficit was in all probability really greater than either of the finance ministers was willing to admit; and by the disclosures which came out in the heat of the controversy, the credit of the crown was seriously impaired.¹

¹ Hist. Parl.
i. 222.
Droz, i.
483, 487.
Soul. vi.
154, 160.

Vergennes died of a lingering illness, on the 13th February 1787; and his death was an incalculable calamity

to France at this period, for he was much esteemed by the Notables; and his manners were so conciliatory, that if any one could have mediated with success on this occasion between the crown and that powerful body, it was himself. Louis with profound grief attended the funeral of a friend to whom he was sincerely attached; and on leaving the grave he said, with tears in his eyes, "How happy should I be to repose in peace beside you!" The difficulties of the monarch were greatly increased by this bereavement. M. Le Count de Montmorin, who was chosen to succeed him, an upright and honourable man, had not vigour or ability to support the crown in the contest in which it was now engaged, and the whole weight of the struggle consequently fell on Calonne. He now had recourse to the royal authority; and Louis formally announced to the Notables, that his intention was that they should deliberate, not on the principle of taxation, but the form in which it should be paid. They answered that a payment in money would be least burdensome, but renewed the demand for a full statement of the public accounts. Some talked of a states-general: among them were the Archbishop of Artois, the Marquis Lafayette, and Crebillon, procureur-general of the parliament of Aix. Addressing the Count d'Artois, who was in the chair, he said, "Your royal highness will permit me to say, that there is no existing authority which can impose the land-tax in the manner proposed; neither this assembly, august as it is, nor the parliament, nor the states of particular provinces. *The States-General alone have that power.*"¹

Meanwhile the contest between Necker and Calonne, in regard to the finance accounts, continued with such acrimony, that the king, deeming the dispute discreditable to the crown, banished the former twenty leagues from Paris, and forbade the latter to publish any thing with his name; a prohibition which did not prevent him from giving a pamphlet on the public accounts to the world anonymously, though every one knew it came from the pen of the finance minister. During this dispute, the opposition to the king and Calonne daily assumed a more determined character. Lomenie, Archbishop of Brienne, took the lead as the head of the ecclesiastical body, and the Prince of Conti assumed the direction of the nobility who aimed at the over-

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78.
Death of
Vergennes,
and con-
tinued re-
sistance of
the Not-
ables.

¹ Droz, i.
487, 488.
Soul. vi.
155, 157.

79.
Calonne is
at length
overthrown,
and Lomenie
de Brienne
appointed
Minister.
April 11.

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throw of the finance minister. To such a length did the spirit of opposition to all his proposals proceed, that they contrived, indirectly, to defeat a proposal which he submitted to them for removing the whole interior custom-house duties on goods passing from province to province; a reform which had been advocated by Colbert and all the ablest ministers of France, and which went to abate a grievance which the States-General had formally complained of nearly two centuries before.* A proposal to abolish one of the most vexatious of the taxes, the gabelle, shared the same fate. Meanwhile the whole popular party, with Necker at their head, conceiving that the crisis would overthrow the finance minister, and lead to the convocation of the States-General, cordially joined the Notables, and a fierce war of pamphlets began against every project which Calonne introduced. At length the king, finding that the universal clamour against that minister rendered all attempts at an accommodation with the Notables hopeless, yielded to the storm and dismissed the minister. He took for his successor Lomenie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, who had been the leader of the coalition by which the former minister had been overthrown; imitating thus, already, the usages of a representative monarchy, where, on a change of ministry, the head of the new administration is taken from the leaders of the opposition.^{1†}

April 7.

May 1.

‡ Soul. vi.
164, 168.
Droz, i.
493, 566.

80.

Character
of the Arch-
bishop of
Toulouse.

It was not, however, without great reluctance, and from nothing but absolute inability to find another minister who could conduct the public affairs, that the king had recourse to the Archbishop of Toulouse. The immoralities and inconsistencies of that prelate's former life were well known to him, and Necker was suggested as

* Calonne, in introducing this proposal to the Notables, said in a lofty spirit, alluding to this circumstance, "This, gentlemen, is our answer to the States-General of 1614."—Droz, i. 494.

† The vehement controversy of Necker and Calonne, which followed the banishment of the one and the fall of the other, completed the public distrust in the solvency of the finances, and demonstrated the gross delusion practised on the nation by the former's *compte rendu*. "Necker," said Calonne, "borrowed 440 millions during his ministry."—"He is wrong," rejoined Necker, "I borrowed 530 millions." This admission gave the *coup-de-grace* to the *compte rendu*; for who could credit that a minister who, according to that statement, had a surplus of 10,500,000 francs, would in five years have borrowed above 500 millions?—See Droz, i. 506, and SOULAVIE, iv. 151.

the only man who was equal to the crisis. But Louis had been personally hurt by the retirement of the Swiss minister in 1781; his haughty self-sufficiency was disagreeable to him; and the queen, urged by the Abbé Vermont, who, in this instance, for the first time departed from the cautious neutrality which he had hitherto observed, warmly supported the appointment of Brienne. Perhaps no person could have been found in the kingdom whose qualities were more dangerous to the monarch in this momentous crisis than those of the Archbishop of Toulouse.* His talents were great, especially in conversation with women; the quality of all others by which, in elevated and highly educated circles, distinction, often undeserved by solid

* Etienne Charles Lomenie de Brienne was born at Paris in 1727; so that, when called to the office of prime minister, in 1787, he was already sixty years of age. Being destined to the ecclesiastical profession, he made himself remarkable, in 1750, at the age of twenty-four, by a thesis, containing unequivocal indications of talents, but, at the same time, many heretical and dangerous opinions. Having got over the scandal arising from this sally, he was admitted into priest's orders; but he soon became intimate with Condorcet, Dupont de Nemours, D'Alembert, the Abbé Morellet, and the rest of the freethinking philosophers, who had so prodigious an influence on public thought in the latter part of the reign of Louis XV. In 1760 he was appointed to a lucrative see, which, in February 1763, he exchanged for the archbishopric of Toulouse. There his administrative talents soon became manifest; he engaged actively in the temporal concerns of his diocese, and took a most beneficial interest in several projects, relating to education, charity, and public utility. It was to him that Toulouse owed the Canal Caraman, and the cut which unites it to the Garonne. He was accused, however, of labouring underhand to subvert the monastic discipline in his diocese; and the assemblies of the clergy in 1772, 1775, and 1780, as well as the parliament of Paris, on 10th February 1784, loudly denounced his innovations in this respect, which were deemed highly prejudicial to the Church. In the midst of his innovations, however, he had a clear eye to his own interests, and while many abbeys were suppressed by his authority, he contrived to annex to his benefice and appropriate to himself some of not the least considerable of them. Meanwhile his reputation for talent in conversation rapidly extended; his elegant and easy manners, his generosity and beneficence, were largely extolled by a numerous body of friends who had shared in his munificence; and such was the celebrity he had acquired, that when the Notables were convoked, he obtained a place in the bureau over which Monsieur, afterwards Louis XVIII., presided; and it was the lead which he took there in combating the proposals of M. Calonne, which led to his elevation to the exalted situation of President of the Council, which was soon after followed by the appointment of his brother, the Count de Brienne, as minister at war. After his fall, in 1789, he was, by the influence of Louis XVI. and the Archbishop of Sens, made a cardinal; but his thirst for wealth pursued him even in that eminent station: he took the oaths to the Republic, to preserve his archbishopric, and was obliged, in consequence, to resign his cardinal's hat. All these concessions, however, could not shield him from the persecution of the revolutionists, and he perished miserably and ignobly on the 16th of February 1794, in consequence of a fit of apoplexy, brought on by the blows of the soldiers who were quartered in his house to detain him prisoner, and the effects of a heavy supper which they forced him to eat with them, in spite of his earnest remonstrances.—See *Bio-graphie Universelle*, xxiv. 653, 658.

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abilities, is acquired. But inconsistency and want of principle were his great defects. Ambitious, intriguing, unscrupulous, he had at different periods of his life been intimately connected with classes of men the most opposite, but agreeing in the common selfishness by which they were actuated. In the assemblies of the clergy he had supported the most violent measures of persecution against the Protestants, and acquiesced in all the extreme views of the disciples of Loyola; in the fashionable coteries his irreligion had gone the length of atheism. Yet did he contrive, not only by his address, but by the peculiarity of his mind, to win the confidence of these very opposite classes of society. His character was a mixture of scepticism and jesuistry; without having lost any of the casuistry of the schools, he had, to the scandal of the Church, thrown himself into the arms of the philosophers and infidels. His talents for administration, however, were considerable; he had taken an active part in many beneficial measures in the state of Languedoc, of which he was a member; his frequent correspondence with former ministers had gained for him the reputation of skill in business, and he had evinced great readiness in debate during the discussions wherein he bore a part in the Assembly of Notables. Yet was his administration to the last degree disastrous to France. Bold and skilful in the conception of plans, he failed in steadiness and resolution in their execution: he was easily diverted from his purpose; and was more successful in bringing the crown into difficulties by his rashness, than extricating it from them by his conduct.¹

¹ Lac. v. 123. Soul. vi. 219, 236. De Staël, i. 118, 122. Droz, i. 511.

81.
Brienne's dangerous speech on dismissing the Notables.

He gave a decisive proof of these qualities in the very outset of his career. He was appointed president of the council on 1st May 1787. His first step was to submit to the Notables those states of the finances for which they had so strenuously contended; but, as might have been expected, this added to the confusion in which the public accounts were already involved; and, after much dispute whether the deficit was a hundred and thirty or a hundred and fifty millions, it was, by common consent, fixed at a hundred and forty millions (£5,600,000), as a sort of medium between the conflicting statements. The result was, that the public distrust in the stability of the finances was con-

firmed ; and, as if to leave nothing undone to add to the agitation of the public mind, Brienne used these words, on closing the Assembly of the Notables, on the 25th May, in regard to the formation of the provincial assemblies :—

“ The *Tiers Etat*, assured that it alone shall *possess as many voices as the clergy and noblesse together*, will never fear that any separate interest should mislead the suffrages. It is just that that portion of his Majesty’s subjects, so numerous, so interesting, so worthy of his protection, should receive, at least by the number of its voices, a compensation for the influence which riches, dignity, and birth, necessarily give to the other orders. Proceeding on these principles, his Majesty will direct that the suffrages shall be taken, *not by order, but by head*. The majority of orders does not always represent that real plurality of votes which constitutes the decisive test of the opinions of every assembly.” The president of the parliament of Paris replied—“ The Notables have beheld with horror the depth of the wound caused by a system of administration of which your parliament has long foreseen the consequences. The different plans proposed by your Majesty require the most mature consideration ; respectful silence alone becomes us.” Thus were the sittings of this famous assembly, which alone had the power to stop the progress of evil, closed, without the privileged orders having made one sacrifice of their unjust rights to the public good ; with the disastrous state of the finances fully exposed to the public view ; and with the principle of the *Tiers Etat* being entitled to an equal representation with the nobles and clergy in the provincial assemblies, and of the whole voting by head, openly promulgated from the throne.¹

Before the administration of Brienne, the immediate precursor of the Revolution, is more fully detailed, it is necessary to go back to a series of other causes, hardly less disastrous than the embarrassment of the finances, which, at the same period, assailed the government of Louis, and in their ultimate effects proved to the last degree ruinous to the monarchy.

The skill of his physicians had at length overcome the physical obstacles which, in the earlier years of his marriage, had deprived Louis XVI. of the prospect of issue ; and, on the 19th December 1778, Marie Antoinette gave birth to a

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May 25.

¹ Weber, i.
177. Droz,
i. 518, 519.
Lab. ii. 176,
177.

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82.

Birth of the
Princess-
Royal and
the Dau-
phin. Dec.
19, 1778.

Oct. 22,
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daughter, named Marie Theresa Charlotte, afterwards so famous in history as the Duchess d'Angoulême. Such was the queen's grief at the infant not proving a son, that it brought on a convulsive fit which nearly proved fatal, and from which she was mainly saved by extraordinary coolness and presence of mind on the part of the king. On this occasion, as well as during her pregnancy, the queen redoubled her usual munificent charities, all of which, so far from being imposed as a burden on the nation, were economised from her own personal revenue as queen of France.* This piece of good fortune was ere-long followed by another; on the 22d October 1781, the queen was again confined; and on this occasion she gave birth to a young prince, who of course became the dauphin. The public joy knew no bounds on this occasion; the queen, on her recovery, was received with the most tumultuous applause at the opera, the Hôtel de Ville, and the Théâtre Français; and she observed, with peculiar satisfaction, that the humblest classes were the most enthusiastic in the expression of their delight. The address of the women of the Halle, or chief market of Paris, deserves to be in an especial manner noticed, as showing what were the feelings towards the royal family of that class, afterwards so fierce during the Revolution, before their opinions had been perverted by the arts and falsehoods of an ambitious faction.† The beneficence of the king and queen on

* The queen, in every important event of her life, made it an invariable rule to add largely to her already magnificent charities. On this occasion she distributed funds for the liberation of an extraordinary number of poor debtors, fathers of families, from prison, in every part of France, requesting only in return the prayers of the reunited households for the heir of France. When distributing this munificence in Paris, the archbishop, to whom it was entrusted, expressed himself thus, in his address to the objects of the royal bounty:—"The prayers of the poor are so efficacious! What will the prayers not obtain of so many unfortunate fathers, who, by the unlooked-for recovery of their freedom, have been restored to their families and their children, who stood in need of the support of their parents at the very time that, by the burden they occasioned, they were the innocent cause of their detention."—MONTJOYE, *Vie de Marie Antoinette*, i. 111.

† The Femmes de la Halle thus addressed the king:—"Sire! If Heaven owed a son to a king who regarded his people as his family, our prayers and our wishes have long petitioned for it; at length we have been heard. We are now sure that our children will be as happy as ourselves; for that child will resemble you. You will teach him, sire! to be as good and just as yourself. We will teach our children how they should love and respect their king." To the queen they thus addressed themselves:—"For long, madam, we have loved you, without daring to say so; we have need of all our respect not to abuse the permission now given to express it." To the dauphin they said,—“You cannot as yet hear the wishes

this occasion exceeded all their former generosity; the sums bestowed on the debtors alone amounted to 474,000 francs (£19,000); nearly all the captives in the prisons were liberated; and Paris, in particular, shared so largely in the royal bounty, that poverty literally was, for a short period, banished from among its vast population. The king, overjoyed at the birth of his children, redoubled his tenderness towards the queen: his confidence in her was unbounded, his affection and solicitude unintermitting. Adored by her husband, beloved by her friends, cherished by her subjects, admired by all, the queen of the first monarchy in Europe, the mother of a rising family, she seemed to have approached as near the perfection of human felicity as it is given to mortals to attain. Yet in this very combination of causes, so pregnant with present felicity, were preparing in secret the springs of unbounded future disaster.¹

The long period of eleven years which elapsed after the marriage of the king before the birth of the princess-royal, had given rise to a general opinion that she was never destined to be a mother. Though both Monsieur, the next heir to the throne, and the Count d'Artois, were married, the former had no family, and, till 1778, the Count d'Artois had only one son, and his health was very delicate.* In these circumstances it was natural, and, in truth, unavoidable, that sanguine hopes of succeeding to the throne should be entertained by the Orleans family; and as long as this auspicious state of matters continued, the queen was allowed to rest in peace, and she remained the object of unvarying attachment to her subjects. But when these prospects were endangered by the birth of the princess-royal, and destroyed by that of the dauphin, a very different state of matters arose. The bright vision of the crown

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1782.

¹ Montjoye, i. 112, 129.
Weber, i. 57, 59.
Campan, i. 200, 209.

83.
The Queen becomes the object of persecution to the Orleans party.

which we form over your cradle: one day they will be explained to you; they cannot go further than that you should resemble those to whom you owe your being."—MONTJOYE, *Vie de Marie Antoinette*, i. 128.

* Monsieur Count de Provence, afterwards Louis XVIII., was married on 14th May 1771 to Josephine Louise of Savoy, but had no family. The Count D'Artois was married on 16th November 1773 to Marie Therese of Savoy, and had two sons; the Duc d'Angoulême, born 6th August 1775: and Charles Ferdinand Duc de Berri, born on 16th November 1778. Failing these two sons, the Orleans family were the next heirs to the throne - SOULAVIE, ii. 2, 3.

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1785.

vanished from before the Duc de Chartres; clouds overcast the coteries of the Palais Royal.* That palace, the most splendid and influential of any, after Versailles, in France, became the centre of dissatisfaction, intrigue, and disappointment, for every rank of society, from the highest to the lowest in Paris. The respectable veil which had hitherto concealed the irregularities of the old Duke of Orleans, proved a certain, though but a slight restraint upon their turbulent activity as long as he lived; but his death, on the 18th November 1785, entirely removed this check. The Duc de Chartres, elevated to be the head of the family, found himself master at once of its immense riches and its vast influence; his dissolute companions encouraged in his breast ambitious projects, to which, but for them, he might have remained a stranger; the dangerous and needy crowd of nobles, libertines, atheists, philosophers, insolvents, courtesans, and democrats, who crowded the antechambers of the Palais Royal,† began openly to speculate on the chance of a change of dynasty, and the vast benefits which it would bring to themselves; and in the event of the queen continuing to give birth to sons, it was whispered that means might be found to get quit altogether of the elder branch of the Bourbon family.¹

¹ Montjoye, Vie de Marie Antoinette, i. 185, 192. Soul. vi. 3, 34. Droz, i. 146, 239.

84.
Character of the Duke of Orleans and his party.

It is probable that views of this sort are never very far from the thoughts of the hangers-on of a branch of the royal family, which has a near prospect of succeeding to the throne by the failure of the direct line of succession; and the example of England sufficiently demonstrates, that the heir-apparent is in general the head of the opposition against the throne. But in the case of France, the danger of this natural, and perhaps unavoidable tendency, was greatly increased by the peculiar character of the young Duke of Orleans, and the dissolute nobility by whom he was surrounded. That celebrated prince was not destitute of talents; he at first evinced some good dispositions; he retained to the last some of the qualities by

* The well-known palace of the Duke of Orleans in the Rue St Honoré, and the headquarters of the opposition to the court in France.

† “ Un tas d’hommes perdus de dettes et de crimes,
Que presse des lois les ordres légitimes,
Et qui, desespérant les plus éviter,
Si tout est renversé ne sauraient subsister.”

—CORNILLE, *Cinna*, Act v. Scene 1.

which his family had been distinguished, and in early youth the most sanguine hopes were entertained that he would prove an honour to his race. But he inherited an extraordinary passion for intrigue from his mother, whose gallantries had afforded subject for scandal even to the Court of Louis XV.; and the profligate society, both male and female, into which, from his first entrance into life, he was plunged, completely obliterated the good impressions which he had received in infancy from his learned and able governess, Madame Genlis, and might have imbibed in maturer years from his young wife, one of the most accomplished and superior women in France.* Initiated at the age of sixteen into all the vices of the capital, he soon outdid them all; and the scandal of his nocturnal orgies, with crowds of abandoned associates, recalled the accounts recorded, but till then hardly credited, of Nero and Helio-gabalus.† What the courtesans had left undone, the Philosophers did; and between the two he became impregnated with all the selfishness, profligacy, irreligion, and licentiousness which then prevailed in the capital. Sensual, voluptuous, and insatiable in the pursuit of excitement, he was fond of violent exercises, had some knowledge of mechanics, and was passionately addicted to horse races, which at that period, in imitation of England, had become fashionable in Paris. But though constitutionally brave, he was destitute of moral courage, and was totally devoid of fixed principle even for his own interest; he was impelled into a conspiracy against the crown, rather by the efforts of his associates than his own ambition;¹ re-

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1786.

¹ Weber, i.
317, 326,
327. Soul
105, 109.
Besenval,
ii. 321.

* He was married, on 5th April 1769, to Mademoiselle de Penthievre, daughter of the Duc de Penthievre, from whom she inherited a princely fortune. She succeeded, with the grace and elegance, to the virtue and delicacy of her family; and she had need of all her firmness and prudence in the midst of the anxiety and distress in which she was subsequently involved by the profligacy and ambition of her husband.—SOULAVIE, ii. 5, and 110, 112.

† The style of his manners at times will be sufficiently illustrated by two anecdotes.—“Il paria un jour à Versailles, qu’il retournerait *nud* à cheval et au galop au Palais Royal: les compagnons de ses plaisirs furent les premiers à rougir de cette petulance; ils le conjurèrent de commencer la partie en partant non de Versailles, mais de ses écuries. D’autres compagnons de ses débauches, soutenant le pari, jurèrent qu’il ne parlerait pas même de ses écuries; *le Duc de Chartres gagna le pari.*”—SOULAVIE, ii. 186.

“L’année 1789 fut l’époque principale de la license révolutionnaire de ce palais fameux, (le Palais Royal); et le public était invité à voir deux sauvages nouvellement arrivés dans la capital. C’était uniquement un homme vêtu couché dans un hamac fait à Paris; et se permettant en presence des spectateurs les jouissances de mariage.”—*Ibid.* ii. 109.

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peatedly, though urged by them, he failed at the decisive moment when he might have seized the reins of power; and ultimately fell a victim to the faction which he had had the wickedness to create, and wanted the vigour to govern.

When the successive children which she bore to Louis made it evident that the Duke of Orleans had daily less chance of succeeding to the throne in any other way than by a change of dynasty, the queen became the object of incessant and envenomed attacks from the profligate retainers, male and female, of the Orleans faction. Surmises unfavourable to her reputation were first whispered in fashionable circles; next they made their appearance in libels, which were privately circulated, and greedily bought up by all classes: at length, emboldened by impunity, the calumnies were generally disseminated, and the libellers openly ascribed to her all the vices with which their own imaginations were stored. The numerous courtisans whom the Duke of Orleans had in his train, were peculiarly active and successful in this *sour*d and malignant warfare, for they knew well, from experience, how to pander to the passions of a depraved capital for scandal—were familiar with the manners of the great; could invent falsehoods which had the air of truth; and were at once stimulated by the thirst for gain, and the prospect of obtaining the spoils of Versailles as the reward of their mendacity. The police were repeatedly applied to, to discover the authors of these atrocious fabrications; but they professed themselves unable to furnish any clue to the mystery: it was soon very apparent that the libels proceeded from an elevated source; and that the attempts to discover their authors were countermanded by opposite influences more powerful even than that of the court in the straitened state of its finances. The effect of these efforts was soon apparent. The queen became as unpopular as she had formerly been beloved. All the embarrassments of the treasury were set down to her extravagance; she was commonly called *Madame Deficit*; and to such a length were the people worked upon, that she could not appear in public without being insulted. In this way a triple object was gained: the appetite of the populace for scandal in high life was gratified;¹ the influence of the queen, whose

85.
Incessant
efforts of
the Orleans
party to
defame the
Queen.

¹ Montjoye,
i. 184, 192.
Weber, i.
326, 327.
Droz, i.
411, 440.

intrepidity and decision of character were already known, was weakened; and a foundation was laid for impugning the legitimacy of the heirs whom she was furnishing to the throne.

