



FRENCH REVOLUTION
VOL. I.
—
THOMAS CARLYLE







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THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION:

A HISTORY.

BY

THOMAS CARLYLE.

Μέγα ὁ ἀγὼν ἔστι, θεῖον γὰρ ἔργον· ὑπὲρ βασιλείας, ὑπὲρ ἐλευθερίας, ὑπὲρ εὐροίας, ὑπὲρ ἀταραξίας. *ARRIANUS.*

Δόγμα γὰρ αὐτῶν τίς μεταβάλλει; χωρὶς δὲ δογμάτων μεταβολῆς, τί ἄλλο ἢ δουλεία στενόντων καὶ πείθεσθαι προσποιουμένων; *ANTONINUS.*

[1837.]

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

THE BASTILLE.

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Diesem Ambos vergleich' ich das Land, den Hammer dem Herrscher ;
Und dem Volke das Blech, das in der Mitte sich krümmt.
Wehe dem armen Blech, wenn nur willkürliche Schläge
Ungewiss treffen, und nie fertig der Kessel erscheint !

GOETHE.

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THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION.



THE BASTILLE.

BOOK FIRST.

DEATH OF LOUIS XV.

CHAPTER I.

LOUIS THE WELL-BELOVED.

PRESIDENT HÉNAULT, remarking on royal Surnames of Honour how difficult it often is to ascertain not only why, but even when, they were conferred, takes occasion, in his sleek official way, to make a philosophical reflection. ‘The Surname of *Bien-aimé* (Well-beloved),’ says he, ‘which Louis XV. bears, will not leave posterity in the same doubt. This Prince, in the year 1744, while hastening from one end of his kingdom to the other, and suspending his conquests in Flanders that he might fly to the assistance of Alsace, was arrested at Metz by a malady which threatened to cut short his days. At the news of this, Paris, all in terror, seemed a city taken by storm: the churches resounded with supplications and groans; the prayers of priests and people were every moment interrupted by their sobs: and it was from an interest so dear and tender that this Surname

'of *Bien-aimé* fashioned itself,—a title higher still than all the rest which this great Prince has earned.'¹

So stands it written; in lasting memorial of that year 1744. Thirty other years have come and gone; and 'this great Prince' again lies sick; but in how altered circumstances now! Churches resound not with excessive groanings; Paris is stoically calm: sobs interrupt no prayers, for indeed none are offered; except Priests' Litanies, read or chanted at fixed money-rate per hour, which are not liable to interruption. The shepherd of the people has been carried home from Little Trianon, heavy of heart, and been put to bed in his own Château of Versailles: the flock knows it, and heeds it not. At most, in the immeasurable tide of French Speech (which ceases not day after day, and only ebbs towards the short hours of night), may this of the royal sickness emerge from time to time as an article of news. Bets are doubtless depending; nay, some people 'express themselves loudly in the streets.'² But for the rest, on green field and steepled city, the May sun shines out, the May evening fades; and men ply their useful or useless business as if no Louis lay in danger.

Dame Dubarry, indeed, might pray, if she had a talent for it; Duke d'Aiguillon too, Maupeou and the Parlement Maupeou: these, as they sit in their high places, with France harnessed under their feet, know well on what basis they continue there. Look to it, D'Aiguillon; sharply as thou didst, from the Mill of St. Cast, on Quiberon and the invading English; thou, 'covered if not with glory yet with meal!' Fortune was ever accounted inconstant: and each dog has but his day.

Forlorn enough languished Duke d'Aiguillon, some years ago; covered, as we said, with meal; nay with worse. For La Chalotais, the Breton Parlemeuteer, accused him not only of poltroonery and tyranny, but even of *concuSSION* (official plunder of money); which accusations it was easier to get 'quashed' by backstairs Influences than to get answered: neither could the thoughts, or even the tongues, of men be tied. Thus, under disastrous eclipse, had this grand-nephew of the great Richelieu to glide about; unworshipped by the world;

¹ *Abrégé Chronologique de l'Histoire de France* (Paris, 1775), p. 701.

² *Mémoires de M. le Baron Besenval* (Paris, 1805), ii. 59-90.

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resolute Choiseul, the abrupt proud man, disdaining him, or even forgetting him. Little prospect but to glide into Gascony, to rebuild Châteaux there,³ and die inglorious killing game! However, in the year 1770, a certain young soldier, Dumouriez by name, returning from Corsica, could see 'with sorrow, at Compiègne, the old King of France, on foot, with doffed hat, in sight of his army, at the side of a magnificent phaeton, doing homage to the—Dubarry.'⁴

Much lay therein! Thereby, for one thing, could D'Aiguillon postpone the rebuilding of his Château, and rebuild his fortunes first. For stout Choiseul would discern in the Dubarry nothing but a wonderfully dizened Scarlet-woman; and go on his way as if she were not. Intolerable: the source of sighs, tears, of pettings and poutings; which would not end till 'France' (La France, as she named her royal valet) finally mustered heart to see Choiseul; and with that 'quivering in the chin (*tremblement du menton*)' natural in such case,⁵ faltered out a dismissal: dismissal of his last substantial man, but pacification of his scarlet-woman. Thus D'Aiguillon rose again, and culminated. And with him there rose Maupeou, the banisher of Parlements; who plants you a refractory President 'at Croe in Combrailles on the top of steep rocks, inaccessible except by litters,' there to consider himself. Likewise there rose Abbé Terray, dissolute Financier, paying eightpence in the shilling,—so that wits exclaim in some press at the playhouse, "Where is Abbé Terray, that he might reduce us to two-thirds!" And so have these individuals (verily by black-art) built them a Domdaniel, or enchanted Dubarrydom; call it an Armida-Palace, where they dwell pleasantly; Chancellor Maupeou 'playing blind-man's-buff' with the scarlet Enchantress; or gallantly presenting her with dwarf Negroes;—and a Most Christian King has unspeakable peace within doors, whatever he may have without. "My Chancellor is a scoundrel; but I cannot do without him."⁶

Beautiful Armida-Palace, where the inmates live enchanted lives; lapped in soft music of adulation; waited on by the

³ Arthur Young, *Travels during the years 1787-88-89* (Bury St. Edmunds, 1792), i. 44.

⁴ *La Vie et les Mémoires du Général Dumouriez* (Paris, 1822), i. 141.

⁵ Besenval, *Mémoires*, ii. 21.

⁶ Dulaure, *Histoire de Paris* (Paris, 1824), vii. 328.

splendours of the world ;—which nevertheless hangs wondrously as by a single hair. Should the Most Christian King die ; or even get seriously afraid of dying ! For, alas, had not the fair haughty Chateauroux to fly, with wet cheeks and flaming heart, from that Fever-scene at Metz, long since ; driven forth by sour shavelings ? She hardly returned, when fever and shavelings were both swept into the background. Pompadour too, when Damiens wounded Royalty ‘slightly, under the fifth rib,’ and our drive to Trianon went off futile, in shrieks and madly shaken torches,—had to pack, and be in readiness : yet did not go, the wound not proving poisoned. For his Majesty has religious faith ; believes, at least in a Devil. And now a third peril ; and who knows what may be in it ! For the Doctors look grave ; ask privily, If his Majesty had not the small-pox long ago ?—and doubt it may have been a false kind. Yes, Maupeou, pucker those sinister brows of thine, and peer out on it with thy malign rat-eyes : it is a questionable case. Sure only that man is mortal ; that with the life of one mortal snaps irrevocably the wonderfulest talisman, and all Dubarrydom rushes off, with tumult, into infinite Space ; and ye, as subterranean Apparitions are wont, vanish utterly,—leaving only a smell of sulphur !

These, and what holds of these may pray,—to Beelzebub, or whoever will hear them. But from the rest of France there comes, as was said, no prayer ; or one of an *opposite* character, ‘expressed openly in the streets.’ Château or Hôtel, where an enlightened Philosophism scrutinises many things, is not given to prayer : neither are Rossbach victories, Terray Finances, nor, say only ‘sixty thousand *Lettres de Cachet*’ (which is Maupeou’s share), persuasives towards that. O Hénault ! Prayers ? From a France smitten (by black-art) with plague after plague, and lying now, in shame and pain, with a Harlot’s foot on its neck, what prayer can come ? Those lank scarecrows, that prowl hunger-stricken through all highways and byways of French Existence, will they pray ? The dull millions that, in the workshop or furrowfield, grind foredone at the wheel of Labour, like haltered gin-horses, if blind so much the quieter ? Or they that in the Bicêtre Hospital, ‘eight to a bed,’ lie waiting their manumission ? Dim are those heads of theirs, dull stagnant those

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hearts : to them the great Sovereign is known mainly as the great Regrater of Bread. If they hear of his sickness, they will answer with a dull *Tant pis pour lui* ; or with the question, Will he die ?

Yes, will he die ? that is now, for all France, the grand question, and hope ; whereby alone the King's sickness has still some interest.

CHAPTER II.

REALISED IDEALS.

SUCH a changed France have we ; and a changed Louis. Changed, truly ; and further than thou yet seest !—To the eye of History many things, in that sick-room of Louis, are now visible, which to the Courtiers there present were invisible. For indeed it is well said, 'in every object there is inexhaustible meaning ; the eye sees in it what the eye brings means of seeing.' To Newton and to Newton's Dog Diamond, what a different pair of Universes ; while the painting on the optical retina of both was, most likely, the same ! Let the Reader here, in this sick-room of Louis, endeavour to look with the mind too.

Time was when men could (so to speak) of a given man, by nourishing and decorating him with fit appliances, to the due pitch, *make* themselves a King, almost as the Bees do ; and what was still more to the purpose, loyally obey him when made. The man so nourished and decorated, thenceforth named royal, does verily bear rule ; and is said, and even thought, to be, for example, 'prosecuting conquests in Flanders,' when he lets himself like luggage be carried thither : and no light luggage ; covering miles of road. For he has his unblushing Chateauroux, with her bandboxes and rouge-pots, at his side ; so that, at every new station, a wooden gallery must be run up between their lodgings. He has not only his *Maison-Bouche*, and *Valetaille* without end, but his very Troop of Players, with their pasteboard coulisses, thunder-barrels, their kettles, fiddles, stage-wardrobes, portable larders (and chaffering and quarrelling enough) ; all mounted in wagons, tumbrils, second-hand chaises,—sufficient not to conquer Flanders, but the patience

of the world. With such a flood of loud jingling appurtenances does he lumber along, prosecuting his conquests in Flanders : wonderful to behold. So nevertheless it was and had been : to some solitary thinker it might seem strange ; but even to him inevitable, not unnatural.

For ours is a most fictile world ; and man is the most fingent plastic of creatures. A world not fixable ; not fathomable ! An unfathomable Somewhat, which is *Not we* ; which we can work with, and live amidst,—and model, miraculously in our miraculous Being, and name World.—But if the very Rocks and Rivers (as Metaphysic teaches) are, in strict language, *made* by those outward Senses of ours, how much more, by the Inward Sense, are all Phenomena of the spiritual kind : Dignities, Authorities, *Holies*, *Unholies* ! Which inward sense, moreover, is not permanent like the outward ones, but forever growing and changing. Does not the Black African take of Sticks and Old Clothes (say, exported Monmouth-Street cast-clothes) what will suffice, and of these, cunningly combining them, fabricate for himself an Eidolon (Idol, or *Thing Seen*), and name it *Mumbo-Jumbo* ; which he can thenceforth pray to, with upturned awestruck eye, not without hope ? The white European mocks ; but ought rather to consider ; and see whether he, at home, could not do the like a little more wisely.

So it *was*, we say, in those conquests of Flanders, thirty years ago : but so it no longer is. Alas, much more lies sick than poor Louis : not the French King only, but the French Kingship ; this too, after long rough tear and wear, is breaking down. The world is all so changed ; so much that seemed vigorous has sunk decrepit, so much that was not is beginning to be !—Borne over the Atlantic, to the closing ear of Louis, King by the Grace of God, what sounds are these ; muffled ominous, new in our centuries ? Boston Harbour is black with unexpected Tea : behold a Pennsylvanian Congress gather ; and ere long, on Bunker Hill, DEMOCRACY announcing, in rifle-volleys death-winged, under her Star Banner, to the tune of Yankee-doodle-doo, that she is born, and, whirlwind-like, will envelope the whole world !

Sovereigns die and Sovereignties : how all dies, and is for a Time only ; is a 'Time-phntasm, yet reckons itself real !'