Subsequent to 1781 the queen gave an additional impulse to these calumnies by the increased lead which she took in public affairs, and the habits in which, in the very innocence of her heart, she indulged at court. With all her exalted and noble qualities, she had not the sagacity to discover in what way these misrepresentations, with the existence of which she was well acquainted, were to be averted; and the very purity of her intentions frequently furnished a handle of which her enemies instantly availed themselves to load her with opprobrium. Her influence with Louis naturally increased, as her position was changed by the birth of the dauphin; and the increasing fondness of the King, which resembled rather that of an ardent lover than of a sedate husband, gave her an evident sway in the council, in which she was now frequently present. Count Segur, the war minister, who succeeded Count St Germain, and M. Des Castries, the minister of marine, who was appointed in 1782, owed their elevation chiefly to her influence; and although she always opposed Calonne's appointment, yet that of the Archbishop of Toulouse was almost entirely owing to her favour and that of the Abbé de Vermond. Courtiers are not slow in discovering where the real sources of power are to be found. The influence of the queen was soon bruited abroad, and exaggerated, by the hundred tongues of rumour; it was said that she was the true prime minister, that the king was entirely guided by her opinion, and that the Cabinet was a mere puppet in her hands. Thenceforward she became the object, not merely of personal but political hostility; the democrats and revolutionists joined with the courtesans and Orleanists, in attacking her measures and reviling her conduct; and that impassioned rancour at power of any kind which had grown up with the spread of republican ideas, averted from the head of the king by the indisputable benevolence and integrity of his character, was all concentrated against the indomitable Austrian who was supposed to guide his councils.¹

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86.

Queen's increasing influence at court inflames the hostility against her.

¹ Besenval, ii. 384, 394. Montjoye, i. 192, 194.

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87.

Increased
rigour in
favour of
the aristo-
cracy in
regard to
commissions
in the army.

Oct. 7, 1781.

The influence of the queen in the administration soon made itself felt, not only in the appointments to the ministry, but in the measures of government. The most important of them was an alteration which, during the time old Marshal Ségur was secretary at war, took place in the qualifications necessary for obtaining commissions in the army or navy. Considerable laxity in this respect had of late years crept in, arising partly from the increasing weight of the bankers and financiers in the distressed state of the royal treasury, which made it no easy matter to exclude their sons, on the score of birth, from the military career, and partly from the general tendency to liberal ideas, which, since the accession of Louis XVI., had more or less characterised the royal councils. But after the retirement of Necker, and the return to the former system of government, it was considered hazardous to permit this laxity to continue; and accordingly an edict was obtained from the king, which provided that no one should obtain a commission in the army or navy, unless he could trace his nobility back for four generations, or a hundred years. This was in effect to restrict them to the old families, and to but a small number even of that privileged body; and it so much limited the class from whom officers could be taken, that it was found impossible to enforce the rule rigidly in practice. In the temper of the public mind, it was abundantly imprudent to revert to such a system under any circumstances; but the evil was aggravated tenfold by the circumstance of the guards, with regard to whom it was rigidly enforced, being permanently stationed in Paris; and in situations, of course, where the private soldiers were continually exposed to the seductions, and liable to be influenced by the opinions of the citizens, male and female, with whom they were in constant intercourse. Thus, while the officers all belonged to the highest class of the aristocracy, the common men were daily becoming more democratic; so that it might easily have been foreseen, that on the first serious crisis a division would arise between them. It will appear in the sequel with what fatal effect this circumstance operated at the decisive crisis of the Revolution.¹

Unhappily the private habits of the queen, shortly before and after the birth of the princess-royal, were not

¹ Ségur, i. 119, 120. Lab. 189. De Staël, i. 153. Monthion, 154.

calculated to diminish the number of these surmises, or disarm the malignity of her enemies. Her aversion to the rigid formality of court etiquette had been early evinced, and it was with ill-disguised reluctance that she submitted even to the necessary fatigue of receiving the persons presented at the court levées. Jealousies, in regard to precedence, had estranged her from some of the highest nobility; the Duc de Chartres was, for very sufficient reasons, never allowed to form one of the intimate circle in which she so much delighted, and spent so large a part of her time; her brother, the Emperor Joseph, and the Grand Duke Maximilian, successively visited Paris, travelling *incognito*; notwithstanding which they were allowed the precedence over the French noblesse of the highest rank—a rule which banished a large part of them from the court during the residence of these foreign princes at the metropolis. Above all, the Duchess of Polignac, the confidant of all her thoughts and wishes, and who made, it must be confessed, a most unexceptionable use of her power, excited in the highest degree the jealousy of the old nobility, who beheld with undisguised resentment the queen fly from the stately splendours of Versailles to take refuge in an elegant domestic circle, in which she threw aside at once the honour, the formality, and the fatigues of her rank.¹

A favourite amusement which was often resorted to at Versailles during the summer of 1778, furnished additional food for the malignity and scandal of Paris. During the extreme heats and enchanting weather of that season, when the queen, in the first month of her pregnancy, was unable to sleep till a late period, she beguiled the weary hours of the night by forming parties who walked out by moonlight on the terraces of Versailles and Trianon, enjoying the delicious coolness of the air, and listening to the noble military bands which played at a little distance. The fame of these nocturnal parties, more agreeable during sultry weather than judicious in a queen, soon spread over Paris. High bribes were offered to the doorkeepers to obtain admission to these magic scenes; gold opened the doors to some improper characters; occasionally some of the Duc de Chartres' mistresses found their way in; an adventurous youth might

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III.

1778.

88.

Aid which these calumnies received from the Queen's imprudent conduct.

¹ Camp. i. 175, 180. Weber, i. 256, 300. Montjoye, i. 116, 123.

89.

Nocturnal parties on the terraces at Versailles.

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III.

1778.

1 Mad. Campan, i. 175, 224. Weber, i. 286, 302. Montjoye, i. 116, 223. Soul. vi. 2, 64.

90.

Total change of ladies' dress is introduced by the Queen.

boast of having sat on the same bench, and even exchanged words with the queen, during the obscurity of the night, and without his being known. The king, worn out with the fatigues of his council, was seldom present on these occasions; but the Count d'Artois and the Count of Provence always were. It may be conceived what food these nocturnal parties, magnified by rumour and blackened by the voice of scandal, furnished to the malignant jealousy of a corrupted capital.¹*

Another change took place at this period, at once descriptive of the revolution in general ideas which was going forward, and of the influence of the queen, notwithstanding all her unpopularity, over the highest circles in the capital. Her sway over the fashions of female dress was omnipotent. At one period, she introduced the extravagantly high feathers and head-dresses, which soon spread over all Europe, and now appear so strange, as they are portrayed on the immortal canvass of Reynolds; at another, yielding to her horror at etiquette and passion for ease of manner, she brought in that total change of fashion, characteristic of the spread of ideas of equality, which at once levelled all distinctions of rank, and arrayed the duchess in the same simple muslin garb as the soubrette. There is more in this than a mere change of fashion; it was allied with the revolution which was then going on in the public mind. In the extravagant admiration for Grecian costume, which spread with the growth of republican ideas, is to be discerned the effects of Rousseau's dreams on the social contract, and the forerunner of the levelling ideas of the Revolution. What-

* During all this period, however, her domestic habits with the king remained unchanged—a clear proof of the innocence of her conduct. “Notre jeune et charmante reine, à force d'être sans façon et sans cérémonie, a expulsé de la cour toutes les ridicules entraves de l'antique étiquette. On voit tous les soirs cette aimable princesse parcourir le château, aller faire des visites, tenant le roi sous les bras, avec un seul valet, de pied portant deux bougies. Quant au nouvel usage des soupers avec les dames et seigneurs titrés ou non, il faut observer que la jeune reine l'a moins provoqué pour le plaisir de souper en grande compagnie, que par une prudence politique bien entendue. C'est à cette ancienne étiquette, suivant laquelle le roi devait souper au retour de la chasse avec tous les chasseurs et sans les princesses, qu'on peut attribuer la débauche de tous les genres à laquelle Louis XV. a été livré dans les vingt dernières années de sa vie; aujourd'hui le roi n'est séparé de son épouse que quand il va à la chasse, ou quand il tient conseil; et les vils courtisans qui oseraient essayer de rompre leur maître n'en trouvent pas le temps.”—*Correspondence Secrète de la Cour pendant le Règne de Louis XVI.*, 99.

ever the queen introduced, was immediately adopted by the fashionable dressmakers of the capital; the ladies of Paris, amidst all their jealousy of the Austrian, hastened to imitate all the changes she adopted; the stately magnificence of feudal costume was discarded; Madame Bertin, the principal dressmaker to the court, became the Lycurgus of modern fashion; and from the antechambers of Versailles the simple style of Grecian drapery spread over all Europe.^{1*}

An event soon after occurred, which, in this temper of the public mind, created a prodigious sensation, and contributed, more than any other circumstance, to give an appearance of consistency to the malignant reports so industriously propagated by the Orleans faction as to the queen's character. Boehmer, jeweller to the court, had frequently showed the queen a superb diamond necklace, which he had constructed at a very heavy expense, in the hope that she would purchase it; but the great cost, which was 1,600,000 francs (£64,000), had made her uniformly and positively decline the offer. He endeavoured,

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III.

1785.

¹ Campan, i. 227, 370. Montjoye, *sa* Marie Antoinette, i. 274, 276.

91.

Affair of the diamond necklace.

* " Marie Antoinette, hors des solemnités, aimait à habiller avec la plus grande simplicité; mais l'air de dignité qui lui était, particulier laissait toujours deviner son rang. On commença à censurer vivement cette simplicité, d'abord parmi les courtisans, ensuite dans le reste du royaume; et par une de ces contradictions qui sont plus communes en France qu'ailleurs, en même temps qu'on bâmaît la reine, on la copiait avec fureur. Chaque femme voulait avoir le même déshabillé, le même bonnet, les mêmes plumes qu'on avait vu. On courait en foule chez la Dame Bertin, sa marchande de modes; ce fut une véritable révolution dans l'habillement de nos dames, qui donna une sorte d'importance à cette femme. Les robes trainantes, toutes les formes qui pouvaient donner une certaine noblesse aux parures, furent proscrites; on ne distingua plus une duchesse d'une actrice. La folie gagna les hommes; les grands avaient longtemps quitté les plumets, les touffes de ruban, les galons au chapeaux, pour les laisser à leurs laquais. Ils quittèrent alors les talons rouges, et les broderies sur les habits: ils se plurent à parcourir nos rues vêtus d'un gros drap, un baton noueux à la main, et chaussés avec des souliers épais. Cette métamorphose valut à plus d'entre eux des aventures humiliantes. Jétés dans la foule, et n'ayant rien qui les distinguât des hommes du peuple, il arriva que des rustics prirent querelle avec eux, et dans ce genre de combats ce n'était pas le noble qui avait la supériorité. Voilà comme insensiblement la seconde ordre se depouillait de la considération qu'on lui avait toujours porté, et avançait le règne de cette égalité qui lui a été si funeste. Ces changemens avaient un inconvénient plus grave encore, en ce qu'ils influèrent insensiblement sur les mœurs; on prit trop de gout pour les manières, les habitudes du peuple, ainsi que pour les maximes démocratiques, qui mettaient tout de niveau, tandis que de l'autre, on l'accoutumait au mépris, à l'insubordination, à l'indolence.—MONTJOYE, *Histoire de Marie Antoinette*, i. 274, 276. A very curious work might be written on the influence of political events and ideas on the prevailing fashions both for men and women; there is always a certain analogy between them. Witness the shepherd-plaid trousers for gentlemen, and coarse shawls and muslins worn by ladies, in Great Britain during the Reform fervour of 1832-4.

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III.

1785.

in consequence, to dispose of it at some of the other courts in Europe, but without success. In the midst of this perplexity, a lady of high rank, named the Countess de la Mothe, descended from the royal house of Valois, waited on him, and stated that the queen had at length resolved to buy the necklace, but that the affair was to be kept a profound secret, and at the same time exhibited a pretended letter of her Majesty's authorizing the purchase. Boehmer was not satisfied with these assurances, upon which she promised to send one of the highest dignitaries about the court to complete the transaction; and in effect, the Cardinal Rohan, grand almoner of the queen, soon after waited on him, and concluded the bargain in the Queen's name, for 1,400,000 francs (£56,000.) The necklace was delivered to Madame de la Mothe, who gave in exchange forged orders of the queen, signed "*Marie Antoinette de France.*" When the first of these fell due, it was not paid by the queen's treasurer; Boehmer made complaints to a lady of the court, and the affair came to the knowledge of the king, who instantly sent for the Cardinal Rohan, and interrogated him closely on so strange an affair. He admitted having had a certain share in the transaction, and having bought the necklace; though he loudly protested that he had been imposed upon by Madame de la Mothe, and that he believed the forged letter-orders were genuine. "Did you not know the queen's signature?" inquired Louis. "I never saw her Majesty write," answered the cardinal. "A Rohan and a cardinal," replied Louis, "might have known that a queen of France does not sign '*Marie Antoinette de France.*'"* He was committed to custody; but before being sent to prison, he contrived to dispatch a secret messenger with instructions to burn all his private papers—an injunction which, by riding so hard that he killed his horse, the servant contrived to effect. Madame de la Mothe was soon after arrested at Bar-sur-Aube; and both she and the cardinal were brought to trial before the parliament of Paris.¹

Sufficient food for censorious observation was afforded even by the bare outline of the case as it has now been

* The queens of France all signed by their Christian names merely, as "*Marie Antoinette;*" never adding "*de France.*"

Aug. 15,
1785.
1 Soul. vi.
70, 81. Cam-
pan, ii. 2,
17. Abbé
Georgel,
Mémoires.
ii. 117, 184.

given ; but the details which came out on the trial were much more prejudicial to the queen's reputation, and furnished abundant materials for the malignity of scandal to magnify. It appeared that Madame de la Mothe, among other devices to support her credit, and carry on a transaction which proved so lucrative to herself, had succeeded in imposing so far on the credulity of the cardinal, that she made him believe that the queen would meet him at night, disguised in a domino, in one of the shrubberies of Trianon, to give him a rose, expressive of her approbation of the steps he had taken concerning the necklace. In effect, she got one of the courtesans from the Palais Royal, named Mademoiselle Oliva, who had an elegant figure and resembled Marie Antoinette, to personify the queen on that occasion. She gave him the rose, and made the deluded cardinal believe he had been honoured with a private nocturnal interview with royalty. It was admitted by Madame de la Mothe, and her husband, that she had got the necklace and disposed of part of it :* her great accession of riches soon after sufficiently proved where the proceeds of it had gone ; the letters and orders bore scarcely any resemblance to the queen's handwriting, and Cardinal Rohan's sudden and complete burning of his papers sufficiently indicated that he had something at least which he was desirous to conceal. But the Orleans faction and the libellers of the queen fastened with such avidity on this scandalous affair, that the public became soon incapable of forming an impartial judgment concerning it. The noblesse were indignant at the thought of a prince of the blood of Rohan being even suspected of such an offence as theft and forgery ; the ecclesiastics loudly murmured against a cardinal being tried before a temporal court ; the populace implicitly believed every thing which tended to involve the court in obloquy and scandal. So general was the delusion, so universal the clamour, that it was com-

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1786.

92.

Trial of
Cardinal
Rohan and
Mad. de la
Mothe.

* " Madame de la Mothe n'a rien des fragmens du collier que les piéces manquantes et dont la trace pouvait être suivie. Mon épouse m'a donnée ces piéces que j'ai vendues en m'assurant que c'était un présent de la reine. Le cadeau était brillant ; mais c'était la fille des Césars qui l'offrait au seul reste de Valois dont l'héritage la première couronne de l'Europe, brillait sur la tête de la reine. Le cardinal a reçu le collier dans son intégrité, qu'il l'ait remis en cet état à mon épouse. Ma femme a donc été égarée, et l'instrument du cardinal."—M. DE LA MOTHE à M. DE MONTMORIN, 22d September-1790 ; given in SOULAVIE, *Règne de Louis XVI.*, vi. 77.

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1783.

April 14,
1786.

monly believed in Paris, down to the Revolution, in defiance of the clearest evidence, and the admissions of the parties themselves, that the queen had really been privy to the purchase of the necklace. After a long trial, the issue of which was looked to with intense anxiety by all France, the cardinal was, by a majority of votes, declared not guilty, amidst the tumultuous applause of the mob, who rejoiced in the opportunity of thus showing their hatred of the queen; but Madame de la Mothe was convicted, and sentenced to be branded on the shoulders with a red-hot iron, and imprisoned for life. This cruel sentence, unworthy for one, how guilty soever, who bore the name of Valois, was carried into execution: the king deeming, and perhaps justly, that, how repugnant soever to his feelings, he could not relax it in any respect, without confirming the general suspicion that the queen was no stranger to the transaction. Such was the impression produced in France, and indeed over Europe, by this extraordinary affair, that a young ecclesiastic, destined to no common celebrity in future times, but whom, even then, nothing escaped—M. TALLEYRAND PERIGORD—wrote at the time to a friend, “Attend narrowly to that miserable affair of the necklace: I should not be surprised if it overturned the throne.”¹*

¹ Abbé
Georgel, ii.
209, 212.
Soul. vi.
71, 74.
Campan,
ii. 20, 24.
Lab. ii. 57.

93.
General
spirit of
innovation.

Fed by so many causes, a spirit of INNOVATION, like a malady, overspread France at this crisis; precipitated all classes into a passion for changes of which they were far from perceiving the ultimate effects, and in the end induced evils far greater than those which these changes were intended to remove. There is no unmixed good in human affairs: the best principles, if pushed to excess, degenerate into fatal vices. Generosity is nearly allied to extravagance—charity itself may lead to ruin—the sternness of justice is but one step removed from the severity of oppression. It is the same in the political world: the tranquillity of despotism resembles the stagnation of the Dead Sea; the fever

* Madame de la Mothe, after a year's detention in the prison of l'Hôpital, effected, or was suffered to effect, her escape, and went over to London. She lost her life, some years after, in a frightful manner; being pursued for debt, to avoid an arrest she endeavoured to escape by a window two stories from the ground, but finding it too high to let herself down, she clung for some time, with her hands, from the window-sill, and when her strength was exhausted, fell, and was killed on the spot.—*Biographie Universelle*, xxiv. 121, (LA MOTHE.)

of innovation, the tempests of the ocean. It would seem as if, at particular periods, from causes inscrutable to human wisdom, an universal frenzy seizes mankind; reason, experience, prudence, are alike blinded; and the very classes who are to perish in the storm are the first to rouse its fury. France exhibited a striking proof of the truth of this observation for a number of years preceding the Revolution. During the reign of Louis XVI. no one thought of a convulsion, though it was rapidly approaching, and the most ardent in the cause of innovation were those whose fortunes were about to perish from its effects. The young nobles applauded the writings of Raynal, Voltaire, and Rousseau, and repeated all the arguments against their own exclusive privileges and the feudal system, without ever suspecting that they would be the first victims of such opinions.¹

Long before the *Tiers Etat* had adopted them, the thirst for liberty, and a blind passion for change, had spread widely among the French noblesse; but the approaches of the spirit of innovation were so disguised under the colours of philanthropy, that none perceived its consequences. "In truth," says Ségur, "who could have anticipated the terrible flood of passions and crimes which was about to be let loose on the world, at a time when all writings, all thoughts, all actions, seemed to have but one end—the extirpation of abuses, the propagation of virtue, the relief of the people, the establishment of freedom? It is thus that the most terrible convulsions are ushered into the world; the night is serene, the sunset fair, which precedes the fury of the tornado."² The passion for innovation which had been continually increasing during the latter years of the reign of Louis XV. became irresistible in the years immediately preceding the Revolution. It seized all classes, embraced all subjects, overwhelmed all understandings. The extravagant imitation of English customs and manners, called the *Anglomania*, was more than a mere foolery of fashion: it was the expression of a disposition disquieted and dissatisfied with itself, and proceeded from a secret desire to imitate the free institutions of a country whose extravagances were so much the object of admiration.

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¹ Ségur, i.
21, 38, 40.
76, 79, 94.
Lab. i. 3.

94.
Great extent of the
Anglo-
mania.

² Ségur, i.
36.

It is hardly credible, however, to what an extent this

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passion for every thing English overspread all classes in the nation. The philosophers constantly held up the English constitution as the model of political wisdom, English philosophy as the school of enlightened reason, the English soil as the only asylum of freedom on earth. The Duke of Orleans and the liberal nobles pushed even to excess the passion for English amusements: the dress, the manners, the air, the slang of English jockeys were the object of universal imitation. Horse-racing and hunting became favourite amusements: leather breeches and top-boots the most fashionable morning attire. Even the mode of riding was altered; and the astonished Parisians, instead of the stately seigneur, sitting erect, with huge jack-boots, on his ambling highly mettled palfrey, beheld tightly dressed youths arrayed like English grooms, trotting along and rising in their stirrups. Almost alone of his subjects at Paris, Louis XVI., who was thoroughly national in his habits and inclinations, resisted the general contagion, and maintained inviolate the habits and amusements of the old school. Superficial observers will exclaim that these are trifles beneath the dignity of history; but they know little of human affairs who are not aware that nothing is unworthy of notice which marks, in a period of ferment, the inclination of the general mind; and in the political, not less than the physical, world, it is straws which show how the wind sets, and often prognosticate the direction of the coming storm.¹

¹ Marm.
Mem. ii.
Séguir, i. 38,
41. Lab. ii.
217, 229.

95.
General ten-
dency to
delusion in
the public
mind.

Every thing at this period indicated that restless desire for change, and those sanguine anticipations of indefinite extension in human powers and felicity, which are so often the precursor of the most dreadful calamities. Many accidental circumstances conspired to add to the effervescence, which were eagerly seized on by a heated generation to swell the general illusion. The invention of balloons by Montgolfier in 1783, was deemed a prodigious step in the progress of improvement; and hundreds of thousands of the Parisians beheld with transport the vast ball of silk rise majestically from the earth, bearing the intrepid aeronauts, who were the first to launch the human race into the unknown regions of the air. Unbounded were the visions which filled the minds of men at this brilliant discovery. England was to be prostrated, the Channel

traversed by legions of invincible aeronauts; from the clouds the blessings of civilisation were to descend upon savage and unenlightened man.* “While that,” says Bulwer with historic truth, “was the day for polished scepticism and affected wisdom, it was the day also for the most egregious credulity and the most mystical superstition. It was the day in which magnetism and magic found converts among the disciples of Diderot; when prophecies were current in every mouth; when the salon of a philosophical deist was converted into a Heraclea, in which necromancy professed to conjure up the shadows of the dead; when the Crosier and the Book were ridiculed, and Mesmer and Cagliostro were believed.”† The first of these, a German physician, announced that he had discovered that man was “an electrical machine;” and amused philosophers, and carried away many heated heads with the mysteries of animal magnetism, which appears destined every half century to overspread the civilized world with its pretensions and its delusions.‡ In the midst of these sanguine anticipations of intellectual progress and scientific discovery, it was in vain that a few more sagacious observers, judging from experience, remarked that it would be well if some moral improvement was mingled with these mental acquisitions. No one seemed to think that such a change was either necessary or desirable.¹ Selfishness, immorality,

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1787.

¹ Lac. vi.
87, 92.
Soul. vi.
103, 110.

* “Quel siècle que le nôtre!” se disaient les spectateurs; ‘combien découvertes sont le partage de cette heureuse génération! Il y a peu d’années qu’on a trouvé l’art de composer la foudre, de l’attirer, de la rompre, et de la faire ruisseler en filets insignifiants. Voilà qu’on découvre l’art de s’élever en un instant plus haut que les lieux d’où la foudre gronde. Quels nouveaux secours offerts ou apportés à des opprimés ou à des captifs! Quels rapides échanges de productions, de connoissances, et de lumières! Qu’il sera beau d’apparaître de haut des nues à des peuples encore barbares, comme des dieux bienfaisans, de leur dicter des lois, venues du ciel, qui adoucissent leur ferocité, et des oracles qui éclaireront leur ignorance.’ ‘Quel vertigé vous possède?’ disent des observateurs chagrins; ‘ces pernicieuses machines, si elles se perfectionnent, introduiront une effroyable anarchie dans la société, rompront le frein des lois, et enfin offriront un nouveau champ de bataille aux hommes, qui, maîtres des airs, commenceront par s’y combattre.’ ‘Taisez-vous,’ répondaient les plus exaltés des jeunes gens: ‘ces alarmes pourraient être justes si la navigation aérienne eut été découverte au quinzième ou seizième siècle; mais aux dix-huitième, que craint-on? Ne s’est-il pas fait une ligue entre tous les sages pour détourner le fleau de la guerre?’—LACRETELLE, *Histoire de France pendant le XVIII. Siècle*, vi. 91, 92. This was on the eve of the reign of Napoleon, and the Moscow campaign.