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The Merovingian Kings, slowly wending on their bullock-carts through the streets of Paris, with their long hair flowing, have all wended slowly on,—into Eternity. Charlemagne sleeps at Salzburg, with truncheon grounded; only Fable expecting that he will awaken. Charles the Hammer, Pepin Bow-legged, where now is their eye of menace, their voice of command? Rollo and his shaggy Northmen cover not the Seine with ships; but have sailed off on a longer voyage. The hair of Towhead (*Tête d'étoupes*) now needs no combing; Iron-cutter (*Taillefer*) cannot cut a cobweb; shrill Fredegonda, shrill Brunhilda have had out their hot life-scold, and lie silent, their hot life-frenzy cooled. Neither from that black Tower de Nesle descends now darkling the doomed gallant, in his sack, to the Seine waters; plunging into Night: for Dame de Nesle now cares not for this world's gallantry, heeds not this world's scandal; Dame de Nesle is herself gone into Night. They are all gone; sunk,—down, down, with the tumult they made; and the rolling and the trampling of ever new generations passes over them; and they hear it not any more forever.

And yet withal has there not been realised somewhat? Consider (to go no further) these strong Stone-edifices, and what they hold! Mud-Town of the Borderers (*Lutetia Parisiorum* or *Barisiorum*) has paved itself, has spread over all the Seine Islands, and far and wide on each bank, and become City of Paris, sometimes boasting to be 'Athens of Europe,' and even 'Capital of the Universe.' Stone towers frown aloft; long-lasting, grim with a thousand years. Cathedrals are there, and a Creed (or memory of a Creed) in them; Palaces, and a State and Law. Thou seest the Smoke-vapour; *unextinguished* Breath as of a thing living. Labour's thousand hammers ring on her anvils: also a more miraculous Labour works noiselessly, not with the Hand but with the Thought. How have cunning workmen in all crafts, with their cunning head and right-hand, tamed the Four Elements to be their ministers; yoking the Winds to their Sea-chariot, making the very Stars their Nautical Timepiece;—and written and collected a *Bibliothèque du Roi*; among whose Books is the Hebrew Book! A wondrous race of creatures: *these* have been realised, and what of Skill is in these: call not the Past Time, with all its confused wretchednesses, a lost one.

Observe, however, that of man's whole terrestrial possessions and attainments, unspeakably the noblest are his Symbols, divine or divine-seeming; under which he marches and fights, with victorious assurance, in this life-battle: what we can call his Realised Ideals. Of which realised Ideals, omitting the rest, consider only these two: his Church, or spiritual Guidance; his Kingship, or temporal one. The Church: what a word was there; richer than Golconda and the treasures of the world! In the heart of the remotest mountains rises the little Kirk; the Dead all slumbering round it, under their white memorial-stones, 'in hope of a happy resurrection:'—dull wert thou, O Reader, if never in any hour (say of moaning midnight, when such Kirk hung spectral in the sky, and Being was as if swallowed up of Darkness) it spoke to thee—things unspeakable, that went into thy soul's soul. Strong was he that had a Church, what we can call a Church: he stood thereby; though 'in the centre of Immensities, in the conflux of Eternities,' yet manlike towards God and man; the vague shoreless Universe had become for him a firm city, and dwelling which he knew. Such virtue was in Belief; in these words, well spoken: *I believe*. Well might men prize their *Credo*, and raise stateliest Temples for it, and reverend Hierarchies, and give it the tithe of their substance; it was worth living for and dying for.

Neither was that an inconsiderable moment when wild armed men first raised their Strongest aloft on the buckler-throne, and, with clanging armour and hearts, said solemnly: Be thou our Acknowledged Strongest! In such Acknowledged Strongest (well named King, *Kön-ning*, Can-ning, or Man that was Able) what a Symbol shone now for them,—significant with the destinies of the world! A Symbol of true Guidance in return for loving Obedience; properly, if he knew it, the prime want of man. A Symbol which might be called sacred; for is there not, in reverence for what is better than we, an indestructible sacredness? On which ground, too, it was well said there lay in the Acknowledged Strongest a divine right; as surely there might in the Strongest, whether Acknowledged or not,—considering *who* it was that made him strong. And so, in the midst of confusions and unutterable incongruities (as all growth is confused), did this of Royalty, with Loyalty environing it, spring up; and grow mysteriously, subduing and assimilating (for a principle

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of Life was in it) ; till it also had grown world-great, and was among the main Facts of our modern existence. Such a Fact, that Louis XIV., for example, could answer the expostulatory Magistrate with his "*L'Etat c'est moi* (The State? I am the State) ;" and be replied to by silence and abashed looks. So far had accident and forethought ; had your Louis Elevenths, with the leaden Virgin in their hatband, and torture-wheels and conical *oubliettes* (man-eating !) under their feet ; your Henri Fourths, with their prophesied social millennium, 'when every peasant should have his fowl in the pot ;' and on the whole, the fertility of this most fertile Existence (named of Good and Evil),—brought it, in the matter of the Kingship. Wondrous ! Concerning which may we not again say, that in the huge mass of Evil, as it rolls and swells, there is ever some Good working imprisoned ; working towards deliverance and triumph ?

How such Ideals do realise themselves ; and grow, wondrously, from amid the incongruous ever-fluctuating chaos of the Actual : this is what World-History, if it teach any thing, has to teach us. How they grow ; and, after long stormy growth, bloom out mature, supreme ; then quickly (for the blossom is brief) fall into decay ; sorrowfully dwindle ; and crumble down, or rush down, noisily or noiselessly disappearing. The blossom is so brief ; as of some centennial Cactus-flower, which after a century of waiting shines out for hours ! Thus from the day when rough Clovis, in the Champ de Mars, in sight of his whole army, had to cleave retributively the head of that rough Frank, with sudden battle-axe, and the fierce words, "It was thus thou clavest the vase" (St. Remi's and mine) "at Soissons," forward to Louis the Grand and his *L'Etat c'est moi*, we count some twelve hundred years : and now this the very next Louis is dying, and so much dying with him !—Nay, thus too, if Catholicism, with and against Feudalism (but *not* against Nature and her bounty), gave us English a Shakspeare and Era of Shakspeare, and so produced a blossom of Catholicism—it was not till Catholicism itself, so far as Law could abolish it, had been abolished here.

But of those decadent ages in which no Ideal either grows or blossoms ? When Belief and Loyalty have passed away, and only the cant and false echo of them remains ; and all Solem-

nity has become Pageantry; and the Creed of persons in authority has become one of two things: an Imbecility or a Machiavelism? Alas, of these ages World-History can take no notice; they have to become compressed more and more, and finally suppressed in the Annals of Mankind; blotted out as spurious,—which indeed they are. Hapless ages: wherein, if ever in any, it is an unhappiness to be born. To be born, and to learn only, by every tradition and example, that God's Universe is Belial's and a Lie; and 'the Supreme Quack' the hierarch of men! In which mournfulest faith, nevertheless, do we not see whole generations (two, and sometimes even three successively) live, what they call living; and vanish,—without chance of reappearance?