† Zanonî, b. ii. c. 2.

‡ After slumbering fifty-four years it re-appeared in 1843, and for a few seasons amazed the frivolous, and carried away the weak, especially in the higher and least occupied classes of society

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and infidelity, were daily extending their influence in society; but all classes, save a mere fraction who were stigmatized as alarmists, were blind to their tendency; and amidst incessant declamations on the lights of the age, and the boundless prospects of social felicity which were opening, the only solid foundations for either—religion and morality—were fast disappearing from the realm.

96.

First measures of Brienne, which are successful.

June 17, 22, and 27, 1787.

It was in the midst of this universal dissolution of opinions, morals, and habits, that M. de Brienne received the helm of affairs, and undertook to moderate the universal effervescence, and rule the general insubordination, by a recurrence to the arbitrary principles of the ancient monarchy. The attempt in the first instance met with unlooked-for success. Three edicts, on the passing of which the king had set his heart, which Calonne had adopted from Turgot, and submitted in vain to the Notables, were successively registered by the parliament. Encouraged by this unwonted instance of moderation, Brienne next sent them an edict to register which imposed an additional duty on stamps; but the moment that the word "tax" was mentioned, their old refractory disposition returned, and, imitating the tactics of the Notables, they stated that they could not register the edict, unless the national accounts were previously submitted to their examination. In the course of the discussions which ensued on this subject, the Abbé Sabatier observed: "You ask for the states of accounts? You are mistaken in your object. It is the STATES-GENERAL which you require."* This witty expression, thrown in at a period of unusual excitement, produced an extraordinary impression: it so completely fell in with, and so happily expressed the public opinion. Carried away by the general enthusiasm, the parliament passed a resolution that a perpetual tax, such as that proposed, could only be imposed by the States-General. The king upon this made some slight modifications in the proposed impost, and again returned it to the parliament: but though the older councillors hesitated, even for their own sake, to merge themselves in the greater assembly, a majority, composed chiefly of the

July 14, 1787.

* "Vous demandez des états: c'est les états-généraux que vous faut." The wit can only be appreciated in French.—DE STAEL, i. 123.

younger councillors, under the guidance of D'Esprennil and Goisard, two enthusiastic young men, again rejected the impost, exclaiming that they must have the States-General, and that they alone could give legality to the impost. "Providence," said D'Ormesson, who was president, "will punish your fatal counsels by granting your prayers." His prophecy was too faithfully accomplished. In less than six years afterwards, D'Esprennil perished by the violence of the people whom the States-General had roused to madness.¹

Hoping to disarm the resistance he could not directly overcome, the king published a list of the reductions he proposed to effect in the different departments of the state; and Brienne set vigorously to work to effect a saving in the army and the civil establishments of the king. But the magnitude of the deficit, which was now a hundred and twenty-five million francs (£5,000,000) yearly, was such that no reductions in the guards or royal household could make any sensible impression on it. The minister at war stated he could save 15,000,000 francs (£600,000) in his department; but what was that to the total amount of the deficiency? The real evil was the impossibility of getting any new taxes imposed, and the oppressive weight of the loans, for the interest of which no provision had been made during the American war. The reductions which were made, and they were very considerable, did rather harm than good; for they excited an angry feeling among those who suffered by them, without giving any sensible relief to those who contributed to the public funds. They regarded their offices, and not without reason, as their private property during their life; and one of the sufferers, Baron Besenval, declared that such iniquitous spoliation was unparalleled save in Turkey. Meanwhile the parliament, not content with having thrown out the new tax, proceeded to offensive measures. Duport, at a solemn meeting of both chambers, brought forward an accusation against Calonne, on the ground of "his dilapidations and abuses of authority," which the parliament ordered their public prosecutor to take up. The decree to that effect was afterwards annulled; but such was the violence with which the tide ran against the ex-minister, that, seeing a fair trial was out of the question, he left the country, and

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III.

1787.

¹ Droz, ii.
6, 7. De
Staël, i. 123,
124. Soul.
vi. 177, 178.
Lac. vi.
182, 184.

97.

Progress of
the dispute
with the
Parliament.

Aug. 10.

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III.

1787.

retired to England. His poverty bore decisive evidence to the integrity, if not the wisdom, of his administration, so far as he was personally concerned; he retired from office poorer than he entered upon it.* Meanwhile the public indignation against the court rose to the highest pitch, although Louis, to weaken it, had recommended Calonne to leave the country. Pamphlets multiplied, and were devoured with ominous rapidity. The queen, to whom the whole was ascribed, was now generally called Madame Deficit; she was insulted even in the park of St Cloud; and by the advice of the lieutenant of police, she abstained from going to the capital while the effervescence continued.¹

¹ Droz, ii.
9, 10. Soul.
vi. 177, 178.
Lac. vi. 183,
184.

98.
Who con-
tinue to
refuse to
register the
Edicts.

Aug. 12,
1787.

If the parliament of Paris had made use of the vast influence they had now acquired to establish a just and equal system of taxation, which might at once have relieved the public necessities, and removed the unjust exemptions which the privileged classes still enjoyed, they would have deserved the title of generous and intrepid patriots. But this was very far indeed from being their object; and it soon appeared that, amidst all their zeal for a restraint on the royal authority, they had no intention of making any sacrifice of their own pecuniary immunities. Brienne, far from being discouraged, for a third time sent back the proposed edict for a tax on stamps; and with it one for the equal imposition of the land-tax on all classes. This was the touchstone of patriotic or selfish opposition; and the parliament failed at the test. By a slender majority, the assembled chambers, including the peers, decided "that the States-General alone had the power to consent to such measures; and that the parliament was incompetent to register them." In coming to this decision, the majority had no intention of really compelling the convocation of that body; which they were well aware would speedily extin-

* Calonne was so poor when he left office, that he owed his means of subsistence to the rich Madame D'Harvelay, who had now become a widow, and bestowed on him her hand and her fortune.—Droz, ii. 10.

The exaggerations of which Calonne was the object would be beyond belief, if any thing was incredible of popular credulity and passion. It was stated, and generally believed, that he had absorbed in four years 3,000,000,000 francs (£120,000,000.) The parliament of Grenoble said—"If you assemble in one mass the whole dilapidations of which our annals have preserved a record, from the commencement of the monarchy, and during the course of fourteen centuries, it would hardly compose a sum so enormous as in his hands has disappeared in four years."—Droz, ii. 10, 11.

guish at once their own influence and their popularity ; they thought the king would do any thing rather than convoke that dreaded assembly ; that this was the most popular ground on which to rest their opposition, and that thus, without losing their reputation for patriotism, they would preserve the substantial advantages of immunity from the heaviest of the direct taxes. But the people, passionately desirous of the States-General, and delighted at the unusual spectacle of a successful resistance to the royal authority, were entranced with the decree of the parliament ; and D'Espremenil, the leader of the Opposition, was drawn home in triumph in his carriage.¹

Brienne, thus defeated a third time, had recourse to measures of severity. By a royal edict on the 15th August, the parliament was exiled to Troyes, the chief town of Champagne ; and the Count of Provence was sent to the one court of the parliament, the Count d'Artois to the other, to register the edicts by force, as in a *lit de justice*. The former, known for his liberal principles, was loudly applauded as he passed through the streets on this mission ; the latter, deemed attached to arbitrary maxims, was assailed with such a storm of hisses and abuse, that the commander of his guard ordered the men to carry arms, which alone dispersed the mob. This event deserves to be noticed as the *first collision* between the crown and the people which occurred during the Revolution. The decrees were registered by force, in the face of formal protests entered on their books by both chambers of the parliament ; but the parliament obeyed the mandate, and retired to Troyes, where they commenced their sittings, after passing a decree, declaring all judgments legal pronounced there. None, however, of the practitioners followed them ; and, though the courts were opened, no one appeared as a suitor, and no business was done. The magistrates, however, were consoled for this defection by laudatory addresses, which showered in upon them from all the parliaments of France, in which their firmness was extolled to the skies. All concurred in demanding the abolition of arbitrary acts, the diminution of the public charges, the recall of the magistrates, the prosecution of Calonne, and the convocation of the States-General.^{2*}

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III.

1787.

¹ Lac. vi.
183, 185.
Droz, ii. 12,
13. Soul.
vi. 177, 178.

99.
Banishment
of the Par-
liament to
Troyes.

Aug. 15.

Aug. 22.

² Droz, ii.
32, 33. Lac
vi. 185, 186.
Lab. ii. 175,
180.

* The parliament of Grenoble said: " The continual renewal of coups

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1787.

100.

A compro-
mise be-
tween the
Crown and
the Parlia-
ment.

Oct. 5, 1787.

¹ Droz, ii.
35, 37. Lac.
vi. 226, 228.
Lab. ii. 398,
402. Soul.
vi. 180.

But too material interests were at stake on both sides to permit this state of hostility between the crown and the parliament of Paris to be of long continuance. The magistrates beheld with pain the suspension of business and entire desertion of their courts, for which the laudatory addresses from the other parliaments of France afforded but a poor compensation: the councillors sighed for the pleasures and the profits of the capital: all were soon wearied of the monotony of life in a retired provincial town. One by one, after a residence of some weeks, they began to drop off, and reappear in the streets of Paris. Brienne had not less pressing motives for desiring an accommodation. The want of money was daily becoming more urgent at the treasury: the fermentation throughout France was alarming: the forced registration of the edicts had excited universal dissatisfaction; and, in the temper of the public, it was doubtful whether the taxes registered by force could be generally collected. In this state of matters, it was not long difficult to come to an accommodation. Brienne adroitly proposed a compromise, by virtue of which the two edicts registered by force were to be withdrawn, and the parliament was to consent to the additional *vingtième* for two years, to be levied equally on all classes, not excepting even the princes of the blood-royal. D'Esprenenil vehemently opposed this concession. "You went out of Paris," said he, "covered with glory, and you will return covered with mud." But the methods of seduction at the disposal of the court prevailed with the majority, and the compromise took place. The edict imposing the territorial tax equally on all was registered, and the parliament made a solemn entry into Paris amidst the acclamations of the people. This was the first example given in France of the great and just principle of the equal taxation of all classes; and the first great victory over the exclusive privileges of the aristocracy, gained by the crown, in the face of the strenuous resistance of the parliaments and the impassioned hostility of the people.¹

d'état, the forced registrations, the exile of members of parliament, the substitution of constraint and rigour for the course of justice, create astonishment in an enlightened age, hurt a nation that loves its king even to idolatry, but which is proud and free; they freeze the hearts, and may in the end break the bonds which unite the sovereign to his subjects and the subjects to their sovereign."—*Adresse du Parlement de Grenoble au Parlement de Paris*, Sept. 2, 1787; Droz, ii. 33.

Although, however, the principle involved in the mode according to which the new tax was to be levied was in the highest degree important, and though it was the first step towards a just and equal distribution of the public burdens, yet the relief, in the first instance, afforded by so trifling an addition to the receipts of the treasury, was very inconsiderable. It was soon apparent that a much more extensive measure was necessary; and Brienne, overjoyed at his recent success, came to the parliament with a proposal which revealed at once the necessitous state of the exchequer, and the magnitude of the burdens on the nation which would be necessary to relieve it. He proposed to borrow immediately 430,000,000 francs, (£17,200,000,) to be paid up in the course of five years;* and in order to induce the magistrates to record, that is, give legal validity to those large loans, he pledged the royal word that the States-General should be assembled before that time expired. As a reason for not convoking them at an earlier period, he stated, that by the year 1792 the income of the state would be equal to its expenditure, and that thus the national representatives, without being disquieted by the pressing concerns of finance, would be able to give their undivided attention to the means of social amelioration. An edict was also proposed giving additional liberty and security to the Huguenots. To give greater solemnity to this proposal, it was determined that the king should attend in person, and announce the fundamental principles of the constitution, and in particular assert, in the most unqualified manner, for the crown, the right of determining where and when the States-General were to be assembled.¹

“It belongs to me alone,” said Louis, “to judge of the utility or necessity of these assemblies; and I will never permit that you should demand with indiscretion what you should await from my judgment. The keeper of the

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1787.

101.
Brienne
proposes
large new
loans.

Nov. 19,

¹ Soul. vi.
181. Droz,
ii. 37, 38.
Lab. ii. 180,
184.

102.
The loan is
rejected, and
the Duke
of Orleans
exiled.
Nov. 19.

* The loans were to be paid up as follows :—

	Francs.
In 1788,	120,000,000 or L. 4,800,000
1789,	90,000,000 or 3,600,000
1790,	80,000,000 or 3,200,000
1791,	70,000,000 or 2,800,000
1792,	60,000,000 or 2,400,000

—SOULAVIE, vi. 186.

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1787.

Seals will inform you, that as soon as the state is liberated from its debts, I will with pleasure communicate the measures which I shall have taken to render that situation durable. The nation will then see its finances re-established; agriculture and commerce encouraged, under the auspices of liberty; a formidable navy, a regenerated army, a new harbour in the Channel, to secure the glory of the French flag; and the means of public education generally diffused." The Duke of Orleans, from the commencement of the assembly, had been observed to evince marks of the utmost agitation; and at length he said, "Sire! I venture to ask your majesty if this sitting is a *lit de justice*?"—"It is a *séance royale*," answered the king.—"Nevertheless," replied the duke, "I see nothing around me which does not characterise a *lit de justice*; and your faithful subjects ventured to hope that your majesty would not again have had recourse to a step contrary to the laws of the kingdom. I supplicate you, sire! to permit me to lay on the table of the court a declaration that I regard this registration as illegal. It will be necessary, to relieve the persons present at the deliberation, to add that it is done by the express command of your majesty." "Who can hear," said Sallier, "of a proposal to register at once loans to so enormous an amount as four hundred and thirty millions? This is a combination of all that is most disastrous in perpetual and life-long loans. Can we expect that the parliament will consent to such a measure, when, if done by any son of a family, it would immediately be annulled by the courts of law? Can we hope for any stability in a plan of finance, when, within the last eight years, no less than four finance ministers have been called to the helm? Sire! the remedy for the wounds of the state has been pointed out by your parliament: it is to be found in the convocation of the States-General; and to be of any avail, they must be assembled immediately." After a long and stormy discussion, the parliament resolved that they could not register the edict for establishing the loans. This was a mortal stroke to the court, for it deprived them at once of resources now become indispensable. Next day the Duke of Orleans was exiled to his estate of Villers-Cotterets;¹ and Freteau and the Abbé Sabatier were sent to the Bastille, on the charge of having assisted at confer-

¹ Soul. vi.
43, 45. Lac.
vi. 231, 233.
Droz, ii.
42, 44.

ences at the Palais Royal tending to dethrone the reigning family, and substitute the Duke of Orleans in its room.

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III.

This severity was keenly felt by the Duke of Orleans, whose ambition never made him forget his pleasures, and who sighed in the seclusion of Villers-Cotterets for the society of Madame Buffon, with whom he had long had a *liaison*, and the pleasures of the *Folie de Chartres*, at Paris.

1788.
103.
Further
measures on
both sides.

But the parliament was not discouraged. Next day, Duport introduced a motion to declare *lettres-de-cachet* illegal, null, and contrary alike to national law and natural right, which was carried by acclamation. A resolution

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was adopted soon after, loudly demanding guarantees for personal freedom: the king, by Brienne's direction, annulled that decree; upon which the parliament passed other resolutions still more stringent, declaring arbitrary imprisonments contrary to imprescriptible right, and demanding the recall of the exiled members, not as men of rank, but as men and French citizens.* Other addresses followed, in which it was stated that the parliament were well aware that those measures did not originate with the king, but emanated from another source; designating thus, by an oblique insinuation, the queen as the author of the public divisions. Meanwhile the edict for the protection of the Protestants, which was again brought forward, met with the most violent opposition, especially from D'Esprenenil and the other zealous patriots, though it went no further than authorising the registry of their births, marriages, and deaths, without removing any of their other civil disabilities. But at length it was registered by a large majority. Before this the Duke of Orleans had been

March 11.

permitted to return, first to the neighbourhood of Paris, and at length to the Palais Royal; and the imprisonment of Freteau and Sabatier was commuted into exile from Paris to the charming Isles des Hieres in the Mediterranean, near Toulon. But the beneficial effect of all these lenient measures was obviated by the cupidity of Brienne,

Jan. 19.

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* "Plusieurs faits assez connus," said they, in their address to the king, "prouvent que la nation, plus éclairée sur ses vraies intérêts même dans les classes les moins élevées, est disposée à recevoir des mains de votre Majesté le plus grand bien qu'un roi puisse rendre à ses sujets—la liberté. C'est ce bien que votre parlement vient vous redemander, Sire, au nom d'un peuple généreux et fidèle. Ce n'est plus un prince de votre sang, ce ne sont plus deux magistrats, que votre parlement redemande au nom des lois et de la raison; ce sont trois Français—ce sont trois hommes."—Droz, ii. 48.

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¹ Droz, ii.
51, 52. Lac.
vi. 235, 237.
Soul. vi.
183, 184.

who exchanged his archbishopric of Toulouse for that of Sens, which was much more lucrative, and the incumbent of which had recently died. His ecclesiastical appointments had now reached the enormous amount of 678,000 francs (£27,000) a-year; a scandalous accumulation for a single prelate, especially when disposing of the patronage of the crown.¹*

104.
Brienne's
plan of a
Cour Ple-
nière.

Still, however, no money was got, and the condition of the finances daily rendered it more indispensable. The *compte rendu* for 1788 was published in May, and admitted a deficit of 161,000,000 francs (£6,440,000) in a period of profound peace.† It was noways surprising that the deficiency had so rapidly increased, when it is recollected that both the Notables and Parliaments constantly refused their sanction to any new taxes, and had done so for ten years, even to pay the interest of the loans which had been contracted during the American war, which they themselves had forced upon an unwilling sovereign. The time had now arrived when it had become necessary either to discover some practicable mode of levying taxes to meet the public exigences, or to proclaim a national bankruptcy. Temporary expedients had been exhausted; an entire change in the mode of obtaining supplies was indispensable. The plan which Brienne had matured, in conjunction with Lamoignon, an able and intrepid old man, who was the keeper of the Seals, was this. He proposed to establish a new court at Paris, to be called the *Cour Plénère*, which was alone to be entrusted with the registration of edicts over the whole kingdom. This court was to be composed of the chancellor, the keeper of the seals of the highest chamber of the parliament of Paris, of some other elevated functionaries, the princes of the blood, the peers, ten councillors of state, and of a member of every provincial parliament, and two from the parliament of Paris.² The members of the court were to be nominated by the king, but to hold their appointments

² Droz, ii.
61, 62.
Soul. vi.
185. Lac.
vi. 238, 239.
Weber, i.
198.

* In addition to this, he received from a single cutting of wood on one of his benefices 900,000 francs (L.36,000) in the year 1788.—Droz, i. 52. note.

† So entirely had the public now lost confidence in the *comptes rendus*, published by the court, that though this one admitted so large a deficit, yet government, to make it credited that it was not still larger, were obliged to submit the public accounts, with all the vouchers, to three accountants of the capital, Didelot, St Amand, and Salvete, who reported in favour of the accuracy of the financial statement.—SOULAVIE, vi. 186.

for life, and be irremovable. The court was to have power to remonstrate on edicts proposed for its consideration, and the king was to determine on the objections submitted to him. At the same time, the parliament of Paris was to be reduced to seventy-six members, less than half its present number, in order to exclude the young councillors, with whom the chief opposition originated.

The utmost pains were taken to keep this design secret, in order that it might be put in force at once by a *lit de justice*, at Versailles, before the parliament had time to take measures for rousing the nation to resist it. A printing-press was established in the most secret manner at that town, to throw off the requisite proclamations announcing this great change to the public, and a double row of guards surrounded the building to prevent any communication with the outside. But in spite of all this vigilance, one of the workmen employed, succeeded in throwing a proof of the proposed edict, enclosed in a ball of clay, to an emissary of D'Espremeniil who was in attendance to receive intelligence on the outside. The project thus got wind, and the parliament took fire. D'Espremeniil unfolded the designs of the court in an impassioned speech. "We have only," said he, "a few hours left to protest: let us do so with the energy of men of honour, with the valour of courageous and faithful subjects. When a reason for terror is about to be spread abroad through the land, let the nation at least have the consolation of knowing that none of us will be severed from the companions of our labours. You have seen from the edict which has been read, what a ridiculous representation the Ministers have given of their proposed assembly, where our kings are to confer with their great vassals. It is by the aid of such a phantom, that they have persuaded the king to disengage himself from his solemn promises, and elude the convocation of the States-General. The nation, however, will not forget the monarch's words: it will not forget what we have done to restore to it its rights. After the honour of having made so noble an attempt, there remains still a higher one before us: that of suffering punishment for our fidelity to the constitution of the kingdom." He then proposed that they should all take an oath never to form a part of any assembly but the parliament, composed of the same persons, and enjoying

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III.

1788.

105.

Protest of
the Parlia-
ment of
Paris.
May 2.

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III.

1788.