In such a decadent age, or one fast verging that way, had our poor Louis been born. Grant also that if the French Kingship had not, by course of Nature, long to live, he of all men was the man to accelerate Nature. The Blossom of French Royalty, cactus-like, has accordingly made an astonishing progress. In those Metz days, it was still standing with all its petals, though bedimmed by Orleans Regents and *Roué* Ministers and Cardinals; but now, in 1774, we behold it bald, and the virtue nigh gone out of it.

Disastrous indeed does it look with those same 'realised ideals,' one and all! The Church, which in its palmy season, seven hundred years ago, could make an Emperor wait bare-foot, in penance-shirt, three days, in the snow, has for centuries seen itself decaying; reduced even to forget old purposes and enmities, and join interest with the Kingship: on this younger strength it would fain stay its decrepitude; and these two will henceforth stand and fall together. Alas, the Sorbonne still sits there, in its old mansion; but mumbles only jargon of dotage, and no longer leads the consciences of men: not the Sorbonne; it is *Encyclopédies, Philosophie*, and who knows what nameless innumerable multitude of ready Writers, profane Singers, Romancers, Players, Disputators, and Pamphleteers, that now form the Spiritual Guidance of the world. The world's Practical Guidance too is lost, or has glided into the same miscellaneous hands. Who is it that the King (*Able-man*, named also *Roi, Rex*, or Director) now guides? His own huntsmen and prickers: when there is to be no hunt, it is well said, '*Le Roi ne fera*

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rien (Today his Majesty will do *nothing*).¹ He lives and lingers there, because he is living there, and none has yet laid hands on him.

The nobles, in like manner, have nearly ceased either to guide or misguide; and are now, as their master is, little more than ornamental figures. It is long since they have done with butchering one another or their king: the Workers, protected, encouraged by Majesty, have ages ago built walled towns, and there ply their craft; will permit no Robber Baron to 'live by the saddle,' but maintain a gallows to prevent it. Ever since that period of the *Fronde*, the Noble has changed his fighting sword into a court rapier; and now loyally attends his king as ministering satellite; divides the spoil, not now by violence and murder, but by soliciting and finesse. These men call themselves supports of the throne: singular gilt-pasteboard *caryatides* in that singular edifice! For the rest, their privileges every way are now much curtailed. That Law authorising a Seigneur, as he returned from hunting, to kill not more than two Serfs, and refresh his feet in their warm blood and bowels, has fallen into perfect desuetude,—and even into incredibility; for if Deputy Lapoule can believe in it, and call for the abrogation of it, so cannot we.² No Charolois, for these last fifty years, though never so fond of shooting, has been in use to bring down slaters and plumbers, and see them roll from their roofs;³ but contents himself with partridges and grouse. Close-viewed, their industry and function is that of dressing gracefully and eating sumptuously. As for their debauchery and depravity, it is perhaps unexampled since the era of Tiberius and Commodus. Nevertheless, one has still partly a feeling with the lady Maréchale: "Depend upon it, Sir, God thinks twice before damning a man of that quality."⁴ These people, of old, surely had virtues, uses; or they could not have been there. Nay, one virtue they are still required to have (for mortal man cannot live

¹ *Mémoires sur la Vie privée de Marie Antoinette*, par Madame Campan (Paris, 1826), i. 12.

² *Histoire de la Révolution Française*, par Deux Amis de la Liberté (Paris, 1792), ii. 212.

³ Lacretelle, *Histoire de France pendant le 18^{me} Siècle* (Paris, 1819), i. 271.

⁴ Dulaure, vii. 261.

without a conscience): the virtue of perfect readiness to fight duels.

Such are the shepherds of the people: and now how fares it with the flock? With the flock, as is inevitable, it fares ill, and ever worse. They are not tended, they are only regularly shorn. They are sent for, to do statute-labour, to pay statute-taxes; to fatten battle-fields (named 'bed of honour') with their bodies, in quarrels which are not theirs; their hand and toil is in every possession of man; but for themselves they have little or no possession. Untaught, uncomforted, unfed; to pine stagnantly in thick obscuration, in squalid destitution and obstruction: this is the lot of the millions; *peuple taillable et corvéable à merci et miséricorde*. In Brittany they once rose in revolt at the first introduction of Pendulum Clocks; thinking it had something to do with the *Gabelle*. Paris requires to be cleared out periodically by the Police; and the horde of hunger-stricken vagabonds to be sent wandering again over space—for a time. 'During one such periodical clearance,' says Lacretelle, 'in May 1750, the Police had presumed withal to carry off some reputable people's children, in the hope of extorting ransoms for them. The mothers fill the public places with cries of despair; crowds gather, get excited; so many women in distraction run about exaggerating the alarm: an absurd and horrid fable rises among the people; it is said that the doctors have ordered a Great Person to take baths of young human blood for the restoration of his own, all spoiled by debaucheries. Some of the rioters,' adds Lacretelle, quite coolly, 'were hanged on the following days: the Police went on.⁵ O ye poor naked wretches! and this, then, is your inarticulate cry to Heaven, as of a dumb tortured animal, crying from uttermost depths of pain and debasement? Do these azure skies, like a dead crystalline vault, only reverberate the echo of it on you? Respond to it only by 'hanging on the following days'?—Not so: not forever! Ye are heard in Heaven. And the answer too will come,—in a horror of great darkness, and shakings of the world, and a cup of trembling which all the nations shall drink.

Remark, meanwhile, how from amid the wrecks and dust of this universal Decay new Powers are fashioning themselves, adapted to the new time and its destinies. Besides the old

⁵ Lacretelle, iii. 175.