¹ Weber, i.
204, 205.
Lac. vi.
241, 243.
Soul. vi.
185, 187.

the same privileges as at present. The oath was unanimously taken, and served as the prelude to the celebrated *Jeu de Paume*, which convulsed France eleven months afterwards. Moved by the general enthusiasm and these generous sentiments, the united chambers of the parliament adopted and recorded a dignified protest, which deserves a place in history, as an authentic record of what, in the estimation of the friends of freedom, and probably in truth, was the old constitution of France.^{1*}

106.
Arrest of
D'Espre-
menil and
Montsabert.
May 3, 1788.

The Government was confounded by this intrepid and dignified assertion of the principles of a constitutional monarchy; and, being resolute not to be defeated, they determined to put in practice the power of a military one. *Lettres-de-cachet* were issued against D'Espremenil and Montsabert, the leaders of the Opposition, who took refuge in the bosom of the parliament, which assembled in great strength on this momentous crisis. The parliament protested against their seizure, declared that it "put them under the protection of the king of the law," and ordered the preparation of a representation to the king, against the prosecution of measures which would "drag legitimate authority and public liberty into an abyss, from whence all the zeal of the magistrates would be unable to extricate it." Meanwhile an immense crowd assembled round their hall in the deepest anxiety as to the issue of a contest,

* "Avertis par la notoriété publique des coups qui menaçaient la nation en frappant la magistrature, et considérant que la résistance du parlement aux deux impôts, sa déclaration d'incompétence pour accorder les subsides, des sollicitations pour obtenir les états-généraux, et ses réclamations sur la liberté individuelle des citoyens, étaient les causes des enterprises des ministres contre la magistrature; considérant que ces enterprises n'avaient d'autre but que de couvrir les anciennes dissipations sans recourir aux états-généraux, s'il était possible, et que le système de la seule volonté manifestée par les ministres annonçait le funeste projet d'anéantir les principes de la monarchie: Décident que la France est une monarchie gouvernée par le roi suivant les lois—dont plusieurs fondamentales embrassent et concernent les droits de la maison régnante, à ses descendans, de mâle en mâle, par ordre de primogéniture; le droit de la nation d'accorder librement les subsides par l'organ des états-généraux régulièrement assemblés; l'immovibilité des magistrats, les coutumes et capitulations des provinces, les droits des cours de vérifier les volontés des rois, et d'en ordonner l'enregistrement *quand elles sont conformes aux lois*; le droit de chaque citoyen de n'être traduit pardevant d'autres que ses juges naturels, et le droit de ne pouvoir être arrêté que pour être remis dans les mains des juges compétens. Le parlement ajoutait ensuite que tous les magistrats renonçaient à toute place différente de celle qu'ils occupent, et qu'en cas de dispersion de la magistrature, le parlement remettait le present acte en dépôt dans les mains du roi, de son auguste famille, des pairs du royaume, des états-généraux, et de chacun des ordres, réunis ou séparés, représentant la nation."—*Protestation du Parlement de Paris, 2 Mai 1788*, given in SOULAVIE, vi. 187, 188; and LACRETELLE, vi. 243, 244.

which would apparently determine whether France was to become a constitutional or remain a despotic monarchy. The most violent cries were heard from the assembled multitude: "We will make a rampart for D'Espremenil with our bodies," resounded on all sides. Loud cheers followed the arrival of the peers, who repaired to the parliament to stand by the defenders of public liberty in this extremity; but all cries ceased, and a deathlike silence prevailed, when the Marquis D'Agoust, aide-major of the Gardes Françaises, arrived, at the head of a battalion of the household troops, with fixed bayonets, preceded by a company of sappers with their hatchets on their shoulders, and followed by a body of the Swiss guards.¹

"Where are Messrs D'Espremenil and Montsabert?" said D'Agoust, with a faltering voice, as he entered the hall and cast his eye round the august assembly. "We are all D'Espremenil, and Montsaberts: since you do not know them, take us all," answered the whole magistrates. D'Agoust, who acted throughout with the most perfect temper and politeness, withdrew for the night, but returned next morning at eleven o'clock with an officer of the court, who was ordered, on pain of imprisonment, to point them out. "On my honour," said the officer, "I do not see them." D'Agoust was again about to retire to obtain new orders, thinking they were really not there; but D'Espremenil, touched with the devotion of the officer, called him back and said, "I, sir, am D'Espremenil, one of those whom you seek; my honour forbids me to submit to arbitrary orders; if I resist, have your soldiers orders to lay their hands on me?" "Do you doubt it," replied D'Agoust, "if you resist?" "I will follow you then," interrupted D'Espremenil, "to avoid such a profanation of the sanctuary of the laws. Let us retire by a back staircase, to avoid a crowd which might endanger the execution of your orders." He then laid on the table of the assembly a protest against the violence of which he and Montsabert were the objects, and declared that he regarded the orders of which that violence was the result, as having been obtained by surprise from a just king. He conjured his colleagues not to be discouraged; to forget him, and attend only to the public interest.² He recommended his family to their kindness, and declared that, whatever might be

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¹ Droz, ii.
57, 58.
Lac. vi.
246, 247.
Soul. vi.
189.

107.
Dramatic
scene in
the hall of
Parliament.

² Sallier,
Ann. Franc.,
192, 194.
Weber, i.
209, 210,
and 432.
Droz. ii. 58,
61. Lac.
vi. 245, 246.
Soul. vi.
191.

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his fate, he would glory to his dying hour in professing their principles. Bowing then respectfully to the assembly, he descended with a firm step to D'Agoust, followed by Montsabert, and was conducted to the isle of St Marguerite, one of the Hieres. The parliament, after protesting against the whole violence, and recording their admiration of the courageous patriotism of the arrested members, separated after a continued meeting of thirty hours.*

108.
Universal
enthusiasm
excited in
France by
these
events.

It is difficult to form a conception of the enthusiasm which these dramatic scenes, and the calm, yet resolute conduct of the Parliament of Paris, excited over all France. That body had now placed itself at the head of the national movement: sacrificing, or not perceiving, its individual interests, it had united with the people in demanding the States-General: and by declaring that it had no power to register the proposed taxes, it had in effect rendered their convocation unavoidable. The imprisonment of some of its members on account of their patriotic efforts, their temperate yet courageous conduct, excited an universal enthusiasm. D'Espremeniil was the object of unbounded interest; his words when arrested were every where repeated: for a short period he was the idol of popular admiration. Alarming fermentation began to prevail in the capital; it rapidly spread to the provinces; the parliaments of Rennes, Bordeaux, Lille, Toulouse, Aix, and other places, passed strong resolutions applauding the conduct of the parliament of Paris, and were assailed by similar military violence; and the whole kingdom was agitated by those mingled hopes and fears which are the food of revolutionary passion.¹

¹ Lac. vi.
227, 241.
De Staël, i.
125. Soul.
vi. 193, 194.
Weber, i.
208, 210.

109.
Lit de Jus-
tice held at
Versailles.
May 8.

On the day after the arrest of D'Espremeniil the parliament was directed to assemble at Versailles, where the king held a bed of justice. The monarch addressed the magistrates with a mournful countenance, and in accents in which the profound grief of his heart was clearly evinced.

* "La cour vivement affectée du spectacle accablant de l'enlèvement de deux magistrats arrachés avec violence du sanctuaire des lois au milieu des gens armés qui ont violé l'asyle de la liberté à arrêt: Qu'il serait représenté au seigneur le roi, qu'il aurait été attendri s'il aurait pu être témoin du triste et morne silence qui a précédé, accompagné, et suivie l'exécution des ordres rigoureux faite au milieu de l'assemblée la plus respectable; et de la noble fierté avec laquelle les magistrats enlevés ont soutenu le coup qui les a frappé, et dont les pairs de France et les magistrats ont partagé la sensibilité comme si cette disgrâce était personnelle à chacun d'eux."—*Protest du Parlement de Paris, 3 Mai 1788; SOULAVIE, vi. 191.*

“No measure,” said he, “has been attempted for the public good for the last year, which has not been thwarted by the parliament of Paris, and its factious opposition immediately imitated by all the other parliaments in the kingdom. The result of their resistance has been the stoppage of the most necessary and interesting improvements in the laws, the suspension of judicial business, the weakening of national credit, even the shaking of the social edifice, and disturbance of the public tranquillity, I owe it to my people, to myself, to my successors, to repress similar attempts. Compelled by stern necessity to punish some magistrates, I did so with regret; and I would rather prevent than repress the repetition of their offences. I have no wish to destroy the parliaments; I wish only to bring them back to their duty, and their legal institution. I would convert a moment of crisis into a salutary epoch; commence the reformation of the judicial body by that of the tribunals of law; promote the rapid distribution of justice to the poor; confide anew to the nation the exercise of its legitimate rights, which are never at variance with those of the sovereign; and impress upon the kingdom that unity of laws, without which the very number of its provinces becomes an evil. The parliament was a single body when Philippe le Bel rendered it stationary at Paris. What is necessary to a great kingdom is a single king, a single law, a single assembly for its registration: numerous inferior courts to determine summarily the greater number of processes; higher courts or parliaments for the decision of those of a more weighty description: a supreme court, the depository of the laws common to the whole kingdom: in fine, States-General assembled, not once only, but on all occasions when the interest of the state requires it. Such is the restoration which my love for my subjects has prepared, and which I now consecrate to their happiness.”¹

¹ Weber, i. 211, 212.

Lamoignon, the keeper of the seals, then detailed the intentions of the king in six edicts, which were registered as in a bed of justice without observation by the parliament. Prepared with great care by Lamoignon and Malesherbes, who had now been restored to the ministry, they contained the elements of practical good government; and, if accepted by the parliaments, and acted upon by

110.
Edicts there proposed, which are rejected.

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III.
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them in the same patriotic spirit in which they were conceived, they might have prevented the Revolution; for they began the great work of reform at the right end, by the redress of experienced evils, not the conferring of untried powers.* But all was lost upon the parliament: the excitement of men's minds rendered them incapable of appreciating the most valuable practical reforms when brought within their reach, if not accompanied by theoretical innovation and the perilous gift of power. That the changes introduced by the six edicts would have been an immense improvement on the laws and institutions of France, by providing for their uniformity and abolishing their cruelty, will probably be disputed by none who have any practical acquaintance with human affairs; and that they were suitable to the wants of the country is decisively proved by the fact, that they were all, within two years afterwards, adopted by the Constituent Assembly, with the entire concurrence of the nation. But coming, as they did, from the free gift of the king, they neither excited attention nor awakened gratitude. Jealousy of the *Cour Plenière* which was to be established, irritation at the abridgement of its own jurisdiction, rendered the parliament of Paris insensible to all the benefits which the country would derive from the changes: the edicts were received in sullen silence;¹ and the first thing the council-

¹ Weber, i.
213, 216.
Droz, ii.
64, 66.
Sallier, Ann.
de France,
198, 200.
May 1789.

* I. The first edict introduced several valuable regulations for the more rapid administration of justice.

II. The second reduced the parliament of Paris to one grand chamber, with subdivisions for the different departments of business. It was reduced to seventy-three councillors and nine presidents.

III. The third introduced the most valuable reforms, long required and loudly called for, in every department of the criminal law. It swept away at once all the cruel punishments which had so long shocked the increasing humanity of the age, and provided against the principal abuses of criminal procedure. The frightful punishment of the wheel was abolished; an interval provided between sentence and execution, to enable the evidence to be laid before the king; torture, both before and after sentence, was declared illegal; criminal trials were to be conducted in public, and counsel allowed to the accused; the crime of which the accused was found guilty was to be specified in the sentence, and no punishment permitted but what the law prescribed for the offence.

IV. The fourth established the *cour plenière*, for the registration of taxes and for other elevated functions, which has been already described.

V. The fifth restricted the jurisdiction of the parliament of Paris, and established certain local courts, styled *grands bailliages*, in its stead, in the places detached from its jurisdiction.

VI. By the sixth, and last edict, all the courts of the kingdom were declared in a state of vacation—in other words, suspended—till the new courts of law were in full operation.—See SALLIER, *Annales Françaises*, viii. 168–174; and WEBER, i. 215, 216.

lors did, when the assembly was dissolved, was to meet in private and protest against them all. Soon after, they wrote officially to the king, declaring that they declined to execute any of the edicts, or interfere in any way with their administration.

Brienne, however, soon found, that the new machinery which he had established could not be put in motion. The excitement produced by the resistance of the parliament of Paris, imitated as it was by that of all the other parliaments in France, was such, that it was found impossible to get other magistrates to supply their place. The High Court of Chatelet at Paris was the first to set this example. Over all France, a similar *coup-d'état* had been attempted as at Paris, on the same day; but the resistance was every where the same: the old courts were suspended, but adequate persons could frequently not be found to fill the new ones. The members of inferior courts erected into great bailliages, indeed, cordially approved of the change, and strongly supported it; but their influence was inconsiderable compared to that of the parliaments, which were all on the other side, and their abilities and information were seldom equal to the new functions to which they were called. Pressed by the necessitous state of the exchequer, Brienne, as a last resource, convoked an extraordinary assembly of the clergy, hoping that in them, at least, the crown, in its last extremity, would find supporters, and that by consenting to the imposition of the direct taxes on their extensive possessions, or by voting a gratuitous gift in lieu of these, they would furnish a considerable relief to the public treasury. But here, too, he experienced the same resistance as from the other privileged bodies; the clergy readily divined what was expected of them, and instead of voting the expected gift, they imitated the example of the Notables and parliament, and eluded the demand by representing, that the States-General could alone sanction the imposition of new burdens, and that their immediate convocation had become indispensable. Juigné, archbishop of Paris, a prelate of an austere and irreproachable life, was the leader of this unexpected opposition. They remonstrated, in an especial manner, against the alarming principle, that the clergy were to be subjected to the *taille*: and even insisted, that the investigation

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III.

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111.

Convocation of an Assembly of the clergy, which also demands the States-General.

June 15,
1788.

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as to the frauds committed in evading the last *vingtième* should be discontinued.* The people, carried away by the spirit of factious opposition to every thing which emanated from the crown, loudly applauded the assertion of these unjust exclusive privileges. It was hard to say whether they were most vehement in supporting the nobility or the clergy, in the maintenance of these invidious distinctions; every thing was patriotic, so as it embarrassed and weakened the king. Thus, the Notables, the parliaments, and the clergy, successively refused to surrender one tittle of their exclusive privileges, and obstinately resisted all the measures proposed by government calculated to effect legislative improvements, and strengthen the crown, by restoring the finances; and in doing so they were all cordially supported by the nation. They all concurred in demanding, each in a louder tone than its predecessor, the convocation of the States-General: and the first thing the States-General did was to destroy them all.¹

Troubles of a very serious kind broke out in many parts of France, in consequence of the attempt to introduce the *Cour Plénière* at Paris, and the rural noblesse, in the disturbed provinces, generally took part with the parliaments. It was in the *pays d'état*, which already possessed little states-general of their own, that these chiefly appeared; an

¹ De Staël, i. 125, 126. Soul. vi. 195, 196. Lac. vi. 254, 255. Droz, ii. 68, 69.

112.
Troubles in Bearn and Dauphiné.

* “ ‘Notre silence,’ disait le clergé, ‘serait un crime dont la nation et la postérité ne voudraient jamais absoudre. Votre Majesté vient d’opérer dans le lit de justice du 8 Mai un grand mouvement, dans les choses et dans les personnes. Nous pouvons espérer que si pareille révolution devait arriver, elle serait la suite plutôt que le préliminaire des états-généraux. Telle est la constitution de ce royaume que tous sont conçues dans le conseil privé du souverain, et ensuite vérifiées et publiées dans ses conseils publics et permanens. La volonté du prince qui n’a pas été éclairée par ses cours, peut être regardée comme sa volonté momentanée. Elle n’acquiesce cette majesté qui assure l’exécution et l’obéissance que préalablement les motifs et les remontrances de vos cours n’aient été entendus en votre conseil privé. * * * Le peuple Français, Sire, n’est pas imposable à volonté. Les Francs étaient un peuple libre. Les princes vivaient de leurs domaines, et des présens qu’on leur faisait au Champs de Mars. Les trois ordres parurent aux états-généraux, où les subsides et les aides sont octroyés de la bonne volonté et gracieuse spéciale, par libéralité et courtesie qui ne peuvent tourner ni à servitude contre les sujets, ni à nouvel droit pour le souverain. Tel est l’ancien droit du royaume, conservé tout entier dans les pays d’état. Le clergé dans ses assemblées en offre aujourd’hui les principes et les formes; il les a toujours conservé et réclamé non comme des privilèges—si ces franchises sont suspendues, elles ne sont pas détruites—si les parlemens ont vérifié de leur autorité particulière les impôts, ils avaient un titre coloré. La nation les avait appelé Des Etats Racourcis à petit pied. La capitation, le vingtième, et toutes les extensions bursales s’étaient introduits furtivement; il est tems de déclarer leur incompétence.”—*Remontrance du Clergé*, 15th June 1788; SALLIER, *Annales Françaises*, viii. 324, 336; and SOULAVIE, vi. 198, 200.

ominous circumstance as to what might be expected of the whole nation, when a similar assembly was brought together from every part of the country. In Bearn, which had from time immemorial possessed Estates of its own, and in which a strong independent spirit had always prevailed, the nobles met, and addressed an energetic remonstrance to the Duc de Guiche, who had been sent down on the part of the king to allay the disturbances.* Supported by the whole nobles of the country, the clergy, and the *Tiers Etat*, the parliament resolved to set at nought the royal edict, and not discontinue its functions. In Dauphiné, another *pays d'état*, the effervescence assumed a still more alarming character. No sooner was intelligence received that their provincial parliament was suspended, than the tocsin sounded in the mountains—menacing groups of highlanders descended from the elevated valleys—Grenoble was attacked, the gates forced, the guard of the intendant of the province dispersed, and the dispossessed magistrates conducted, amidst loud shouts, to the old hall of justice, where they were obliged to resume their functions. Happily, at this critical juncture, the military noblesse of the province assembled, and, by heading, obtained the direction of the movement. Three hundred nobles swore on their swords to defend the rights of the province to the last drop of their blood; and a general rendezvous of the whole of Dauphiné was appointed to be held forthwith at Vizile, to take the oath of fidelity to their country on the tomb of the Chevalier Bayard. They assembled there, accordingly, in such force, that the governor of the province, the old Marshal De Vaux, a man of known firmness of character, wrote to the king, that he could not prevent the meeting though he had twenty thousand men under his orders. Five hundred nobles of Dauphiné assembled with the clergy and deputies of the

June 1788.

* "Voici," said they, "le berceau du Grand Henri; et sous cette enseigne sacrée les Bearnais ne craignent pas la mort. Ils sentent couler dans leurs veines le sang de leurs ancêtres, qui ont mis sur le trône les princes de la maison de Bourbon. Nous ne sommes point des rebelles. Nous réclamons notre contrât et la foi des sermens d'un roi que nous aimons. Le Bearnais est né libre—il ne mourra pas esclave. Il est pauvre, mais il est bon. Un grand roi l'a dit—' Il est prêt à faire au roi le sacrifice de sa fortune; ' mais qu'il respecte le contrât qu'il a fait avec nous. Qu'il tienne tout de nous de l'amour, et rien de la force. Nous prodiguerons notre sang contre les ennemis de l'état; mais qu'on ne vienne pas nous arracher la vie quand nous défendons la liberté."—SOULAVIE, vi. 205.

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1788.

Tiers Etat of the province, and appointed as their secretary, MOUNIER, the judge-royal of Grenoble, a man of an upright and honourable character, afterwards well-known in the commencement of the Revolution.* They declared "infamous, and traitors to their country," all who should take office in the courts established by Brienne; and unanimously passed resolutions, demanding the recall of the parliament of Dauphiné, and the resumption of its functions without any abridgement; the assembly of the States-General; the convocation of the estates of the province in a *single chamber, with the Tiers Etat equal in number to the other members*; their immediate union with the other provinces; and declaring their determination to resist the payment of all taxes till the States-General were assembled, and the deposed magistrates restored.¹

¹ Soul. vi.
208, 210.
Droz, ii 73,
75.

113.
Serious
troubles in
Brittany.
July, 1788.

In Dauphiné the vehemence of popular excess was prevented by the nobles putting themselves at the head of the movement, and the wisdom with which they were directed by Mounier. But it was not thus in Brittany, where the governor of the province, Count de Thiard, prohibited the assembling of the estates, and the nobles were

* Jean Joseph Mounier, born at Grenoble on the 12th November 1758, was the son of a worthy and respectable citizen of that place. At first he was desirous of entering the army, but the rigid rules which at that period confined the higher ranks of that career to young men of aristocratic birth, rendered this impossible. He then became a merchant, but soon tired of that profession, and at length took to the law, and passed at the bar in Grenoble in 1779. At the age of twenty-six, he was appointed to the office of judge-royal in that city; and with such assiduity and talent did he discharge its duties, that during six years that he held the office, there was only one of his judgments appealed from. In the intervals of his judicial labours, he cultivated natural history, and entered with ardour upon the study of public law and politics. Similarity of study and inclinations made him early contract a close intimacy with several English travellers, who were attracted to Grenoble by the romantic beauties of its environs, particularly the inimitable passes which lead up to the Grand Chartreuse; and from them he imbibed that profound admiration for a constitutional government, and the forms of the English parliament, which distinguished him throughout his political career. When the parliament of Paris, in August 1787, gave the signal for general resistance to the government in regard to the proposed duty on stamps, he took an active part in the parliament of Grenoble in following up the movement; and his great weight as a judge gave him the lead in their deliberations. He was an able, upright, and patriotic man; his sense of justice was profound, his passion for liberty disinterested; no one meant more sincerely to do good to his country; and yet, on the opening of the States-General in 1789, few did it, by imprudent zeal, more essential injury. Of that no one was soon more thoroughly sensible than himself. He was, early in the Revolution, denounced as a traitor at Paris; obliged to fly from France, and the latter years of his life, down to his death in 1806, were devoted to combating, with sincere and honourable zeal, those ideas of equality, in promoting which, at first, he had borne so prominent a part.—*Biographie Universelle*, xxx. 310, 321, (MOUNIER.)

at once brought into collision with the royal authority. It was well known that the king would not permit the military to use their arms against the people; and, in fact, secret orders to that effect had already been given: so that the prohibition met with no attention. The very day after it was issued, a hundred and thirty nobles drew up a protest, in which they “declared infamous all those who should accept any place either in the new courts, or the administration of the province, contrary to its laws and constitutions,” and delivered it to the governor. Twelve hundred gentlemen assembled at St Brioux and Rennes, and deputed twelve of their number to bear the remonstrances of the estates of Brittany to the king, but with a positive order not to see either Brienne or Lamoignon. No sooner did they arrive in Paris, than they attended the meetings of the liberal leaders, who afterwards took so prominent a part in the Revolution: particularly the Dukes of Rohan and Praslin, Lafayette, Boisgelin, and others. The twelve deputies were forthwith sent to the Bastile. Upon this violent disturbances broke out in Rennes, Nantes, and the chief towns of the province; the military were publicly insulted; mobs paraded the streets without resistance, and the officers, indignant at the passive inaction to which they were constrained, protested against it in a solemn instrument, and endeavoured to vindicate their outraged honour by a duel of fifteen of their number against fifteen Breton nobles. Symptoms of insubordination even appeared in some regiments: the officers of one—that of Bassigny—publicly protested against the orders with the execution of which they were entrusted; and the weakness of the governor of the province was excused, perhaps justified, by the doubt whether his troops could be relied on for acting against the people. In lieu of the twelve imprisoned deputies, the province sent up eighteen others to lay their remonstrances before the king: an order not to enter Paris or approach the court, was disregarded; the clergy of the whole province agreed to addresses requiring the liberation of the imprisoned deputies, the restoration of the parliament of the province, and the convocation of the States-General;¹ and to such a length did the general enthusiasm proceed, that many Breton officers, holding commissions in the guards, resigned them, and

¹ Droz, ii. 69, 71. Soul. vi. 207, 209. Lab. ii. 227, 238. Sallier 200, 204. Besenval, i. 316, 320.

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hastened to their homes, to stand by their country in the hour of danger.

1788.

114.

The States-General are at length announced for May 1, 1789.

Matters now looked sufficiently ominous for the royal authority, in the temper both of the capital and the provinces; but, serious as those difficulties were, they were outdone by those arising from the exhausted state of the public exchequer. Brienne preserved his accustomed indifference—"Every thing," said he, "is foreseen and provided for: even a civil war. The king shall be obeyed; the king knows how to cause his authority to be respected." But these vague assurances did not replenish the exchequer, and it was at length announced that all the resources were exhausted: that there remained only 400,000 francs (£16,000) in the royal treasury; and that without some extraordinary resource, the public creditors, whose dividends fell due in August next, could not be paid. This brought matters to a crisis. Brienne, having failed in his application to the nobles, the parliaments, and the clergy, resolved to endeavour to propitiate the *Tiers Etat*, at once the wealthiest and the most numerous class in the state, from whose gratitude he hoped to obtain that assistance which he had sought in vain from the justice or patriotism of the privileged classes. On 8th August, an edict appeared CONVOKING THE STATES-GENERAL FOR THE 1ST MAY 1789.

Aug. 8,
1788.

The *Cour Plenièrè* and edicts of 8th May were meanwhile suspended till that event took place; so that the old parliaments resumed their functions. Nothing was said as to the form of their convocation, the qualifications of the electors, or whether they were to vote by order or by head. As if, too, it had been intended purposely to excite the people to the highest pitch on these vital points, an ordinance appeared soon after, which not only authorized the municipal authorities to tender their advice to government on the approaching emergency, but invited all private persons to come forward with their ideas and plans, as to the best method of convoking them, and to publish them for the public information. So little was Brienne aware of the extreme peril of the course he was thus adopting, that when a hint was dropped in the council as to the dangers with which the convocation of the States-General might be attended, he replied with imperturbable *sang froid*—"Sully had no difficulty with them:"¹ forgetting

July 15,
1788.