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Noblesse, originally of Fighters, there is a new recognised Noblesse of Lawyers ; whose gala-day and proud battle-day even now is. An unrecognised Noblesse of Commerce ; powerful enough, with money in its pocket. Lastly, powerfulest of all, least recognised of all, a Noblesse of Literature ; without steel on their thigh, without gold in their purse, but with the 'grand thaumaturgic faculty of Thought' in their head. French Philosophism has arisen ; in which little word how much do we include ! Here, indeed, lies properly the cardinal symptom of the whole widespread malady. Faith is gone out ; Scepticism is come in. Evil abounds and accumulates ; no man has Faith to withstand it, to amend it, to begin by amending himself ; it must even go on accumulating. While hollow languor and vacuity is the lot of the Upper, and want and stagnation of the Lower, and universal misery is very certain, what other thing is certain ? That a Lie cannot be believed ! Philosophism knows only this : her other belief is mainly, that in spiritual supersensual matters no Belief is possible. Unhappy ! Nay, as yet the Contradiction of a Lie is some kind of Belief ; but the Lie with its Contradiction once swept away, what will remain ? The five unsatiated Senses will remain, the sixth insatiable Sense (of vanity) ; the whole *dæmonic* nature of man will remain, —hurled forth to rage blindly without rule or rein ; savage itself, yet with all the tools and weapons of civilisation : a spectacle new in History.

In such a France, as in a Powder-tower, where fire unquenched and now unquenchable is smoking and smouldering all round, has Louis XV. lain down to die. With Pompadourism and Dubarryism, his Fleur-de-lis has been shamefully struck down in all lands and on all seas ; Poverty invades even the Royal Exchequer, and Tax-farming can squeeze out no more ; there is a quarrel of twenty-five years' standing with the Parliament ; everywhere Want, Dishonesty, Unbelief, and hotbrained Sciolists for state-physicians : it is a portentous hour.

Such things can the eye of History see in this sick-room of King Louis, which were invisible to the Courtiers there. It is twenty years, gone Christmas-day, since Lord Chesterfield, summing up what he had noted of this same France, wrote, and sent off by post, the following words, that have become memorable : '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.'⁶

CHAPTER III.

VIATICUM.

FOR the present, however, the grand question with the Governors of France is: Shall extreme unction, or other ghostly viaticum (to Louis, not to France), be administered?

It is a deep question. For, if administered, if so much as spoken of, must not, on the very threshold of the business, Witch Dubarry vanish; hardly to return should Louis even recover? With her vanishes Duke d'Aiguillon and Company, and all their Armida-Palace, as was said; Chaos swallows the whole again, and there is left nothing but a smell of brimstone. But then, on the other hand, what will the Dauphinists and Choiseulists say? Nay what may the royal martyr himself say, should he happen to get deadly worse, without getting delirious? For the present, he still kisses the Dubarry hand; so we, from the anteroom, can note: but afterwards? Doctors' bulletins may run as they are ordered, but it is 'confluent small-pox,'—of which, as is whispered too, the Gatekeeper's once so buxom Daughter lies ill: and Louis XV. is not a man to be trifled with in his viaticum. Was he not wont to catechise his very girls in the *Parc-aux-cerfs*, and pray with and for them, that they might preserve their—orthodoxy?¹ A strange fact, not an unexampled one; for there is no animal so strange as man.

For the moment, indeed, it were all well, could Archbishop Beaumont but be prevailed upon—to wink with one eye! Alas, Beaumont would himself so fain do it: for, singular to tell, the Church too, and whole posthumous hope of Jesuitism, now hangs by the apron of this same unmentionable woman. But then 'the force of public opinion'? Rigorous Christophe de Beaumont, who has spent his life in persecuting hysterical Jansenists and incredulous Non-confessors; or even their dead bodies, if no better might be,—how shall he now open Heaven's gate,

⁶ Chesterfield's *Letters*: December 25th, 1753.

¹ Dulaure (viii. 217); Besenval, &c.

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and give Absolution with the *corpus delicti* still under his nose? Our Grand-Almoner Roche-Aymon, for his part, will not higgler with a royal sinner about turning of the key: but there are other Churchmen; there is a King's Confessor, foolish Abbé Moudon; and Fanaticism and Decency are not yet extinct. On the whole, what is to be done? The doors can be well watched; the Medical Bulletin adjusted; and much, as usual, be hoped for from time and chance.

The doors are well watched, no improper figure can enter. Indeed, few wish to enter; for the putrid infection reaches even to the *Œil-de-Bœuf*; so that 'more than fifty fall sick, and ten die.' Mesdames the Princesses alone wait at the loathsome sick-bed; impelled by filial piety. The three Princesses, *Graille*, *Chiffe*, *Coche* (Rag, Snip, Pig, as he was wont to name them), are assiduous there; when all have fled. The fourth Princess, *Loque* (Dud), as we guess, is already in the Nunnery, and can only give her orisons. Poor *Graille* and Sisterhood, they have never known a Father; such is the hard bargain Grandeur must make. Scarcely at the *Débotter* (when Royalty took off its boots) could they snatch up their 'enormous hoops, gird the 'long train round their waists, huddle on their black cloaks of 'taffeta up to the very chin;' and so, in fit appearance of full dress, 'every evening at six,' walk majestically in; receive their royal kiss on the brow; and then walk majestically out again, to embroidery, small-scandal, prayers, and vacancy. If Majesty came some morning, with coffee of its own making, and swallowed it with them hastily while the dogs were uncoupling for the hunt, it was received as a grace of Heaven.² Poor withered ancient women! in the wild tossings that yet await your fragile existence, before it be crushed and broken; as ye fly through hostile countries, over tempestuous seas, are almost taken by the Turks; and wholly, in the Sansculottic Earthquake, know not your right hand from your left, be this always an assured place in your remembrance: for the act was good and loving! To us also it is a little sunny spot, in that dismal howling waste, where we hardly find another.

Meanwhile, what shall an impartial prudent Courtier do? In these delicate circumstances, while not only death or life, but even sacrament or no sacrament, is a question, the skilfulest

² Campan, i. 11-36.

may falter. Few are so happy as the Duke d'Orléans and the Prince de Condé; who can themselves, with volatile salts, attend the King's antechamber; and, at the same time, send their brave sons (Duke de Chartres, *Egalité* that is to be; Duke de Bourbon, one day Condé too, and famous among Dotards) to wait upon the Dauphin. With another few, it is a resolution taken; *jacta est alea*. Old Richelieu,—when Archbishop Beaumont, driven by public opinion, is at last for entering the sick-room,—will twitch him by the rochet, into a recess; and there, with his old dissipated mastiff-face, and the oiliest vehemence, be seen pleading (and even, as we judge by Beaumont's change of colour, prevailing) 'that the King be not killed by a proposition in Divinity.' Duke de Fronsac, son of Richelieu, can follow his father: when the Curé of Versailles whimpers something about sacraments, he will threaten to 'throw him out of the window if he mention such a thing.'