¹ Lab. ii. 266, 268. Bertrand de Molleville, i. 1, 2.

that he was not Sully; that Louis XVI. was not Henry IV.; and that 1614 was not 1789.

The consequences of this royal invitation to all classes to go back to first principles, and tender their ideas to government on the approaching regeneration of society, were soon apparent. Hundreds of pamphlets immediately inundated the capital and the provinces, in which, disregarding all reference to usage, law, or precedent, an appeal was at once made to first principles and the natural rights of man. The king's permission to tender advice on the convocation of the States-General, was made a pretext for disseminating doctrines with impunity, subversive not merely of the royal, but of any authority whatever. The most vehement fermentation instantly seized the public mind. Social regeneration became the order of the day; the ardent and philanthropic were seduced by the brilliant prospects of unbounded felicity which appeared to be opening upon the nation, the selfish entranced by the hope of individual elevation in the midst of the general confusion. But though all classes were unanimous in desiring the convocation of the States-General, and the commencement of the public reforms, they differed widely as to the measures which they deemed likely to advance the general welfare, and already were to be seen the seeds of those divisions which afterwards deluged the kingdom with blood. The higher classes of the noblesse, and all the prelates, desired the maintenance of the separation of the three orders, and the preservation of their exclusive privileges: the philosophic party, from whom the Girondists afterwards sprung, considered the federal republics of America as a model of government; while the few cautious observers whom the general whirl had left in the nation, in vain suggested, that, as they were about to embark on the dark and unknown sea of innovation, the British constitution was the only haven in which they could hope to find a secure asylum.¹

This great victory had been gained by the united efforts of all classes; the nobles had supported the *Tiers Etat*, and the clergy had been almost unanimous on the same side; but, as usual on such occasions, divisions were consequent on success. The separate interests of the different bodies who had combined in the struggle, appeared when

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1788.

115.

Vehement
excitement
of the public
mind.

¹ Lab. ii.
267, 268.
Montgail-
lard, Hist.
de Fran., i.
466.

116.

Divisions
already ap-
pear in the
country on
the subject.

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it was over. Each of the three bodies had entertained different views in demanding the States-General. The parliaments had hoped to rule them as in their last assemblage; the nobles expected, by the convocation of this body, to regain their lost influence; the *Tiers Etat* to rise into political importance. These discordant views were immediately supported by their respective adherents, and divisions broke out between the three Estates. The commons vehemently maintained that the vast increase in the numbers and consideration of their body since the last assemblage of the Estates in 1614, rendered it indispensable that a great addition should be made to the number of their representatives; that many places, formerly of no moment, had risen into opulence and importance within the last two centuries, which were wholly without representatives; that no national assembly could stand on a secure basis, which was thus rested only on a partial representation; that the light of the age was adverse to the maintenance of feudal distinctions, and that the only way to prevent a revolution was to concede in time the just demands of the people. On the other hand, the parliament of Paris, the nobles and privileged classes, alleged, that the only way to arrest innovation was to adhere to the practice of the constitution; that no human wisdom could foresee the effect of any considerable addition to the representatives of the people; and that, if such a deviation from established usage could ever be expedient, the last time when it should be attempted was in a moment of great public excitement, when the object of political wisdom should be to moderate rather than increase the ambition of the lower orders.¹

¹ Mig. i. 25.
Th. i. 27, 28.
De Staël,
i. 125, 126.
Lab. i. 268,
269.

117.
Great influence of the Abbé Siéyes' pamphlet.

A pamphlet published at this period, by the Abbé Siéyes, under the title, "*Qu'est-ce le Tiers Etat?*" had a powerful influence on the future destinies of France. "The *Tiers Etat*," said he, "is the French nation, *minus* the noblesse and the clergy." Public opinion ran daily more strongly in favour of the commons; extravagant expectations began to be formed, visionary schemes to be published, and that general unhinging of opinions took place which is the surest prelude of a revolution. The country was daily more and more deluged with pamphlets, many written with great talent, others indulging in the

most chimerical projects.* Every thing tended to increase the public effervescence, and to disqualify men from forming a rational judgment on public affairs. Siêyes, in consequence of the celebrity of his pamphlet, acquired a lead in public estimation, to which he was far from being entitled either by his judgment or his principles. He was a good dialectician, had great facility in writing, and an ingenious speculative mind; but he was neither a profound thinker nor a judicious legislator. Ignorant of mankind, he thought human affairs were to be regulated on abstract principles, as physical objects are by the laws of mechanics. Extravagantly vain of his own abilities, he boasted to Dumont that he had brought the science of politics to perfection, while in effect he proved himself incapable of constructing a constitution which could subsist two years. Nor was he without a strong intermixture of worldly ambition; he seldom took a decided part in politics, except when his own interest was concerned; and permitted at last all his aspirations after liberty to be quietly stifled by the gift of a valuable estate in the park of Versailles, when Napoleon rose to the head of affairs.^{1†}

It soon appeared to what cause this sudden and decisive change in the politics of the courts had been owing. By a royal edict, dated August 16, 1788, it was declared legal for the king to pay the whole public creditors, whether holders of annuities or of capital stock, the interest due to them, if above 1200 francs (£48,) *two-fifths in paper*, and only the remaining three-fifths in cash. This was followed

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¹ Dumont, Souvenirs de Mira-beau, 64. De Staël, i. 169, 170. Lab. ii. 312. Vide Infra, c. xxix. § 29.

118.
Edicts amounting to national bankruptcy. Aug. 16.
Aug. 18.

* The author is in possession of a collection of seventeen thick octavo volumes of these lucubrations, all published in 1788 and 1789. Their united bulk is double of the whole of this History, and many of them had reached a fifth and sixth edition.

† The Abbé Siêyes was born at Frejus, on the 3d May 1748, so that at this time he was forty years old. He was bred to the church, and in 1784 was appointed dean of the cathedral of Chartres, and vicar-general of the diocese. His abilities having soon made themselves known, he was, in 1787, named a member of the Provincial Assembly which Necker had established at Orleans. For long his studies had been directed to the questions of politics and constitutional government which had for some years agitated France, and in consequence he was one of the first to publish, in pursuance of Brienne's invitation, an essay on the States-General about to assemble in May 1789, entitled "Vues sur les Moyens d'Exécution dont les Représentans de la France pourront disposer en 1789." Soon after he published another pamphlet, entitled "Essai sur les Privilèges," in opposition to the decision of the Notables against the duplication of the Tiers Etat, and the voting by head; and then a third, which gained a prodigious reputation, "Qu'est-ce le Tiers Etat?" The tendency of this able production may be judged of from two words. He asked what has the Tiers Etat been hitherto? "*Rien.*" What will it be in future? "*Tout.*" *Rien ou Tout*

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two days afterwards by a second edict, which declared that *billets de la caisse d'escompte*, (exchequer bills,) down to the 1st January 1789, were not to be paid in money to holders presenting them for payment, but in bills only on private individuals; they were declared at the same time a legal tender, in payment both to government and between man and man; and all prosecutions on these bills were suspended till the 1st January ensuing. As these exchequer bills were the principal resource of government, and two-fifths of the interest on the public debt was declared payable in these bills thus bearing a forced circulation, these edicts were equivalent to a declaration of national bankruptcy. This last and melancholy resource was not adopted till driven to it by absolute necessity; a few days after, when Necker was recalled to the ministry, he found only 250,000 francs (£10,000) in the royal treasury; a sum not equal to a single day's expenditure by government.¹

¹ Hist. Parl.
i. 251, 252.
De Staël, i.
157, 158.
Lab. ii. 269,
270.

Financial embarrassment is the real cause of the overthrow of most administrations in countries where the people have either legally or practically an effective control over the measures of government. Mankind can stand any thing rather than a stoppage or diminution of their accustomed payments. Brienne, though to the last degree unpopular, had weathered the storm as long as the public creditors were regularly paid; but that which neither the *Cour Plenière*, nor the resistance of the parliaments, nor the revolt of the provinces could effect, was at once accom-

119.
Which leads
to the fall
of Brienne
and Lamoignon.

Aug. 25.

were thus made the watchwords of the movement in commencing the Revolution: we shall see in the sequel that "*tout ou rien*" was the maxim of Napoleon at its close, and which occasioned its fall. There is more here than a mere play upon words; these words are descriptive of the march, in its earliest, equally as its last stages, of revolutionary ambition; seeking to engross every thing at first; losing every thing by its reluctance to abandon any thing at last.—*Vide infra*, c. lxxvii. § 106, where Napoleon's words are given.

Sièyes's reputation now became such, that not merely his entrance into, but his great influence in the States-General, was a matter of certainty. Soon after he published another pamphlet, entitled "*Projet de délibération à prendre dans les assemblées des bailliages*;" and so great was the public anxiety to obtain the benefit of his talents, that after the electors of Paris had passed a resolution, to the effect that neither nobles nor priests should form part of their representatives, they rescinded it purposely to let in Sièyes. He was one of the members for Paris, accordingly, in the States-General, and was the person who proposed that they should assume the title of *National Assembly*. But his talents for speaking were by no means equal to his ability in writing; and he was soon eclipsed in that assembly by Mirabeau, and many other orators.—See *Biographie des Contemporaines*, xix. 189, 190, (SIEYES.)

plished by the edicts concerning the public creditors, and the diminution of the wonted dividends. Indescribable was the sensation which these financial measures produced. Credit of every kind was violently shaken. Money became scarce, creditors clamorous, debtors desperate; the holders of the public securities were loud in their complaints that the paper money was forced on them at a third more than they could get for it; the excitement was universal. Alarmed at this perilous state of affairs, the queen privately sounded Necker, through the Austrian ambassador M. de Merey, as to whether he would resume his post at the finances in conjunction with the present ministry; but he wisely declined. Upon this the Count d'Artois represented to the king the absolute necessity of Brienne's removal, which was agreed to. The archbishop was reconciled to his fall by the gift of considerable ecclesiastical preferment, in addition to the immense benefices he already enjoyed, and the promise of a cardinal's hat, which, by the king's influence, he soon after obtained. His retreat was, two days afterwards, followed by that of Lamoignon; who, having ever acted on honourable and conscientious motives, was regretted by his friends, however disliked by the people, whose advances he had opposed. The victory of the parliament was complete; its functions were immediately resumed, and Necker, with the general approbation of the nation, but with great reluctance on the part of the king, was recalled to the direction of the finances.^{1*}

It soon appeared in what an extraordinary state of excitement the public mind was, and how prone to violence the people were, even in that moment when, having gained a complete victory, it was least excusable. The police of Paris, formerly so admirable under Lenoir and Sartines, had sensibly declined in efficiency since the frequent contests for power had rendered it uncertain which party was likely to be long in the ascendant, and the known repugnance of the king to vigorous measures had rendered it doubtful whether the authorities did not run

¹ Sallier, 203. Hist. Parl. i. 252. Lab. ii. 273. Besenval, ii. 328, 329.

120.
Riots in Paris on the 25th August.

* Lamoignon was shortly after found in his demesne, where he had retired, with a fowling-piece in his hand, shot dead. It is not known whether his untimely end was the result of design or accident.—LABAUME, ii. 273. The king, from esteem for his upright character, made him a present of 400,000 francs (L.16,000) on his retiring from office; but so low was the treasury, that he only received the half of that sum.—*Ibid.*

CHAP. greater risk in repressing than permitting disorders.
 III. Taking advantage of this circumstance, a violent mob
 1788. assembled on the evening of the 25th August, the day on
 Aug. 25. which Brienne left Paris, and, traversing the Pont Neuf,
 obliged all the passers-by to shout out "Long live Henry
 IV.—To the devil with Brienne and Lamoignon!" As
 these disorders were not checked, the mob soon swelled
 immensely, and began to throw stones at the adjoining
 houses; and these obnoxious ministers were burnt in
 effigy.* A detachment of cavalry having been sent to dis-
 perse the assemblage, were assailed by the populace, fired
 in return, and killed a man. The people, now become
 furious, advanced to attack the soldiers: eight persons fell
 on the side of the troops, who were driven across the Pont
 Neuf. The mob, with loud shouts, paraded the adjoining
 streets, celebrating their triumph, and burning several
 watch-houses, which fell in their way. They were only
 arrested on the Place de Grève by a discharge from the
 armed police, which brought down twenty of the foremost,
 and dispersed the rest.¹

¹ Hist. de la
 Revolution,
 par deux
 amis de la
 Liberté, i.
 55. Duval,
 Souv. de la
 Terreur, i.
 8, 11. Lab.
 i. 280, 281.

121.
 Riot at
 Brienne's
 hotel. Aug.
 26.

But in every age the populace of Paris have been found
 to be the most resolute and intractable of any recorded in
 history. Far from being deterred by so bloody a termina-
 tion of their triumph, the people collected in still greater
 force on the succeeding evening, armed with sabres, bayo-
 nets, and torches; and after burning Lamoignon in effigy,
 proceeded with their brands to set fire to the hotel of M.
 de Brienne, minister at war, and brother to the fallen
 prelate. Already they had got entire possession of the
 street, and were just beginning to force the doors, when
 Brienne himself arrived, and ordered two companies of the
 Gardes Françaises to charge with fixed bayonets, which at
 length dispersed the crowd, but not before several of their
 number had been killed and wounded. At the same time

* The Abbé Sabatier, who had first demanded the States-General in the
 parliament of Paris, made a narrow escape on this occasion. He was mis-
 taken for the Abbé Vermont, preceptor to the queen: and the people
 insisted he should alight, go down on his knees, and make the *amende*
honorable for his misdeeds.—"What would you have?" exclaimed the
 counsellor of parliament, in great alarm. "I am the Abbé Sabatier, your
 best friend." Upon this the air rang with acclamations of "Vive notre
 père! Vive notre sauveur!" Yet he had been the principal means of
 throwing out the equal territorial assessment which the king had made
 such efforts to lay on the noblesse, to the relief of the Tiers Etat! Such
 is popular judgment.—DUVAL, *Souvenirs de la Terreur*, i. 11-14.

a vast assemblage collected in the Rue Meslay, and attacked the house of the commander of the city guard, Du Bois, who was the object of great hatred, from the vigour he had displayed on the preceding day. But he arranged his troops in his hotel and the adjoining houses, and received the assailants with so vigorous a fire of musketry that thirty of their number were stretched on the pavement; and a troop of horse, which arrived at the same time, completed their defeat. Symptoms of irresolution, however, had already appeared among some of the troops; and the frequent shouts from the mob, "Vivent les Gardes Françaises," proved that the soldiers of that body had already begun to experience that debauching influence, which afterwards proved fatal alike to the monarchy and the cause of freedom.¹

The disorders were, by these vigorous military measures, effectually arrested, though not before above two hundred persons had perished on the two sides, in the tumults which had taken place. But now began a system, both on the part of the government and the magistracy, which revealed at once the weakness of the monarchy, and was productive, in the end, of unheard-of calamities. The authors of these disorders, though well-known, were not prosecuted: the Marquis de Nesles, their principal leader, was not even inquired after. The parliament, instead, as they were in duty bound, of protecting the police and military who had put down the riots which threatened such serious consequences, and instituting prosecutions against the ringleaders in them, passed over their crimes in silence. In place of doing so, they adopted two *arrêts*, directing the trial, not of the insurgents, but of the *police-officers* who had arrested their incendiary violence! Du Bois, whose firmness had saved the capital from incalculable calamities, was obliged to fly from Paris to avoid destruction by the populace. Not one of the insurgents was brought to justice, nor was the slightest attempt made to discover them—the distinctive mark of revolutionary times, and the certain prelude to the overthrow of society. When government deems it prudent not to prosecute, or does not venture to bring to justice the leaders of popular violence, how great soever their crimes;¹ when it is generally felt that more danger is run

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III.
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¹ Sallier, 208.
Duval, i.
14, 19.
Montgai-
lard, Hist.
de France,
i. 451, 452.
Lab. ii. 283,
284. Hist.
Parl. i. 255.

122.
Want of
vigour in
the govern-
ment in pro-
secuting the
offenders.

² Lab. ii.
284, 285.
Duval, i. 20,
21. Hist.
Parl. i. 255.
Sallier, 208.
Montjoye,
Hist. du
Duc D'Or-
leans, i. 178.

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by the magistrates and soldiers, who are entrusted with the preservation of the peace, if they discharge their duty, than if they neglect it; and when it becomes evident that the only persons who are secure of impunity, in a collision between them and the people, are the perpetrators of revolutionary crimes, it may be concluded with certainty that unbounded national calamities are at hand.

123.
Universal
joy on
Necker's
restoration
to office.

But although to the far-seeing sagacity of political wisdom, this weakness on the part of government, and betrayal of duty on the part of the magistracy, might appear fraught with the most perilous consequences, yet, to the ordinary observer, the restoration of Necker to office seemed fraught with the happiest auguries, and to forebode only peace and happiness to France. His reception at court was, in the highest degree, flattering. The queen and princes assured him of their entire confidence—the repugnance of the king seemed to be overcome: the courtiers and nobles flocked round him in crowds when he came from the presence-chamber, after receiving his appointment. Even the most inveterate of his former opponents were among the foremost to tender their congratulations. They were perfectly sincere in doing so: they regarded him as the only barrier between them and national bankruptcy; he was the mighty magician whose wand was again to unlock the doors of the treasury. The same rejoicings took place all over France. Universally, for a brief space, the public discontents were stilled. On entering upon office he found the treasury empty, and the credit of government extinct. Next day he received tenders of loans to a considerable extent, and the funds rose thirty per cent. An infusion of popular power into the government was deemed, at that period, a sovereign remedy for all difficulties, a certain antidote to all disorders. The public creditors were then only alive to the danger of national bankruptcy which arose from the perfidy or extravagance of kings; they had yet to learn the far more imminent peril which springs from the violence and vacillation of the people. He immediately recalled all persons exiled for political offences, and strove to the utmost to assuage individual distress. But it was too late. When he received the intimation of his recall, his first words were,¹ “Ah! would that I could recall the fifteen months

¹ De Staël, i. 157, 159. Lab. ii. 275, 276. Weber, i. 252. Besenval, ii. 332.

of the Archbishop of Toulouse!" In truth, during these eventful years, the period of safe concession had gone by; every point now abandoned was adding fuel to the flame.

It was in the midst of the effervescence arising from these popular tumults, that the royal edict for summoning the States-General appeared. It set out with an eloquent and touching exposition, which all felt to be true, of the king's motives for calling them together.* It appointed the election to take place by a double process. In the first instance, the electors of each bailiwick were to meet and choose delegates, and these delegates were to elect the members of the States-General. Strange to say, no property qualification whatever was declared necessary, either for an elector in the primary assemblies which chose the delegates, or for the delegates themselves, or for the members of the States-General. It was merely declared that the number of delegates chosen in the rural districts should be two for each two hundred hearths, three above two hundred hearths, and four above three hundred, and so on.† In the towns, again, two delegates were to be chosen for each hundred "inhabitants;" four above a hundred; six above two hundred, and so on.‡ Nearly three

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1788.

124.

Royal edict for summoning the States-General. Aug. 27, 1788.

* The circular calling together the States-General bore,—“We have need of the concurrence of our faithful subjects, to aid us in surmounting the difficulties arising from the state of the finances, and establishing, in conformity with our most ardent desire, a durable order in the parts of government which affect the public welfare. We wish that the three estates should confer together on the matters which will be submitted to their examination: they will make known to us the wishes and grievances of the people in such a way, that, by a mutual confidence, and exchange of kind offices between the king and people, the public evils should as rapidly as possible be remedied. For this purpose we enjoin and command that, immediately on the receipt of this letter, you proceed to elect deputies of the three orders, worthy of confidence from their virtues, and the spirit with which they are animated; that the deputies should be furnished with powers and instructions sufficient to enable them to attend to all the concerns of the state, and introduce such remedies as shall be deemed advisable for the reform of abuses, and the establishment of a fixed and durable order in all parts of the government, worthy of the paternal affections of the king and of the resolutions of so noble an assembly.”—CALONNE, 315; LAB. ii. 335; *Hist. Parl.*, i. 268, 269.

† Le nombre des députés [delegates] qui seront choisis par les paroisses et communautés de campagne pour porter leurs cahiers, seront de deux à raison de deux cent feux et audessous; trois, audessus de deux cent feux; quatre, audessus de trois cent feux; et ainsi de suite. Les villes enverront le nombre des députés aux états-généraux annexé au présent règlement; à l'égard de toutes celles qui ne s'y trouvent pas comprises, le nombre de leurs députés sera fixé à quatre.”—*Art. 31, Edict, 27th Aug. 1788; Hist. Parl.*, i. 269.

‡ “*Les habitans* composant le Tiers Etat des villes qui ne se trouvent compris dans aucuns corps, communautés, ou corporations, s'assembleront à l'Hotel de Ville, au jour qui sera indiqué par les officiers municipaux, et il y sera élu des députés [delegates] dans la proportion de deux députés

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millions of Frenchmen were admitted under this regulation to a privilege which substantially amounted to the power of choosing representatives; for the electors were nothing but delegates, who, in every instance, obeyed the directions of their representatives. Finally, this immense body were entrusted with the important privilege of drawing up *cahiers*, or directions to their constituents in regard to the conduct they were to pursue on all the great questions which were to come before them.* These *cahiers* were absolute mandates, which the representatives bound themselves by a solemn oath to observe faithfully, and support to the utmost of their ability.¹

1 Necker, i.
119. Lab.
ii. 236, 240.
Hist. Parl.
i 266, 269.

125.

Its extreme
dangers.

Nor was this all. Not content with establishing an electoral system which amounted almost to universal suffrage, and permitting these numerous electors to bind their representatives *à priori* by absolute mandates on all the questions which might occur, Necker imposed no restraint whatever on the persons who were to be chosen as representatives. Neither property, nor age, nor marriage, were required as qualifications. Every Frenchman, of twenty-five years of age, domiciled in a canton, who paid the smallest sum in taxes, was declared eligible. The consequences were disastrous in the extreme. Youths hardly escaped from school; lawyers unable to earn a livelihood in their villages; curates barely elevated either in income or knowledge above their humble flocks; physicians destitute of patients, barristers without briefs; the ardent, the needy, the profligate, the ambitious, were at once vomited forth from all quarters to co-operate in the reconstruction of the monarchy. Very few, indeed, of the assembly were possessed of any property; fewer still of any knowledge. The only restraints on human passion—knowledge, age, property, and children—were wanting in the great majority of its members; they consisted almost entirely of ardent youths, many of whom already thought themselves equal to Cicero, Brutus, or Demosthenes,

pour cent individus et audessous présens à la dite assemblée; quatre audessus de cent; six audessus de deux cent; et toujours en augmentant ainsi dans la même proportion."—*Ibid.* Art. 27.

* The collection of these *cahiers*, in thirty-six volumes folio, is the most interesting and authentic monument which exists of the grievances which led to the Revolution. An abstract of this immense record has been published by Prudhomme, in three vols. 8vo; another by Grille, in two vols. 8vo.

while all were resolutely bent on making their fortunes: they were elected by almost universal suffrage, and subjected to the most rigorous mandates from a numerous and ignorant constituency. And yet from such a body, all classes in France, with a few individual exceptions, expected a deliverance from the evils or difficulties with which they were surrounded, and a complete regeneration of society. The king, the ministers, and courtiers, anticipated the cessation of the vexatious opposition of the parliaments, and more ready submission from a body of men who were thought to be so ill calculated to combine as the *Tiers Etat*; the nobles, a restoration of order to the finances, and emancipation from the public difficulties by the confiscation of the church property; the commons, liberation from every species of restraint, and boundless felicity from the prospects which would open to them in the new state of society which was approaching. When hopes so chimerical are entertained by all classes of society, and a chaos of unanimity is produced, composed of such discordant interests, it may usually be concluded that a general infatuation has seized the public mind, and that great national calamities are at hand.¹

Necker's influence as a minister was prodigiously increased on his restoration to power. It is hardly going too far to say, that, for good or for evil, he was omnipotent. The extreme penury of the exchequer rendered his powerful credit with the capitalists indispensable to carrying on the government; the recent and entire overthrow which the crown had received in the contest with the parliaments, rendered irresistible the influence of any minister who came in from the impulse of their victory, and was supported by their immense weight throughout the country. He was the movement leader, and all history tells us that such a legislator, in a moment of popular triumph, can do what he pleases, provided he does not visibly check the popular desires. Sensible of, perhaps exaggerating his influence, aware of what was expected of him, he bent his whole attention to the vital question of the convocation of the States-general, and left the ordinary details of his office to his friend, Dufresne de Saint-Leon. Alive to the incalculable importance of the measure which was now to be adopted, and knowing that a single false

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1788.

¹ Lab. ii.
337, 351.

126.

A second convocation of the Notables, to determine the form of convoking the States General.

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¹ De Stael,
i. 170, 171.
Lab. ii. 304,
305. Necker,
sur la Rev.
i. 52, 53.

step would probably prove irretrievable, Necker concurred with the king in thinking that the Notables should be convened afresh, to deliberate on the course to be adopted. They were convoked, accordingly, for the 3d November 1788. Necker had previously made up his own mind what to do; his known professions and opinions left him hardly room for choice. But like all men who are rash in opinion but timid in action, he wished to throw the responsibility of the change he meditated off himself—a sure sign he was not adequate to the crisis. A great general seldom calls a council of war; Napoleon rarely summoned one—Wellington, never.¹

127.
Ancient
form of
voting in
the States-
General.

It was historically known that on former occasions, when the States-general were assembled, the representatives of the three orders of the nobles, the clergy, and the *Tiers Etat*, named in equal numbers in the different electoral districts or bailliages, as they were called, whatever the population of those districts was, met in a common hall to verify their powers and adjust the roll. This done, the representatives of each order retired to a *separate chamber*, where they deliberated on the matters submitted to them; and, when they had come to a decision, they returned into the common hall, and then the judgment of the whole was taken, not by *head*, but *by order*; so that, if any two of the orders concurred, the third was outvoted. This, in particular, was the form observed in the last meeting of the Estates in 1614, and indeed on all previous occasions. It need hardly be observed, that this is strictly in conformity with the structure of modern society as it has appeared in all the old forms of national assemblies; and it is still observed without the slightest deviation in the British parliament, where the sovereign, in the first instance, meets the Lords and Commons in the House of Lords; but, before business begins, the Commons withdraw, and every vote on public questions is taken in each house separately.² It was equally well ascertained that the States-General had never, in any period of French history, possessed the privilege of commencing legislative measures, or even putting a simple negative upon those issued by the king. Royal ordinances could alone originate laws or legislative changes; what the states had to do was only to consider the ordinances in which each order

² Mont. i.
432, 433.
Lab. ii.
295, 296.

was interested, either in the existing laws or in proposed modifications of them, and make their remarks upon them, which were to be decided on by the king in council. They were only invested with the right to make remonstrances, or tender advice: the exclusive power of originating and altering laws was vested in the king in council, enlightened, when it was so offered, by their advice. And in the event of a royal edict issuing on such advice, it was addressed, not to the States-General as a whole, but to the particular order which was interested in, and had tendered the advice.¹

When the States-General were promised by Brienne, and appointed to meet in May 1789, the whole popular party in France immediately united their strength to gain two points, entirely at variance with all these usages. These were,—1. That the number of the deputies elected by the *Tiers Etat* should be *equal* to that elected by the two other orders taken together. This, it was contended, was indispensable to prevent the two privileged orders, whose interests were identified, entirely crushing the third estate, which had rights and interests adverse to theirs to contend for;—2. That the whole orders should deliberate and vote, not in separate chambers, but *by head*, in one assembly. This, it could not be denied, was an innovation hitherto unknown in the French, or indeed any European constitution; but it was strenuously argued that it was an innovation loudly called for by the changes in the circumstances of society, and the increasing wealth, importance, and intelligence of the commons. The interests of the three orders, it was said, are not in reality at variance: they have only been rendered so, by unjust privileges having been assumed on the one side, and general ignorance existing on the other. But at length all these causes of discord have been removed, by the increasing liberality of the age, the dictates of an enlarged philosophy, and the augmented information of the people. Now, then, is the time to impress this new character, already communicated to the age, upon its institutions, and build up the monarchy afresh upon the only basis which is likely to be durable, a conformity to the wishes, necessities, and interests of the people. All objections drawn from the perilous tendency of such sweeping changes were lost upon the heated generation which had now sprung up into social activity:² the

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¹ Preface
aux Ordon-
nances, tome
iii. 20.
Feraud,
Esprit de
l'Histoire.
iii. 88. Ro-
bertson's
Charles V.,
i. 460, 461.

128.

The popul-
ar party
contend for
one cham-
ber, and a
double
number of
deputies
from the
Tiers Etat.

² Lab. ii.
304, 306.
Bertrand
de Molle-
ville, i. 133.
Hist. de la
Rev. Garat's
Mem. ii.
307. D'En-
traignes,
Mem. sur
les Etats
Généraux,
250, 256.

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threatened danger was in their estimation a recommendation the more, an objection the less. They replied in the words of the turbulent democracy of Poland: "*Malum periculosam libertatem quam quietam servitutem.*"

129.
The Parliament of Paris resist these changes.

The parliament of Paris was the first body to give the signal of resistance to these sweeping innovations. That powerful assembly had too long been in alliance with the leaders of the *Tiers Etat*, not to be well aware of the aspiring temper of that body; and was too well versed in constitutional law not to be sensible how completely the pretensions so strongly advanced by them were at variance with former usage. Gloomy presentiments, accordingly, seized several of its leading members, as to the ultimate tendency of the prodigious excitement which now agitated the public mind, and the proposal to invest popular vehemence at once with supreme power, by the duplication of the *Tiers Etat*, and the voting in a single chamber. Robert de Saint-Vincent, in particular, who had taken so decided a part against the king in former contests, knowing what a fabric of popular usurpation the *Tiers Etat* proposed to build upon the duplication of their numbers, and voting in a single chamber, was filled with the most dismal apprehensions. He was haunted by perpetual terrors of a vast social conflagration, of which posterity would accuse him of being the author. Impressed with these ideas, he strongly opposed the proposed measure; and, after a violent debate, the parliament, by a considerable majority, resolved that the States-General should be assembled according to the forms observed when they were last assembled in 1614. This was a very important decision, as it was held by the constitutional party that a registry by the parliament was essential to give legality to a royal ordinance; for, as matters now stood, it was registered only under this qualification.¹

Sept. 25,
1788.

¹ Lab. ii.
294, 295.
Montg. i.
432.

130.
And immediately lose their popularity.

Never did a public body experience so quickly the eternal truth, that the popularity of popular leaders is entirely dependent on their advancing with the movement, as the parliament of Paris did on this occasion. In an instant their influence was gone. Brienne, Lamoignon themselves, were not the objects of greater obloquy. Such was the universal odium into which they fell, that they could not appear in the streets without being insulted.

D'Esprenenil had been prevented from attending at this debate by his detention in the Isles des Hieres; and being soon after liberated, he was received along the whole road with the most intoxicating marks of public admiration. But no sooner did he arrive in Paris, and learn from Adrian Duport, his intimate friend, the designs of the popular party, than he at once gave in his adherence to the decision of the parliament. He was the supporter of constitutional right, not speculative change. This honourable act of moral courage, which proves the sincerity and force of his character, instantly raised against him a host of enemies: he was accused of treachery, weakness, corruption, because he did not choose, disregarding the laws he had sworn to observe, to adventure on the boundless sea of innovation. Already he began to feel in his own person the truth of the prophecy of D'Ormesson, that heaven would punish them for demanding the States-General by granting their supplication.¹

The Notables met soon after, and took into consideration the all-important subject of the form of convoking the States-General. They consisted of the same individuals who had been assembled two years before; and Necker secretly flattered himself that he would give a decisive proof of his influence and popularity by triumphing over the aristocratic body which had proved so refractory as to the proposals of Calonne. But the event soon showed that he was mistaken. The question was warmly debated before them not only in oral discussion, but in a multitude of pamphlets, which, professing to go to the bottom of the question, lost sight entirely of usage or precedent, and launched into the boundless fields of speculation and ambition. Nothing was omitted which could tend to inflame the public mind. The grossest falsehoods, the most extravagant exaggerations, were passed off without contradiction on the people; the parliament was loaded with obloquy on account of its recent decision; Necker extolled to the skies: and, to accustom the people to a contempt of things sacred, many parodies appeared on pieces of the church service, which had a prodigious circulation.* But

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¹ Gallard,
222. Lab.
ii. 297, 299.

131.

Meeting of
the Notables,
who con-
firm the
decision of
the Parlia-
ment of
Paris.

Nov. 3,
1788.

* The titles of some of these were "Litanies du Tiers Etat; son Evangile; ses Vêpres; sa Passion; sa Mort, et sa Resurrection."—BERTRAND DE MOLLEVILLE, *Hist. de la Révolution*, i. 138.

The following commencement of a catechism regarding the parliament

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1788.

¹ Lab. ii.
324, 325.
De Staël,
i. 170, 171.
Th. i. 29.
Hist. Parl.
i. 256.

though these arts had a vast effect upon the people, they were entirely lost upon the Notables. Of the six bureaux or divisions into which the assembly was divided, five reported that the convocation and voting should be according to the old form; the remaining one, headed by Monsieur Count of Provence, whose liberal principles were well known, supported the double representation. In that house, the opposite vote was carried by the casting vote of Monsieur himself, so that but for him the decision of all the bureaux would have been the same.¹

132.
Necker induces the King to double the Tiers Etat, and leave the mode of voting unsettled.

The decided resistance of such important bodies as the parliament of Paris and the Notables of France to the projects of doubling the *Tiers Etat*, and voting in a single chamber, might well have made Necker hesitate in the course which he was pursuing. The Count D'Artois, the Prince of Condé, and the other princes of the blood, except Monsieur, soon after presented a memorial of great ability to the king, in which the dangers of the proposed innovation are pointed out with surprising force and accuracy, and the consequences foretold precisely as they afterwards occurred.* But nothing could overcome the infatuation

of Paris will show the temper of the times, and the obloquy into which that once popular body had fallen.—“*Question*. Qu'êtes-vous de votre nature?—*Réponse*. Nous sommes des officiers du Roi chargés de rendre justice à ses peuples.—*Q*. Qu'aspirez-vous à devenir?—*R*. Les législateurs, et par conséquent les maîtres de l'état—*Q*. Comment pouvez-vous en devenir les maîtres?—*R*. Parceque, ayant le pouvoir législatif et le pouvoir executif, il n'y aura rien qui puisse nous résister.—*Q*. Comment avez-vous vous conduits d'abord avec le Roi?—*R*. Nous avons opposé à toutes ses volontés, en persuadant aux peuples que nous sommes leurs défenseurs, et que c'est pour le bien de tous que nous refusons de registrer les impôts.—*Q*. Le peuple ne verra-t-il pas que vous ne vous êtes refusés aux impôts que parceque vous aurez les payer vous-même?—*R*. Non; parceque nous les ferons prendre le change, en disant que la nation seule peut consentir aux impôts, et nous demanderons les états-généraux.—*R*. Si, malheureusement pour vous, le Roi vous prend au mot, et les états-généraux soient convoqués, comment vous en tirerez-vous?—*R*. Nous chicanerons sur la forme, et nous demanderons la forme de 1614.—*Q*. Pourquoi cela?—*R*. Parceque selon cette forme, le Tiers Etat sera représenté par des gens de loi; ce qui nous donnera la prépondérance.”—See *Catéchisme du Parlement*, 1788; *Histoire Parlementaire*, i. 254.

* “Sire! L'état est en peril. Votre personne est respecté; les vertus du monarque lui assurent les hommages de la nation: mais une révolution se prépare dans les principes du gouvernement; elle est annoncée par la fermentation des esprits. Des institutions réputées, sacrées, et par lesquelles cette monarchie a prospéré pendant tant de siècles, sont convertées en questions problématiques, ou même décriées comme des injustices.

“Les écrits qui ont paru pendant l'assemblée des Notables, les mémoires qui ont été remis aux princes soussignés, les demandes formées par diverses provinces, villes, ou corps; l'objet et le style de ces demandes et de ces mémoires—tout annonce, tout prouve un système d'insubordination raisonnée, et le mépris des lois de l'état. Tout auteur s'érige en législateur: l'éloquence, ou l'art d'écrire, même dépourvu d'études, de connoissances, d'experiences, semblent de titres suffisans pour régler la constitution des

of the Swiss minister; and, unfortunately, Louis, judging of others by himself, and ever anxious to do what his people wished, went into his views. On the 27th December 1788, the fatal edict appeared, the death-warrant of the French monarchy, which declared that "the number of deputies in the States-General shall be at least a thousand: that this number shall be made up as nearly as possible in proportion to the population and taxes of each bailiwick: and that *the number of deputies of the Tiers Etat shall be equal to that of the two other orders put together*: and that proportion shall be established in the letters of convocation." Nothing was said as to the form of assembly or voting, whether by order or head.^{1*}

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1788.

Dec. 27,
1788.¹ Hist. Parl.
i. 235, 236.

empire: quiconque avance une proposition hardie, quiconque propose des changes des lois, est sûr d'avoir des lecteurs et des sectateurs. Tel est le malheureux progrès de cette effervescence que les opinions qui auraient paru il y a quelque temps les plus repréhensibles, paraissent aujourd'hui raisonnables et justes: et ce dont s'indignent aujourd'hui les gens de bien passera dans quelque temps peut-être pour régulier et légitime. Qui peut dire où s'arrêtera la témérité de ses opinions? Déjà les droits du trône sont mis en question: les droits des deux ordres de l'état divisent les opinions; bientôt les droits de propriété seront attaqués; l'inégalité des fortunes sera présentée comme un objet de réforme; déjà on a proposé la suppression des droits féodaux comme l'abolition d'un système d'oppression, reste de la barbarie. C'est de ces nouveaux systèmes, c'est du projet de changes, les droits, et les lois qui est sortie la prétension qu'on annonce quelques corps du Tiers Etat d'obtenir pour cet ordre deux suffrages aux états-généraux, tandis que chacun des deux premiers ordres continuerait à n'en avoir qu'un seul. Les princes soussignés ne peuvent dissimuler l'effroi que leur inspirait pour l'état le succès des prétensions du Tiers Etat, et les funestes conséquences de la révolution proposée dans la constitution des Etats; ils y découvrent un triste avenir. Le Tiers Etat, avertis par ce premier succès, ne serait pas disposé à se contenter d'une concession sans objet et sans intérêt réel, tant que le nombre des députés serait augmenté sans que le nombre des suffrages fut changé. Plusieurs bureaux ont exposé l'injustice et le danger d'une innovation dans la composition des états-généraux, ou dans la forme de les convoquer: la foule des prétensions qui en résulteraient; la facilité, si les voix seraient comptées par tête et sans distinction d'ordres, de compromettre, par la séduction de quelques membres des autres ordres, les intérêts de ces ordres, et la destruction de l'équilibre si sagement établi entre les trois ordres, et la ruine éventuelle du Tiers Etat même."—*Mémoire de M. Le Comte D'Artois, le Prince de Condé, le Prince de Bourbon, et le Prince de Conti*; Dec. 1. 1788. *Histoire Parlementaire de France*, i. 256, 260. This memoir is history traced out with prophetic hand by anticipation; but it passed at the time among the whole philosophers, and, of course, in all the popular societies, as mere drivelling—the prejudices of a worn-out, ignorant, and corrupted aristocracy.

* The following table exhibits the progressive change in the number of the different orders at different periods of French history:—

	1560.	1576.	1588.	1614.
Clergy,	98	104	134	141
Nobles,	76	72	180	130
Tiers Etat,	219	150	191	192

There was no fixed proportion, the royal edict summoning them having in each instance fixed the relative numbers. But the Tiers Etat, in general, sent about two-thirds, or somewhat more, of the other two orders taken together.—MONTGAILLARD, i. 435, 436.

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1788.

133.

Necker's
reasons for
this step.

Nothing can be more instructive than to see the arguments by which Necker supported this great and decisive addition to the popular influence. He rested his opinion on the unanimity expressed on this point in all the petitions to the king from the towns and municipalities of the kingdom, on the general concurrence of the writers who had published their opinions, and on the recent decisions of the majority of the parliaments—"All hope," said he, "of a successful issue would be lost, if it were made to depend on establishing harmony between three orders essentially at variance in their principles and interest. To put an end to the injustice of pecuniary privileges, and maintain a proper equilibrium between the *Tiers Etat* and the other orders, we must give it a double representation; without that, there would always be a majority of two to one against it: whereas, when all are compelled to look to the common interest, they will only adopt the laws which impose the least burden upon the community, and will thus compel the *Tiers Etat* to accept the impost which at present they deem most onerous. We ascribe too much importance to this last order. The *Tiers Etat*, by their nature and their occupations, must *ever be strangers to political passions*. Their intelligence and goodness of disposition are a sufficient *guarantee against all the apprehensions at present entertained of their excesses.*"¹

¹ Mem. de
Necker, i.
175, 180.
Lab. ii. 326,
327.

134.
Elections,
and extra-
ordinary
negligence
with which
they were
conducted.

The elections commenced soon after, and, as might have been expected with a conceding government and an inflamed people, almost all terminated in favour of the popular party. They were carelessly conducted by the constituted authorities. The crown made no attempt to influence the returns, the nobility little; the importance of attending to the qualifications of those who exercised the elective franchise was not understood; and, after a few days, every person decently dressed was allowed to vote without any questions being asked. Upwards of three millions of electors concurred in the formation of the Assembly, being more than *triple* the number which, with the same population, now forms the constituency of the united parliament of Great Britain. The parliaments had little influence in the choice of the deputies, the court none; the noblesse chose a few liberal persons of their rank, but the great

bulk of their representatives were firmly attached to the interests of their order, and as hostile to the *Tiers Etat* as to the oligarchy of great families which composed the court. The inferior clergy named deputies attached to the cause of freedom, and the bishops those likely to uphold the hierarchy. Finally, the *Tiers Etat* chose a numerous body of representatives, firm in their attachment to liberty, and ardently desirous of extending the influence of their order.¹

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1788.

¹ Th. i. 26.
Dumont, 57.

Every thing contributed at this period to swell the torrent of popular enthusiasm. The minds of men, strongly agitated by the idea of an approaching revolution, were in a continual ferment; the parliaments, nobles, and dignified clergy, who had headed the movement, already saw themselves assailed by the arms which they had given to the people. No words can convey an idea of the transports which seized the public mind at the prospect of the regeneration of society. The pamphlets swelled from hundreds to thousands: every hall in Paris was filled with popular meetings and debating clubs, where the most extravagant levelling doctrines were most loudly applauded; the journals daily added to the universal enthusiasm. No bounds, it was thought, could be set to the general felicity which was approaching, by the admission of the people into the practical direction of affairs. Even the elements contributed to swell the public effervescence, and seemed to have declared war on the falling monarchy. A dreadful storm of hail, in July 1788, laid waste the provinces, and produced such a diminution in the harvest, as threatened all the horrors of famine; while the severity of the succeeding winter exceeded any thing that had been experienced since that which followed the disasters of Louis XIV. The monetary crisis which had taken place in August 1788, in consequence of the edicts relative to the payments of the *rentes* two-fifths in paper, augmented to a very great degree the general distress. The charity of Fénélon, which immortalized the former disastrous epoch, was now equalled by the humane beneficence of the clergy of Paris; but all their efforts could not embrace the immense mass of indigence, which was swelled by the confluence of dissolute and abandoned characters from every part of France.² These wretches assembled round the throne, like the sea-birds round the wreck, which are the harbingers of

135

Dreadful
distress in
Paris in the
winter of
1788-9.

² Th. i. 36,
37. Lac. vi.
6, 7. Pr.
Hist. i. 290,
291.

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death to the sinking mariner, and already appeared in fearful numbers in the streets on occasion of the slightest tumult. They were all in a state of destitution, and for the most part owed their lives to the charity of the ecclesiastics, whom they afterwards massacred in cold blood in the prison of Carmes.

Disturbances of a very serious kind soon after broke out in Brittany, already the seat of so vehement a fermentation, on occasion of the contests with the parliaments. But it strangely contrasted in principle and object with the previous convulsion. Already over all France, the parliaments, terrified at the work of their own hands, and anticipating their own speedy extinction in the superior majesty and power of the States-General, were desirous of pausing in their career, or even retracing their steps. But it was too late. They had sown the wind, and must reap the whirlwind. Divisions had broken out in Brittany between the noblesse and the *Tiers Etat*, immediately after their united victory over Brienne and the throne; the latter contended for the abolition of a hearth-tax from which the former enjoyed exemption, and the collection of which was often attended with vexation. The nobles of the province, seeing themselves thus assailed in their pecuniary interests, and alarmed at the general effervescence in favour of the *Tiers Etat*, which was taking place over the whole kingdom, refused to concur in the appointment of deputies to the States-General; alleging as an excuse, that they were prohibited, by the constitution of the province, from taking any part in an assembly where the two first orders were not secured a separate representation. They flattered themselves that in this way they would preserve their privileges, which were highly favourable to the noblesse, in a separate little state, or *pays d'état*, forgetting that the age of such minute subdivisions of the same country was past; that the current ran strong in favour of uniform institutions; and that if France was revolutionized, there was little chance that Brittany would be able to live through the storm.¹

Bloody discord soon succeeded this imprudent attempt of the Breton nobility to stop the current which they had so recently made such strenuous efforts to put in motion. The populace of Rennes, indignant at the attempt to

¹ Beaulieu,
Essai sur la
Rév. i. 77.
Lab. ii. 355,
555.

arrest the movement by the very persons who had a few months before stimulated them to resist the royal authority, armed themselves with sabres, pistols, and pikes, and commenced an indiscriminate attack on the noblesse when assembling to enter the hall of their provincial assemblies. The nobles on their side took up arms, and brought their retainers into the town. A fierce conflict ensued in the streets: great numbers were wounded: two of the noblesse, M. de Boishue and M. de St Rival, perished; and the exasperation on both sides soon became so excessive, that there is no saying to what it would have led, if the Count de Thiers had not interposed, and restored, for the time at least, a seeming tranquillity. Meantime, at the first intelligence of these alarms, crowds of ardent patriots flocked to Rennes from Nantes, Angers, and the neighbouring towns, eager to avenge the cause of the *Tiers Etat*; the nobles summoned the peasantry from their estates to defend them from violence, who appeared in multitudes eager for the affray; and the governor, who was enjoined by Necker not to use military force, but trust to "the persuasion and ascendant of virtue," only succeeded in preventing an immediate civil war by adjourning the estates until the public effervescence had subsided.* Nor were matters less serious in Provence, where the approach of the elections increased to an extraordinary degree the general enthusiasm; although the efforts of the noblesse, who there had great influence over the people, prevented the breaking-out of open hostilities. Notwithstanding all Mirabeau's influence, the nobles protested against the king's edict doubling the *Tiers Etat*; and declared that they would not submit to sending deputies to the States-General, but would proceed in a body, according to the ancient privilege of their order in the states of Dauphiné.¹ No prosecutions

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137.
Tumults in
Rennes and
in Dau-
phiné.Jan 26,
1789.