Happy these, we may say; but to the rest that hover between two opinions, is it not trying? He who would understand to what a pass Catholicism, and much else, had now got; and how the symbols of the Holiest have become gambling-dice of the Basest,—must read the narrative of those things by Besenval, and Soulavie, and the other Court Newsmen of the time. He will see the Versailles Galaxy all scattered asunder, grouped into new ever-shifting Constellations. There are nods and sagacious glances; go-betweens, silk dowagers mysteriously gliding, with smiles for this constellation, sighs for that: there is tremor, of hope or desperation, in several hearts. There is the pale grinning Shadow of Death, ceremoniously ushered along by another grinning Shadow, of Etiquette: at intervals the growl of Chapel Organs, like prayer by machinery; proclaiming, as in a kind of horrid diabolic horse-laughter, *Vanity of vanities, all is Vanity!*

CHAPTER IV.

LOUIS THE UNFORGOTTEN.

POOR Louis! With these it is a hollow phantasmagory, where like mimes they mope and mowl, and utter false sounds for hire; but with thee it is frightful earnest.

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Frightful to all men is Death; from of old named King of Terrors. Our little compact home of an Existence, where we dwelt complaining, yet as in a home, is passing, in dark agonies, into an Unknown of Separation, Foreignness, unconditioned Possibility. The Heathen Emperor asks of his soul: Into what places art thou now departing? The Catholic King must answer: To the Judgment-bar of the Most High God! Yes, it is a summing-up of Life; a final settling, and giving-in the 'account of the deeds done in the body:' they are done now; and lie there unalterable, and do bear their fruits, long as Eternity shall last.

Louis XV. had always the kingliest abhorrence of Death. Unlike that praying Duke of Orleans, *Egalité's* grandfather,—for indeed several of them had a touch of madness,—who honestly believed that there was no Death! He, if the Court Newsmen can be believed, started up once on a time, glowing with sulphurous contempt and indignation on his poor Secretary, who had stumbled on the words, *feu roi d'Espagne* (the late King of Spain): "*Feu roi, Monsieur?*"—"Monseigneur," hastily answered the trembling but adroit man of business, "*c'est une titre qu'ils prennent* ('tis a title they take)."¹ Louis, we say, was not so happy; but he did what he could. He would not suffer Death to be spoken of; avoided the sight of churchyards, funereal monuments, and whatsoever could bring it to mind. It is the resource of the Ostrich; who, hard hunted, sticks his foolish head in the ground, and would fain forget that his foolish unseeing body is not unseen too. Or sometimes, with a spasmodic antagonism, significant of the same thing, and of more, he *would* go; or stopping his court carriages, would send into churchyards, and ask 'how many new graves there were today,' though it gave his poor Pompadour the disagreeablest qualms. We can figure the thought of Louis that day, when, all royally caparisoned for hunting, he met, at some sudden turning in the Wood of Senart, a ragged Peasant with a coffin: "For whom?"—It was for a poor brother slave, whom Majesty had sometimes noticed slaving in those quarters. "What did he die of?"—"Of hunger:"—the King gave his steed the spur.²

But figure his thought, when Death is now clutching at his

¹ Besenval, i. 199.

² Campan, iii. 39.

own heart-strings ; unlooked for, inexorable ! Yes, poor Louis, Death has found thee. No palace walls or life-guards, gorgeous tapestries or gilt buckram of stiffest ceremonial could keep him out ; but he is here, here at thy very life-breath, and will extinguish it. Thou, whose whole existence hitherto was a chimera and scenic show, at length becomest a reality : sumptuous Versailles bursts asunder, like a dream, into void Immensity ; Time is done, and all the scaffolding of Time falls wrecked with hideous clangour round thy soul : the pale Kingdoms yawn open ; there must thou enter, naked, all unking'd, and await what is appointed thee ! Unhappy man, there as thou turnest, in dull agony, on thy bed of weariness, what a thought is thine ! Purgatory and Hell-fire, now all-too possible, in the prospect : in the retrospect, — alas, what thing didst thou do that were not better undone ; what mortal didst thou generously help ; what sorrow hadst thou mercy on ? Do the 'five hundred thousand' ghosts, who sank shamefully on so many battle-fields from Rossbach to Quebec, that thy Harlot might take revenge for an epigram, — crowd round thee in this hour ? Thy foul Harem ; the curses of mothers, the tears and infamy of daughters ? Miserable man ! thou 'hast done evil as thou couldst :' thy whole existence seems one hideous abortion and mistake of Nature ; the use and meaning of thee not yet known. Wert thou a fabulous Griffin, *devouring* the works of men ; daily dragging virgins to thy cave ; — clad also in scales that no spear would pierce : no spear but Death's ? A Griffin not fabulous but real ! Frightful, O Louis, seem these moments for thee. — We will pry no further into the horrors of a sinner's deathbed.

And yet let no meanest man lay flattering unction to his soul. Louis was a Ruler ; but art not thou also one ? His wide France, look at it from the Fixed Stars (themselves not yet Infinitude), is no wider than thy narrow brickfield, where thou too didst faithfully, or didst unfaithfully. Man, 'Symbol of Eternity imprisoned into Time !' it is not thy works, which are all mortal, infinitely little, and the greatest no greater than the least, but only the Spirit thou workest in, that can have worth or continuance.

But reflect, in any case, what a life-problem this of poor Louis, when he rose as *Bien-Aimé* from that Metz sick-bed,

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really was! What son of Adam could have swayed such incoherences into coherence? Could he? Blindest Fortune alone has cast *him* on the top of it: he swims there; can as little sway it as the drift-log sways the wind-tossed moon-stirred Atlantic. "What have I done to be so loved?" he said then. He may say now: What have I done to be so hated? Thou hast done nothing, poor Louis! Thy fault is properly even this, that thou didst *nothing*. What could poor Louis do? Abdicate, and wash his hands of it,—in favour of the first that would accept! Other clear wisdom there was none for him. As it was, he stood gazing dubiously, the absurdest mortal extant, a very Solecism Incarnate, into the absurdest confused world;—wherein at last nothing seemed so certain as this, That he, the incarnate Solecism, had five senses; that there were Flying Tables (*Tables Volantes*, which vanish through the floor, to come back reloaded), and a *Parc-aux-cerfs*.

Whereby at least we have again this historical curiosity: a human being in an original position; swimming passively, as on some boundless 'Mother of Dead Dogs,' towards issues which he partly saw. For Louis had withal a kind of insight in him. So, when a new Minister of Marine, or what else it might be, came announcing his new era, the Scarlet-woman would hear from the lips of Majesty at supper: "Yes, he spread out his ware like another; promised the beautifulest things in the world; not a thing of which will come: he does not know this region; he will see." Or again: "'Tis the twentieth time I have heard all that; France will never get a Navy, I believe." How touching also was this: "If *I* were Lieutenant of Police, I would prohibit those Paris cabriolets."³

Doomed mortal;—for is it not a doom to be Solecism incarnate! A new *Roi Fainéant*, King Donothing; but with the strangest new *Mayor of the Palace*: no bow-legged Pepin now for *Mayor*, but that same cloud-capt, fire-breathing Spectre of DEMOCRACY; incalculable, which is enveloping the world!—Was Louis, then, no wickeder than this or the other private Donothing and Eatall; such as we often enough see, under the name of Man of Pleasure, cumbering God's diligent Creation, for a time? Say, wretcheder! His Life-solecism was seen and felt of a whole scandalised world; him endless Oblivion cannot

³ *Journal de Madame de Hausset*, p. 293, &c.

engulf, and swallow to endless depths,—not yet for a generation or two.

However, be this as it will, we remark, not without interest, that 'on the evening of the 4th,' Dame Dubarry issues from the sick-room, with perceptible 'trouble in her visage.' It is the fourth evening of May, year of Grace 1774. Such a whispering in the *Œil-de-Bœuf*! Is he dying, then? What can be said is, that Dubarry seems making up her packages; she sails weeping through her gilt boudoirs, as if taking leave. D'Aiguillon and Company are near their last card; nevertheless they will not yet throw up the game. But as for the sacramental controversy, it is as good as settled without being mentioned; Louis sends for his Abbé Moudon in the course of next night; is confessed by him, some say for the space of 'seventeen minutes,' and demands the sacraments of his own accord.

Nay already, in the afternoon, behold is not this your Sorceress Dubarry with the handkerchief at her eyes, mounting D'Aiguillon's chariot; rolling off in his Duchess's consolatory arms? She is gone: and her place knows her no more. Vanish, false Sorceress; into Space! Needless to hover at neighbouring Ruel; for thy day is done. Shut are the royal palace-gates for evermore; hardly in coming years shalt thou, under cloud of night, descend once, in black domino, like a black night-bird, and disturb the fair Antoinette's music-party in the Park; all Birds of Paradise flying from thee, and musical windpipes growing mute.⁴ Thou unclean, yet unmalignant, not unpitiable thing! What a course was thine: from that first trucklebed (in Joan of Arc's country) where thy mother bore thee, with tears, to an unnamed father: forward, through lowest subterranean depths, and over highest sunlit heights, of Harlotdom and Rascaldom—to the guillotine-axe, which shears away thy vainly whimpering head! Rest there uncursed; only buried and abolished: what else befitted thee?

Louis, meanwhile, is in considerable impatience for his sacraments; sends more than once to the window, to see whether they are not coming. Be of comfort, Louis, what comfort thou canst: they are under way, those sacraments. Towards six in the morning, they arrive. Cardinal Grand-Almoner Roche-

⁴ Campan, i. 197.

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Aymon is here in pontificals, with his pyxes and his tools: he approaches the royal pillow; elevates his wafer; mutters or seems to mutter somewhat;—and so (as the Abbé Georgel, in words that stick to one, expresses it) has Louis ‘made the *amende honorable* to God:’ so does your Jesuit construe it.—“*Wa, Wa,*” as the wild Clotaire groaned out, when life was departing, “what great God is this that pulls down the strength of the strongest kings!”⁵

The *amende honorable*, what ‘legal apology’ you will, to God:—but not, if D’Aiguillon can help it, to man. Dubarry still hovers in his mansion at Ruel; and while there is life, there is hope. Grand-Almoner Roche-Aymon, accordingly (for he seems to be in the secret), has no sooner seen his pyxes and gear repacked, than he is stepping majestically forth again, as if the work were done! But King’s Confessor Abbé Moudon starts forward; with anxious acidulent face, twitches him by the sleeve; whispers in his ear. Whereupon the poor Cardinal has to turn round; and declare audibly, “That his Majesty repents of any subjects of scandal he may have given (*a pu donner*); and purposes, by the strength of Heaven assisting him, to avoid the like—for the future!” Words listened to by Richelieu with mastiff-face, growing blacker; and answered to, aloud, ‘with an epithet,’—which Besenval will not repeat. Old Richelieu, conqueror of Minorca, companion of Flying-Table orgies, perforator of bedroom walls,⁶ is thy day also done?

Alas, the Chapel organs may keep going; the Shrine of Sainte Geneviève be let down, and pulled up again,—without effect. In the evening the whole Court, with Dauphin and Dauphiness, assist at the Chapel: priests are hoarse with chanting their ‘Prayers of Forty Hours;’ and the heaving bellows blow. Almost frightful! For the very heaven blackens; battering rain-torrents dash, with thunder; almost drowning the organ’s voice: and electric fire-flashes make the very flambeaux on the altar pale. So that the most, as we are told, retired, when it was over, with hurried steps, ‘in a state of meditation (*recueillement*),’ and said little or nothing.⁷

So it has lasted for the better half of a fortnight; the Dubarry

⁵ Gregorius Turonensis, *Histor.* lib. iv. cap. 21.

⁶ Besenval, i. 159-172. Genlis; Duc de Levis, &c.

⁷ Weber, *Mémoires concernant Marie-Antoinette* (London, 1809), i. 22.

10th May 1774.

gone almost a week. Besenval says, all the world was getting impatient *que cela finît*; that poor Louis would have done with it. It is now the 10th of May 1774. He will soon have done now.

This tenth May day falls into the loathsome sick-bed; but dull, unnoticed there: for they that look out of the windows are quite darkened; the cistern-wheel moves discordant on its axis; Life, like a spent steed, is panting towards the goal. In their remote apartments, Dauphin and Dauphiness stand road-ready; all grooms and equerries booted and spurred: waiting for some signal to escape the house of pestilence.⁸ And, hark! across the *Œil-de-Bœuf*, what sound is that; sound 'terrible and absolutely like thunder'? It is the rush of the whole Court, rushing as in wagger, to salute the new Sovereigns: Hail to your Majesties! The Dauphin and Dauphiness are King and Queen! Overpowered with many emotions, they two fall on their knees together, and, with streaming tears, exclaim, "O God, guide us, protect us; we are too young to reign!"—Too young indeed.