¹ Hist. Parl.
i. 202, 205.
Lab. ii. 359,
360. Prud-
homme,
Crimes de
la Révolu-
tion, i. 101.
Droz. ii.
132, 136.
Duval, i.
43, 45.

* To such a length did the general fervour proceed, that the women of Angers published an arrêté on 6th February 1789, in which they set forth—"Nous, mères, sœurs, épouses, et amantes, des jeunes citoyens de la ville d'Angers, assemblées extraordinairement, lecture faite des arrêtés de tous messieurs de la jeunesse: déclarons que si les troubles recommencent, et en cas de départ, tous les ordres des citoyens se réunissant pour la cause commune, nous nous joindrons à la nation, dont les intérêts sont les nôtres; nous reservant, la force n'étant notre partage, de prendre, pour nos fonctions et notre genre d'utilité, les soins des bagages, provisions, de bouche, préparatifs de départ, et tous les soins, consolations, et services qui dépendront de nous."—*Arrêté des Mères, Sœurs, Epouses, et Amantes, des jeunes citoyens d'Angers, 6th February 1789; Histoire Parlementaire, i. 292.*

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or punishments followed these disorders, either among the noblesse or the *Tiers Etat*; and Necker soon after published a general amnesty for all political offences in Brittany. This step increased the belief, already unhappily too general, that in political contests the government did not venture to punish even the most guilty; and that none ran any risk of ultimate responsibility but those who discharged their duty in repressing such disorders.

138.
Elections
at Paris.
March 28,
1789.

The elections in Paris, though they were of incomparably more importance, were attended with less disturbance, chiefly because the decided preponderance of the *Tiers Etat* rendered all attempts at a contest on the part of the nobles hopeless. By an ordinance issued by Necker on the 28th March 1789, the city was divided into sixty electoral districts, the inhabitants of which were to assemble in one day and choose their deputies, which were fixed at forty, of whom twenty were from the *Tiers Etat*, ten from the nobles, and ten from the clergy. Paris had the privilege, nowhere else enjoyed by the people of France, of choosing their deputies at once, without the intervention of delegates. So little was the importance of a qualification in the electors understood at that period, that a regulation practically amounting to household suffrage, was set forth in the royal edict, and excited hardly any attention.* The court was most anxious that the old custom of the president of the *Tiers Etat* addressing the king on his knees should be observed; but if this was done, it excited little interest whether or not the deputies were elected by universal suffrage. Great military preparations were made for preserving public tranquillity; but the elections passed off without disturbance. Twenty-five thousand electors, under this regulation, were admitted to the right of voting; a very great proportion in a city not at that period containing above six hundred thousand souls.¹ As might have been

April 21.

¹ Hist. Parl.
i. 310, 314.
Bailly, ii.
44. Lab.
ii. 376, 378.

* "Les habitans composant le Tiers Etat, nés Français, ou naturalisés, âgés de vingt-cinq ans, et domiciliés, auront droit d'assister à l'assemblée déterminée par le quartier dans lequel ils resident actuellement, en remplissant les conditions suivantes. Pour être admis dans l'assemblée de son quartier, il faudra pouvoir justifier d'un titre d'office, de grades dans une faculté, d'une commission ou emploi de lettres de maîtrise, ou enfin de la quittance ou avertissement de capitation, montant au moins à la somme de six livres (five shillings) en principal."—*Reglement du Roi*, 13 April 1789; *Histoire Parlementaire*, i. 307.

expected with such a suffrage, the whole twenty deputies of the *Tiers Etat* were chosen in the democratic interest ; the questions which were ere long so fiercely contested in the National Assembly were all agitated, and excited a vehement interest in the electoral chambers of Paris ; and already might be seen the germs of that towering ambition in the *Tiers Etat*, which ere long the limits of France and of Europe were unable to contain.

The most important part of the duty of the primary electors, next to that of choosing their representatives, was the drawing up of the cahiers, or statements of grievances and suggestions of remedies. They contained instructions to the deputies how to vote on all the principal questions which were expected to be brought forward, and therefore present an authentic record of what was generally desired by the people of France on the opening of the States-General. As might have been expected, the instructions to the representatives varied, generally speaking, according to the orders from which they emanated, though on some points there was a surprising unanimity. The instructions of the nobles, on the whole, were such as were calculated to uphold the interests of their order ; those of the clergy, to establish religion on a better basis, and ameliorate the condition of the inferior orders of the parish priests. An infinity of local abuses were pointed out, and remedies suggested, many of which were of course inconsistent with each other. But the majority of the cahiers demanded, on the part of all the orders together,* the removal of the chief abuses which had been experienced

139.
Cahiers, or
instructions
to the depu-
ties.

* The majority of the cahiers of the three orders concurred in demanding :—

1. Equality in punishments.
2. The suppression of the sale of public offices.
3. The redemption of feudal and seignorial rights.
4. The revision of the criminal code.
5. The establishment of tribunals to conciliate litigants.
6. The suppression of seignorial criminal powers.
_____ the right of Franc-fief.
_____ custom-house duties in the interior
_____ gabelles, aides, and corvées.
7. The fixing the expense of all the departments of the public service.
8. The extinction of the public debt.
9. Toleration of all religious sects, but the recognition of the religion of the greatest number as the dominant religion.
10. The amelioration of the condition of the curés.
11. The abolition of drawing for the militia.

—See *Rédaction des Cahiers*, par CLERMONT TONNERRE, 27th July 1789. *Parl. Hist. de France*, ii. 170, 175.

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in the practical administration of the country. The fundamental points, on which they were nearly all unanimous, were—that the person of the king was to be sacred and inviolable; that the crown was to be hereditary in the male line, and the king the depository of the executive power; the agents of authority responsible; the royal sanction indispensable to the promulgating of laws; that the States-General, with the sovereign, should make laws; that the consent of the nation should be necessary to taxes and loans; that taxes should not be legally imposed but from one sitting of the States-General to another. Private property was to be sacred as well as individual liberty, and *lettres-de-cachet* were to be abolished. All the cahiers expressed their attachment to the monarchical form of government; many, in touching terms, their affectionate regard for the person of the sovereign. Their general spirit was—“Concert with the king good laws for the nation;” not a few contained an express injunction to do nothing without his concurrence and sanction. When the National Assembly usurped the government, and centred in themselves the whole powers, executive as well as legislative, of the state, that ambitious body violated not less expressly the instructions of its constituents, than it committed treason alike against the royal authority and the cause of freedom.¹

¹ *Résumé des Cahiers*, par Clermont Tonnerre, July 27, 1789. *Parl. Hist.* ii. 99, 101. Droz, ii. 382. Lab. ii. 341, 343.

140. Vehement excitement which prevailed in Paris.

But though moderation and wisdom generally characterised the instructions of the cahiers, the case was very different in the clubs and coffeehouses of the capital. Already was to be seen, in the vehemence with which their inmates were agitated, and the enthusiasm with which the most violent and revolutionary doctrines were received, the most unequivocal proof of the near approach of a national convulsion. Such was the unparalleled multitude of pamphlets which issued from the press, that in the three last months of 1788 alone, they exceeded two thousand five hundred.* The general excitement increased when the result of the elections was known; for it was then ascertained that at least four-fifths of the deputies of the *Tiers Etat* were decided in their movement principles; that two-thirds of the clergy were of the same way of thinking; and that even in the nobles, a strong minority, with the Duke of Orleans

* “Quelqu’un en acheta 2500 dans les trois derniers mois de 1788, et sa collection était loin d’être complète.”—Droz, ii. 136.

and several of the oldest peers at its head, would support the union of the orders and the voting by head. Political regeneration was now therefore more than a visionary speculation. It had acquired a majority in the great ruling assembly: and it was obvious to all, that if the union of the orders and the voting by head could be established, the government would be overthrown, and society might be remodelled in all its parts, at the pleasure of the revolutionary leaders. To the attainment of these objects, accordingly, the whole efforts of the popular party were directed. Projects of radical change and an entire remodelling of society became universal; the sixty electoral halls of Paris became so many centres of political fervour, where, in anticipation of the States-General, all the great questions about to be canvassed in that assembly were nightly debated with inconceivable warmth, and that general agitation was observable in the public mind, which is the invariable precursor of political catastrophes. Yet so little were the leaders of the movement aware of the tendency of this universal excitement, that, so far from anticipating the general overthrow of society from the convocation of the States-General, their only fear was that they would do nothing. "The States-General," said the Duke of Orleans, "will not effect the reform of a single abuse, not even of *lettres-de-cachet*."¹

An event, however, soon occurred in the capital, calculated, if any thing could, to open the eyes of Necker to the perilous and ungovernable nature of the spirit he had evoked. In the Faubourg Saint Antoine, a celebrated manufacturer of furniture papers, named Reveillon, had long been at the head of a wealthy and prosperous establishment, which gave employment to three hundred persons. Indulgent and humane in the extreme to all in his employment, he was adored by his workmen, and respected by every person of worth within the sphere of his acquaintance. But these very qualities rendered him obnoxious to the Revolutionists, who were envious of worth which they could not imitate, and jealous of influence emanating from others than themselves. They gave out that he was an aristocrat, who was practising these arts in order to render the noblesse popular in the district where popular power had its principal stronghold, and that he had said

¹ Lab. ii. 376, 377. Genlis, Mém. iii. 258. Droz, ii. 158, 159. Vie de Siéyes, p. 20. Marmontel, Mém. ii. 296.

141.
Riot at Reveillon's. April 27.

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April 27.

¹ Droz, ii.
168 Lab.
ii. 383, 384.
Prudhom.
Crimes de la
Rév iii. 77.

142.
Destruction
of Reveil-
lon's manu-
factory, and
violent tu-
mult to
which it
gave rise.
April 28.

his workmen could subsist on fifteen sous a-day—a smaller sum than was adequate for the support of their children. So far were these calumnies from being true, that, having risen by his good conduct from being a common workman, he had, in consequence of his known benevolence of disposition, and interest in the welfare of the poor, been shortly before named one of the commissioners for drawing up the cahiers for the *Tiers Etat* of Paris. In the present excited state of the public mind, however, the leaders of the populace could make them believe any thing. On the evening of the 27th April, while Reveillon was at the elections, a crowd, which soon swelled to six thousand persons, issued from the Faubourg St Marceau, burnt him in effigy before his door, and declared they would return on the following night, and consume himself in good earnest, with all his establishment. They were as good as their word.¹

Early on the following morning a hideous crowd, armed with clubs, sabres, and old muskets, arrived in the Rue Montreuil, where Reveillon's manufactory was situated, and with loud shouts and direful imprecations commenced the work of destruction. A body of thirty police, who, at Reveillon's request, had been stationed in the vicinity to preserve order, were unable to resist a mob which soon swelled to six thousand persons: a few courageous workmen, whom he had armed in his defence, were overpowered; and a furious mob, shouting "Vive le Duc d'Orleans," "Vive le successeur du Bon Henri," burst open the doors, and instantly filled every apartment in the building. Reveillon himself narrowly escaped destruction from these bloodthirsty assassins; but his house and manufactory were utterly sacked, and soon after reduced to ashes. His cellars were broken open, and the wine drunk amidst loud cheers; the furniture and rich stock of papers all committed to the flames, and every thing portable carried off or destroyed. Towards evening the troops arrived, consisting of three regiments, with two pieces of artillery, under the command of the Baron Besenval. He thrice ordered the mob to disperse and evacuate the premises; but, thinking the military would not fire, they treated the summons with derision. The guards then received orders to expel them by force; they made their way with fixed

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¹ Duval,
Souv. de
la Terreur,
i. 23, 26.
Prudhom.
iii. 75, 77.
Besenval,
i. 345, 347.
Bertrand
de Molle-
ville, Hist.
de la Rév.
i. 136, 137.

bayonets into the courtyard, and were received by a shower of stones and burning rafters from the ravaged edifice, which killed and wounded several soldiers. Regular volleys were then fired by the troops, and they at length drove the mob, who fought with desperation, out of the burned premises. A frightful scene presented itself; drunken brigands, half-burned, were lying on all sides, many of them expiring in the most dreadful tortures, from the sulphuric and other acids used in the manufactory, which they had swallowed in their frenzy, taking them for spirits. At length the disgraceful assemblage was dispersed; but not before two hundred of the insurgents had been killed, and three hundred wounded in the contest.¹

Baron Besenval was warmly applauded by all persons of worth and sense in Paris for this seasonable act of vigour, which, if duly followed up and imitated in subsequent times, would probably have arrested the whole horrors of the Revolution. But it was otherwise at the court; he was coldly received there; and no one even mentioned to him a circumstance, so evidently calculated, according to the manner in which it was received and acted upon, to determine the course of future events. No prosecutions took place: none of the guilty persons were arrested: no investigations, even, were instituted regarding it.* Necker's system of conciliation and concession, and the king's horror at the shedding of blood, made them on this occasion forget the first duty of government, that of protecting life and property. Meanwhile, the Orleans and movement party at Paris, as usual in such cases, unable to palliate the excesses of the insurgents, endeavoured to lay the blame of them on others. It was the court who had secretly provoked the tumult, in order to give them an excuse for introducing troops into the capital: it was English gold which had bought the riot, to stain the Revolution in its outset with blood, and for ever debar France from those blessings which Great Britain had long enjoyed. The character of the king and of Necker sufficiently demon-

143.
Who was
the author
of this tu-
mult.

* Two of the rioters were hung by the provost-marshal in the act of plundering, several prisoners were made, and the parliament commenced an investigation. In a few days, however, they were all liberated, and the enquiry was stopped, some said in consequence of orders from the king, others from discovery of the exalted personages whom the enquiry would implicate.—Droz, ii. 171.

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strate the absurdity of the first hypothesis: for the last, the French historians now confess there never has been discovered a vestige of evidence.* Machiavelli's maxim, "If you would discover the author of a crime, consider who had an *interest* to commit it," enables us to solve the mystery. The States-General were on the eve of meeting: by vigorous measures the union of the orders might be effected: the whole members were already arrived in Paris: every thing would depend on intimidating the court, and giving a striking example of popular power at that decisive crisis. The cries of the insurgents when they broke into Reveillon's premises, pointing to the Duke of Orleans as the successor of Henry IV.; the five-franc pieces found in the pockets of the dead rioters; the large sums spent by the mob in the neighbouring cabarets; the concert and vigour of their operations; the number of them who did not belong to Paris, and had come for that special purpose—evidently point to the source from whence this first great outrage of the Revolution proceeded.¹

¹ Droz, ii.
170, 171.
Lab. ii.
386, 387.
Besenval, ii.
347. Duval,
i. 25, 27.

144.
Necker's
views on the
union of the
orders.

Neither, however, the fervour which had become universal in the middle classes of society, nor the savage passions which had displayed themselves among the lower, could shake Necker in his determination to accede to the wishes of the *Tiers Etat*, and permit, at least to a certain extent, the union of the three orders in one chamber. A devout believer in human perfectibility, unbounded in his confidence in the wisdom and virtue of the middle class of society, he could not be brought to believe that any risk was to be apprehended from the intermingling of their representatives with those of the nobles and clergy.† On the contrary, he saw the greatest possible danger, and a prolongation of the whole difficulties of government, in

* "De nombreuses recherches ont été faites pour decouvrir si le gouvernement Anglais avait pris une part active à nos premiers troubles, et n'ont donné contre lui aucune apparence de preuve. C'est plus tard qu'il s'est mêlé de nos affaires."—Droz, *Histoire de Louis XVI.*, ii. 270.

† "Enfin et pourquoi le dissimularais-je? Je m'associais de tous mes vœux aux espérances de la nation, et je ne les croyais point vaines. Hélas! peut-on songer aujourd'hui à l'attente universelle de tous les bons Français, de tous les amis de l'humanité—le peut-on sans verser des larmes? Les uns se disaient, Enfin le trésor de l'état ne sera plus à la merci d'un ministre des finances; il ne sera plus dans la dépendance de ses vices ou de ses combinaisons personnelles; une assemblée composée d'hommes élus par la nation fixera les dépenses publiques en les proportionant d'une main ferme à l'étendue des revenus; *aucun écart ne sera possible*, et le monarque lui-même sera mis à couvert de ses erreurs, et de ses regrets. Que de richesses d'opinion seront alors créées!"—NECKER, *Sur la Révolution*, i. 52.

their exclusion. It was this opinion, the result of inexperience, and of the general reluctance of well-meaning but speculative men to believe in the wickedness of those with whom they have not been brought in contact, which even his warmest and ablest supporters admit was his fatal error at this decisive moment.* He had not moral courage enough to fix by a royal edict in what way the votes were to be taken in the States-General; and yet he had resolved in his own mind that the separation of the orders could not be maintained, and that the sooner and the more quietly the fusion took place the better. His great object was to get the privileged classes themselves to concede at once, and with a good grace, what could not ultimately be avoided; and in this way alone, he maintained, the dangers of the crisis could be averted. Thus, well knowing to what the general opinion was pointing, he left the matter, so far as authority went, unsettled—the most perilous course which could at such a moment by possibility have been adopted; for it stimulated revolt at the very time when it was most dangerous, and prepared from success the fatal belief, alike in its supporters and opponents, that popular power was irresistible.¹

It may appear strange how a monarch, possessing the good sense and penetration which distinguished Louis XVI., and who had had such ample experience, in the preceding parts of his reign, of the futility of all hopes of social regeneration founded on the expectation of disinterested virtue in mankind, should have been led away by these illusions; the more especially as he was so far from being blinded by the foolish Anglomania then generally prevalent, that he entertained a thorough, perhaps even an exaggerated distrust, of every thing adopted from an English model. But the secret reason which inclined him to go into Necker's views of the fusion of the orders was this—and when once stated its force becomes very apparent.

¹ Necker's Reflections sur la Rév. i. 175, 195. De Staël, i. 210, 213. Smyth's Fr. Rev. i. 151, 152.

145.
Reasons which led Louis XVI. to adopt these views of Necker.

* "Après ses devoirs religieux, l'opinion publique était ce que l'occupait le plus: il sacrifiait la fortune, les honneurs, tout ce que les ambitieux recherchent, à l'estime de la nation; et cette voix du peuple, alors non encore altérée, avait pour lui quelque chose de divin. Le moindre nuage sur sa réputation était la plus grande souffrance que les choses de la vie pussent lui causer. Le but mondain de ses actions, le vent de terre qui le faisait naviguer, c'était l'amour de la considération. Pendant 1788, M. Necker étudia constamment l'esprit public comme la boussole à laquelle les décisions du roi devaient se conformer."—DE STAËL, *Rév. Franc.* i. 94, 172

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His whole life had been one continued contest with his subjects ; but it was with the higher classes alone that he had been brought into collision, and their selfish, obstinate resistance to any social amelioration, or just measures of any kind, had profoundly afflicted his benevolent heart. The necessities of the exchequer absolutely required a consent on the part of the nation to increased burdens ; but he had found, by experience, that all attempts to get the privileged classes either to submit to taxation themselves, or register them so as to render them a legal burden on others, were ineffectual. Finally, he had been personally hurt at the determined resistance of the Notables to his just proposal for an equalization of the public burdens, and not less so at the impassioned resistance of all the parliaments of France, and the nobles of Brittany and Dauphiné, to his *cour plénière* and relative ameliorations.¹

¹ Necker, i.
86, 97, 135.

146.
Their pernicious results.

He had thus, not unnaturally, come to entertain a belief, that still, as in feudal times, the real antagonist power which the crown had to contend with was that of the noblesse, who seemed now determined only on maintaining their own unjust privileges, to the entire stoppage of all measures likely to conduce to the public good ; and that it was by a union with the *Tiers Etat* only that the king could either obtain the supplies requisite for carrying on the government, or be enabled to establish the ameliorations become essential in the public administration. To accomplish these objects, a union of orders and voting by head appeared to be indispensable ; for every project for the public good would be thrown out by the selfish resistance of the privileged classes in their separate houses. Referring to the past, these views appeared to be entirely supported by French history : for it was by elevating the boroughs, and relying on the support of the commons, that Louis XI., and after him Cardinal Richelieu, had reared up a counterpoise to the power of the feudal nobility. And yet this opinion overturned the monarchy, in consequence of the fatal mistake which it involved—that of supposing that the principal thing to be done was the discovering means to overcome the resistance of the nobles, whereas the real point was to erect a barrier, by the combination of all the power and property in the kingdom, against the encroachments of the people.

Another instance, among the numerous ones which history affords, of the important truth, that while experience is the only secure guidance for the statesman, it is experience in *parallel circumstances* that is alone to be relied on; and that, in the perpetual change of human affairs, the highest effort of political wisdom is to discern correctly when that similarity of circumstances has taken place.¹

The French Revolution, the greatest and most impassioned effort ever made by man for the attainment of public freedom, has failed in its object; and failed not only at the time but for ever. This is now generally admitted alike by its supporters and opponents; nor can it be denied by any with the slightest show of reason, when it is recollected that, at this moment, (1843,) half a century after the Revolution broke out, and after its progress has been marked by unutterable calamities, the electors of France are under two hundred thousand: that they are confined to the class of proprietors, and the whole remainder of the nation is wholly unrepresented: that no habeas corpus act, or restraint upon prolonged imprisonment, has yet been established: that the odious fetters of the police system are unremoved; that the taxes are twice as heavy, the standing army twice as large, the land-tax twice as burdensome as they were before the Revolution: that Paris is permanently garrisoned by forty thousand regular soldiers, and restrained by a girdle of forts placed around its suburbs; and that the whole remainder of France is obliged to submit without a murmur to any government which the dominant capital chooses to impose. Rejecting, as contrary alike to reason and religion, and as decisively disproved by the examples of Rome in ancient, and Great Britain in modern times, the gloomy doctrine that such consequences are the unavoidable result of the struggles of a great nation for freedom, the question recurs—the all-important question—What has occasioned this failure? And it will be evident to every candid observer that the cause of it is to be found, not in any stern necessity, but in that common fountain of social and individual evil—the selfishness and guilt of the persons entrusted with its direction. And the important question here occurs—*Who did wrong in this stage of the Revolution?*

I. The whole nation, and, in an especial manner, the

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¹ Necker, i.
135, 175, 176.
De Staël, i.
241, 247.

147.

Who did
wrong at
this period
of the Re-
volution?

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The forcing
of the king
into the
American
war.

popular and democratic leaders, were in fault in forcing the king, alike against his own judgment and that of his queen and council, to engage in the American war. That aggression, alike unjust towards an allied and friendly power, and inexpedient as tending to render inextricable the already alarming embarrassments of the exchequer, contributed powerfully to bring on the Revolution. It at once doubled the strength of the democratic party, by combining national rivalry of England with a contest of an insurgent people against their government, and halved the power of resistance in the crown, by the vast addition which it made to the national debt, at a time when the selfish resistance of the parliaments to the registering of new taxes rendered it impossible to make any lasting provision for the payment even of its interest. National bankruptcy or a revolution were rendered unavoidable by forcing the king into such a contest, at a time when the state of the finances and the temper of the public mind made it impossible to provide for its expenses.

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Fault of the
nobles and
clergy in
resisting
equal taxa-
tion.

II. The nobles and clergy did wrong in refusing to equalize the public burdens, and relinquish their exclusive privileges in the matter of taxation. This was not merely a flagrant piece of injustice towards their fellow-citizens, then burdened exclusively with the heaviest part of the direct taxes, but a manifest dereliction of duty—it may almost be said an act of treachery—towards their sovereign in the predicament into which they had brought him. They had cordially concurred with the *Tiers Etat* in forcing him into the American war, which had so immensely increased the embarrassments of the treasury; they had for long drawn the chief benefit from those numerous civil and military offices which constituted so large a part of the public expenditure; and they had strenuously and successfully resisted the numerous efforts made by the king and his ministers to reduce this unnecessary part of the national charges. It was in an especial manner incumbent on them, therefore, to contribute their fair proportion to the national income, and relieve the king from the perplexity into which, by their efforts and for their benefit, he had been brought. Instead of this, they refused to depart from one jota of their exclusive privileges, and without doing or suggesting any thing whatever to save their sovereign or

their country, contented themselves with opposing an inert passive resistance to every project calculated either to increase the public income, or remove the grievances that were complained of. Whoever has had practical acquaintance with the almost invincible repugnance of mankind generally, and of none more than the highest landed proprietors of every country, to direct taxation, even for the most useful and necessary purposes, if not absolutely called for by dangers which strike the senses, will have no difficulty in appreciating both the magnitude of the embarrassment which this resistance imposed on the sovereign, and of the guilt of those who, for their own selfish purposes, occasioned it.

III. The parliament of Paris, and the other parliaments of France, did wrong in refusing, in the manner they did, to register the loans and taxes which the king sent to them for their sanction. That this power with which they were constitutionally invested, of refusing their consent to new taxes, was a most important one, and constituted the only barrier remaining against despotic power, is indeed certain. If, therefore, they had made use of it to compel the sovereign to abrogate pernicious privileges, or consent to salutary improvements, they would have been real patriots, and deserved the eternal gratitude of mankind. But though, under the corruptions of the preceding reign, they had often done this, under the beneficent rule of the patriotic Louis the case was very different. They then showed no disposition to concur in the reforms of the sovereign; suggested little or nothing for social amelioration; sturdily resisted all such when introduced by the government; threw out all attempts to subject themselves to the common burdens of the state; but contented themselves with a determined resistance to the imposition of any new taxes, even though rendered necessary by the American war, for which they had so loudly clamoured, and though plainly indispensable to save the nation from national bankruptcy. The pretext for this conduct, viz. that they were entitled to have the public accounts submitted to them before they consented to new taxes, was a manifest usurpation. What right had they, who were not the representatives of any portion of the people, but simple magistrates, invested with judicial functions, in virtue of

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The Parliaments did wrong in refusing to register the taxes.

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offices which they had bought for money, to erect themselves into a states-general or privy council, entitled to examine and control the whole administration of government? Even if they had possessed such a power, was it expedient to assert it, to the effect of involving the king in inextricable pecuniary embarrassments, and convulsing the nation by the convocation of the States-General, at the very time when the unparalleled excitement in the public mind rendered it evident that such a step was fraught with the utmost danger both to the stability of the monarchy and to the cause of freedom?

IV. Necker as clearly erred in the regulations which he laid down in the royal edict of 27th December, for the convocation of the States-General. The effect of these concessions has thus been described by the man in existence who gained most by the Revolution, Napoleon Buonaparte. "The concessions of Necker were the work of a man ignorant of the first principles of the government of mankind. It was he who overturned the monarchy, and brought Louis XVI. to the scaffold. Marat, Danton, Robespierre himself, did less mischief to France: he brought on the Revolution, which they consummated. Such reformers as M. Necker do incredible mischief. The thoughtful read their works; the populace are carried away by them; the public happiness is in every mouth; and soon after, the people find themselves without bread: they revolt, and society is overturned. Necker was the author of all the evils which desolated France during the Revolution; all the blood that was shed rests on his head."¹ Making every allowance for the despotic feelings which so strongly characterised the French Emperor, it is impossible to deny that there is much truth in these observations. Admitting that a struggle was inevitable, the question remains, Was it expedient to make so extraordinary an addition to the *powers* of the people at such a crisis; to double the number of the popular representatives on the eve of a conflict? The result proved that it was not. It was intended to conciliate; it had the effect of alienating: it was meant to attach the people to the throne; it made them combine for its overthrow: it was designed to produce oblivion of past injury; it induced ambition of future elevation.

Timely concession, it is frequently said, is the only way

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Necker's fatal error in the convocation of the States-General. Effect of his concessions.

¹ Bour. viii. 109.

to prevent a revolution. The observation is just in one sense, but erroneous in another; and it is by attending to the distinction between the two great objects of popular ambition, that the means can alone be attained of allaying public discontent, without unhinging the frame of society. There is, in the first place, the love of freedom—that is, of immunity from personal restriction, oppression, or injury. This principle is perfectly innocent, and never exists without producing the happiest effects. Every concession which is calculated to increase this species of liberty, is comparatively safe in all ages, and in all places. But there is another principle, strong at all times, but especially to be dreaded in moments of excitement. This is the principle of democratic ambition; the desire on the part of the people of exercising the powers of sovereignty; of usurping the government of the state. This is the dangerous principle; the desire not of exercising industry without molestation, but of exerting power without control. The first principle will only produce disturbances when real evils are felt; and with the removal of actual grievance, tranquillity may be anticipated. The second frequently produces convulsions, independent of any real cause of complaint; or, if it has been excited by such, it continues after they have been removed. The first never spreads by mere contagion; the second is frequently most virulent when the disease has been contracted in this manner.

It was not the mere duplication of the *Tiers Etat* which was attended with these disastrous effects. That measure, if proper care had been taken to confine the right of voting for the delegates to persons possessed of an adequate property qualification, and the right of sitting in the States-General to men of respectability, and if the separation of the orders had been preserved, would have been attended with little peril. It was the combination of no property qualification in electors, delegates, or representatives, with that duplication, and the leaving the question of voting by orders or head at the same time unsettled, which was the fatal error. At the very moment when three millions of electors—a number above triple that of those who now hold the franchise among a larger number of inhabitants in the British empire*—were suddenly, and for the first

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Limits of
conciliation
and conces-
sion.

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What con-
stituted the
great error
of Necker's
measures.

* At this time, under the combination of the Reform and original con-

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time, admitted to a right of choosing representatives, for the avowed purpose of reconstructing and regenerating the monarchy, the number of these representatives in the States-General was doubled, and no restraint whatever was imposed by government on the prevailing and all-absorbing passion for an union of the orders. What was to be expected from such a step but the total overthrow of society? How long would Great Britain, with its sober temperament, practical habits, and centuries of freedom, withstand a similar strain? Not three months. What then was to be expected from the ardent passions, excited feelings, and unbounded enthusiasm of the people of France, roused to the highest pitch by the visions of political regeneration, and then admitted for the first time to the exercise of the highest and most perilous political power?

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Effect of
Necker's
concession.

In moments of political agitation, it should be the object of the statesman to remove all real causes of complaint, but firmly to resist all rapid encroachments of popular ambition. All restrictions upon personal liberty, industry, or property; all oppressive taxes; all odious personal distinctions—should be abandoned; all prosecutions calculated to inflame the passions, and convert a demagogue into a martyr, should be avoided. If punishment is required, the mildest which the case will admit should be chosen; in selecting the species of prosecution, the least vindictive should be preferred. The inflicting of death should, above all things, be shunned, unless for crimes which public feeling has stigmatized as worthy of that penalty. But having conceded thus much to the principles of justice, and the growth of freedom, all attempts at a sudden increase of the power of the people should be steadily opposed, and nothing conceded which tends to awaken democratic passion. In so far as Necker laboured to relieve the real evils of France; in so far as he sought to re-establish the finances, curb the powers of the nobles, emancipate the industry of the peasants, purify the administration of justice, his labours were wise and beneficial, and he did all that man can do, to terminate the oppression, and avert the disasters, of his country. In so far as

stitution of Great Britain and Ireland, there are 930,000 electors among a population of 27,000,000, or 1 in 30 nearly. In France, on occasion of the election of the States-General, 3,000,000 electors voted out of 25,000,000 persons, or somewhat above 1 in 8.

he yielded to public clamour, or the fatal thirst for popular applause, and conceded unnecessarily to the ambition of the people; in so far as he departed, with undue rapidity, from ancient institutions, to acquire temporary popularity, he deserves the censure of posterity, and is answerable for all the disasters which ensued.

The talent of using political power so as not to abuse it, is one of the last acquisitions of mankind, and can be gained only by many ages of protected industry and experienced freedom. It can seldom with safety be extended to any considerable body of the people, and this least of all in a nation just emerging from the fetters of servitude. Unless the growth of political influence in the lower orders has been as gradual as the changes of time, or the insensible extension of day in spring, it will infallibly destroy the personal freedom which constitutes its principal object. A certain intermixture of the democratic spirit is often indispensable to the extrication of individual liberty, just as a certain degree of warmth is requisite to vivify and cherish animal life: but, unless the fire is restrained within narrow limits, it will consume those who are exposed to its fierceness, not less in political than private life.

The love of real freedom may always be distinguished from the passion for popular power. The first is directed to objects of practical importance and the redress of experienced wrongs; the second aims at visionary improvement and the increase of democratic influence. The one complains of what has been felt, the other anticipates what may be gained. Disturbances arising from the first subside, when the evils from which they spring are removed; troubles originating in the second magnify with every victory which is achieved. The experience of evil is the cause of agitation from the first; the love of power the source of convulsions from the last. Reform and concessions are the remedies appropriate to the former; steadiness and resistance the means of extinguishing the flame arising from the latter. The passion of love is not more dependent on the smiles of beauty, than democratic passion on the hope of successive augmentations of power. It is the intention of nature, that the power of the people should increase as society advances; but it is

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Slow growth
of the ability
to wield
political
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between the
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not her intention that this increase should take place in such a way as to convulse the state, and ultimately extinguish their own freedom. All improvements that are really beneficial, all changes which are destined to be lasting, are gradual in their progress. It is by suddenly increasing the power of the lower orders that the frame of society is endangered, because the immediate effect of such a change is to unsettle men's minds, and bring into full play the most visionary and extravagant ideas of the most desperate and ambitious men. Such an effect was produced in France by the duplication of the *Tiers Etat* and the union of the orders in 1788; and similar consequences will, in all ages, be found to attend the concession of great political powers, at a period of more than ordinary political excitation.

"No revolution," says Madame de Staël, "can succeed in a great country, unless it is commenced by the aristocratic class; the people afterwards get possession of it, but they cannot strike the first blow. When I recollect that it was the parliaments, the nobles, and the clergy, who first strove to limit the royal authority, I am far from intending to insinuate that their design in so doing was culpable. A sincere enthusiasm then animated all ranks of Frenchmen; public spirit had spread universally, and among the higher classes, the most enlightened and generous were those who ardently desired that public opinion should have its due sway in the direction of affairs. But can the privileged ranks, who commenced the Revolution, accuse those who only carried it on? Some will say, we wished only that the changes should proceed a certain length; others, that they should go a step further; but who can regulate the impulse of a great people, when once put in motion?"¹ A heavy responsibility attaches to those of the higher ranks, who, during periods of agitation, support the demands of the populace for a sudden increase of power, instead of directing their desires to what may really benefit them, the redress of experienced evils. On their heads rest all the disasters and bloodshed which necessarily follow in their train. It is difficult to say which are most worthy of reprobation; the haughty aristocrats, who resist every attempt at practical improvement when it can be done with safety, or the factious

157.

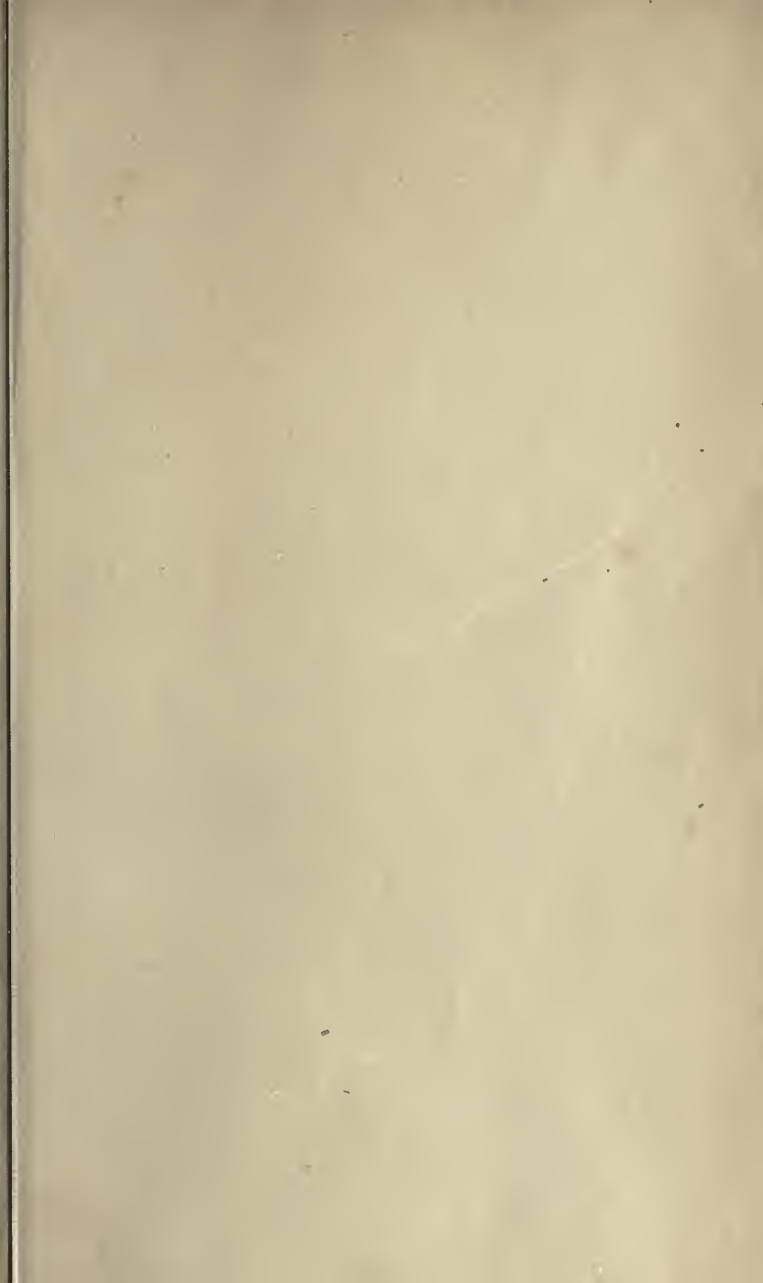
Revolution
headed by
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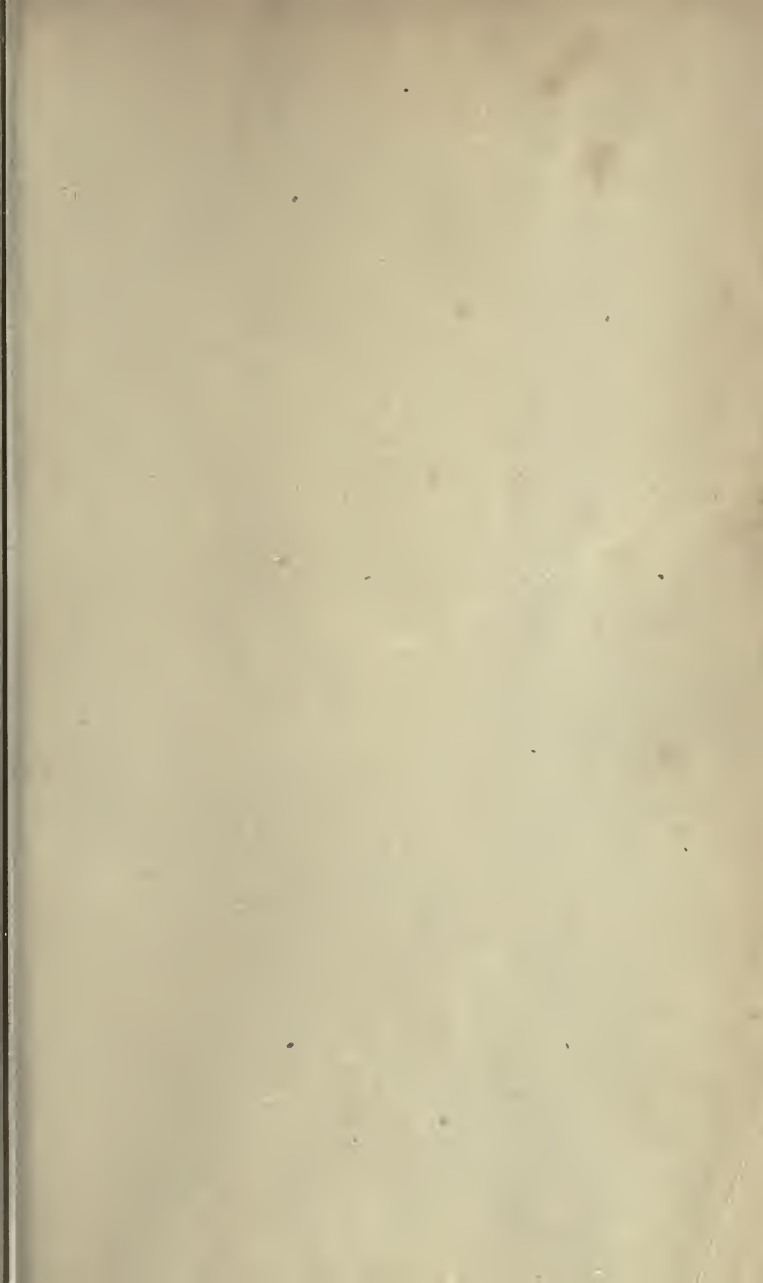
¹ Rév.
Franc., i.
125.

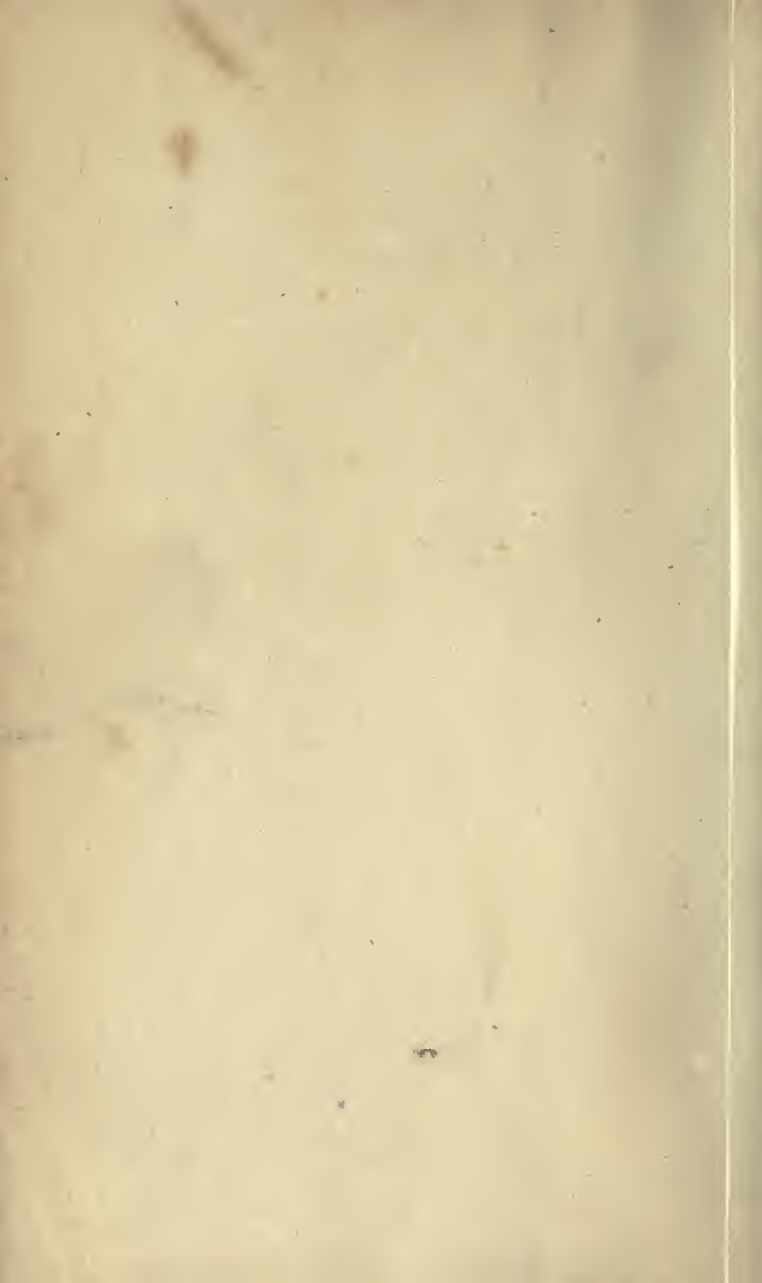
demagogues, who urge on additions to popular power when it threatens society with convulsions. The true patriot is the reverse of both ; he will, in every situation, attach himself to the party which resists the evils that threaten his country ; in periods when liberty is endangered, he will side with the popular, in moments of agitation, support the monarchical party.

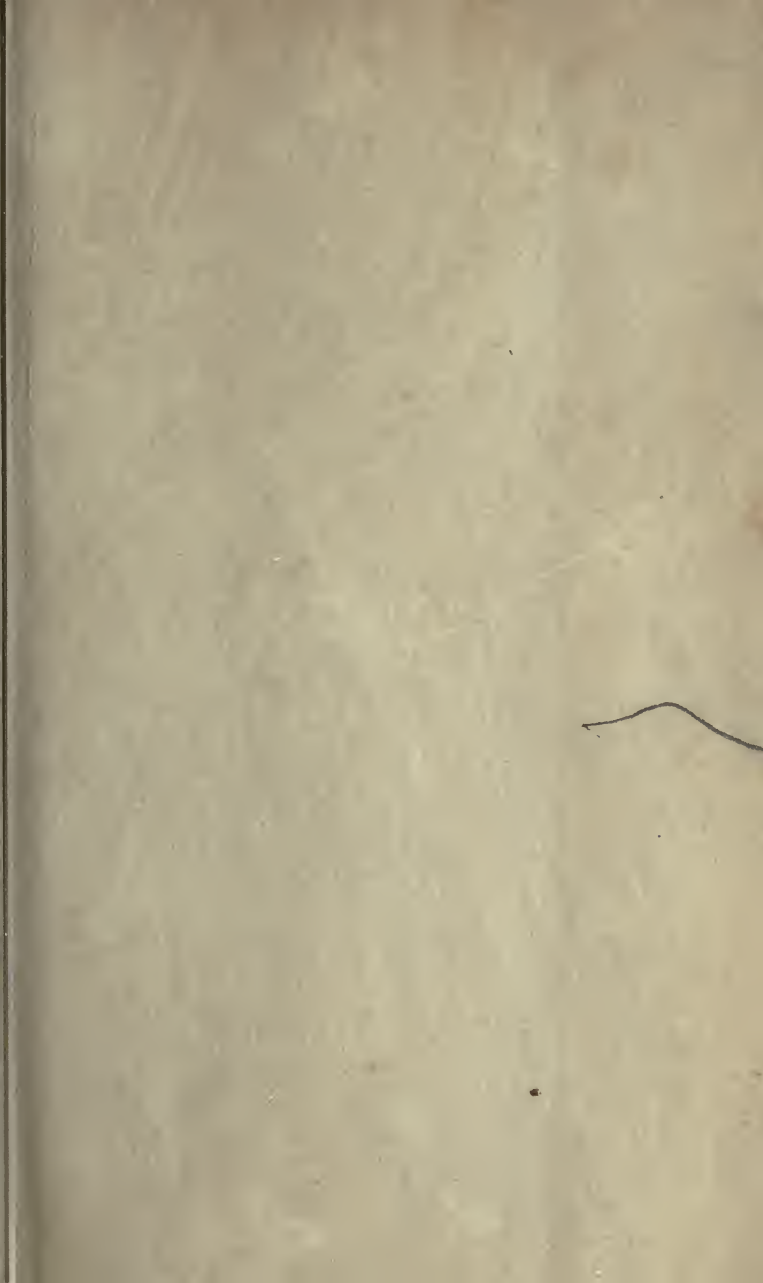
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