But thus, in any case, 'with a sound absolutely like thunder,' has the Horologe of Time struck, and an old Era passed away. The Louis that was, lies forsaken, a mass of abhorred clay; abandoned 'to some poor persons, and priests of the *Chapelle Ardente*,'—who make haste to put him 'in two lead coffins, pouring in abundant spirits of wine.' The new Louis with his Court is rolling towards Choisy, through the summer afternoon: the royal tears still flow; but a word mispronounced by Monseigneur d'Artois sets them all laughing, and they weep no more. Light mortals, how ye walk your light life-minuet, over bottomless abysses, divided from you by a film!

For the rest, the proper authorities felt that no Funeral

⁸ One grudges to interfere with the beautiful theatrical 'candle,' which Madame Campan (i. 79) has lit on this occasion, and blown out at the moment of death. What candles might be lit or blown out, in so large an Establishment as that of Versailles, no man at such distance would like to affirm: at the same time, as it was two o'clock in a May Afternoon, and these royal Stables must have been some five or six hundred yards from the royal sick-room, the 'candle' does threaten to go out in spite of us. It remains burning indeed—in her fantasy; throwing light on much in those *Mémoires* of hers.

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could be too unceremonious. Besenval himself thinks it was unceremonious enough. Two carriages containing two noblemen of the usher species, and a Versailles clerical person; some score of mounted pages, some fifty palfreniers: these, with torches, but not so much as in black, start from Versailles on the second evening, with their leaden bier. At a high trot they start; and keep up that pace. For the jibes (*brocards*) of those Parisians, who stand planted in two rows, all the way to St. Denis, and 'give vent to their pleasantry, the characteristic of the nation,' do not tempt one to slacken. Towards midnight the vaults of St. Denis receive their own: unwept by any eye of all these; if not by poor *Loque* his neglected Daughter's, whose Nunnery is hard by.

Him they crush down, and huddle under-ground, in this impatient way; him and his era of sin and tyranny and shame: for behold a New Era is come; the future all the brighter that the past was base.

BOOK SECOND.

THE PAPER AGE.

CHAPTER I.

ASTRÆA REDUX.

A paradoxical philosopher, carrying to the uttermost length that aphorism of Montesquieu's, 'Happy the people whose annals are tiresome,' has said, 'Happy the people whose annals are vacant.' In which saying, mad as it looks, may there not still be found some grain of reason? For truly, as it has been written, 'Silence is divine,' and of Heaven; so in all earthly things too there is a silence which is better than any speech. Consider it well, the Event, the thing which can be spoken of and recorded, is it not, in all cases, some disruption, some solution of continuity? Were it even a glad Event, it involves change, involves loss (of active Force); and so far, either in the past or in the present, is an irregularity, a disease. Stillest perseverance were our blessedness; not dislocation and alteration,—could they be avoided.

The oak grows silently, in the forest, a thousand years; only in the thousandth year, when the woodman arrives with his axe, is there heard an echoing through the solitudes; and the oak announces itself when, with far-sounding crash, it *falls*. How silent too was the planting of the acorn; scattered from the lap of some wandering wind! Nay, when our oak flowered, or put on its leaves (its glad Events), what shout of proclamation could there be? Hardly from the most observant a word of recognition. These things *befell* not, they were slowly *done*; not in an hour, but through the flight of days: what was to be

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said of it? This hour seemed altogether as the last was, as the next would be.

It is thus everywhere that foolish Rumour babbles not of what was done, but of what was misdome or undone; and foolish History (ever, more or less, the written epitomised synopsis of Rumour) knows so little that were not as well unknown. Attila Invasions, Walter-the-Penniless Crusades, Sicilian Vespers, Thirty-Years Wars: mere sin and misery; not work, but hindrance of work! For the Earth, all this while, was yearly green and yellow with her kind harvests; the hand of the craftsman, the mind of the thinker rested not: and so, after all, and in spite of all, we have this so glorious high-domed blossoming World; concerning which, poor History may well ask, with wonder, Whence *it* came? She knows so little of it, knows so much of what obstructed it, what would have rendered it impossible. Such, nevertheless, by necessity or foolish choice, is her rule and practice; whereby that paradox, 'Happy the people whose annals are vacant,' is not without its true side.

And yet, what seems more pertinent to note here, there is a stillness, not of unobstructed growth, but of passive inertness, the symptom of imminent downfall. As victory is silent, so is defeat. Of the opposing forces the weaker has resigned itself; the stronger marches on, noiseless now, but rapid, inevitable: the fall and overturn will not be noiseless. How all grows, and has its period, even as the herbs of the fields, be it annual, centennial, millennial! All grows and dies, each by its own wondrous laws, in wondrous fashion of its own; spiritual things most wondrously of all. Inscrutable, to the wisest, are these latter; not to be prophesied of, or understood. If when the oak stands proudest flourishing to the eye, you know that its heart is sound, it is not so with the man; how much less with the Society, with the Nation of men! Of such it may be affirmed even that the superficial aspect, that the inward feeling of full health, is generally ominous. For indeed it is of apoplexy, so to speak, and a plethoric lazy habit of body, that Churches, Kingdoms, Social Institutions, oftenest die. Sad, when such Institution plethorically says to itself, Take thy ease, thou hast goods laid up;—like the fool of the Gospel, to whom it was answered, Fool, *this night* thy life shall be required of thee!

Is it the healthy peace, or the ominous unhealthy, that rests on France, for these next Ten Years? Over which the Historian can pass lightly, without call to linger: for as yet events are not, much less performances. Time of sunniest stillness;—shall we call it, what all men thought it, the new Age of Gold? Call it at least, of Paper; which in many ways is the succedaneum of Gold. Bank-paper, wherewith you can still buy when there is no gold left; Book-paper, splendid with Theories, Philosophies, Sensibilities,—beautiful art, not only of revealing Thought, but also of so beautifully hiding from us the want of Thought! Paper is made from the *rags* of things that did once exist; there are endless excellences in Paper.—What wisest Philosophe, in this halcyon uneventful period, could prophesy that there was approaching, big with darkness and confusion, the event of events? Hope ushers in a Revolution,—as earthquakes are preceded by bright weather. On the Fifth of May, fifteen years hence, old Louis will not be sending for the Sacraments; but a new Louis, his grandson, with the whole pomp of astonished intoxicated France, will be opening the States-General.

Dubarrydom and its D'Aiguillons are gone forever. There is a young, still docile, well-intentioned King; a young, beautiful and bountiful, well-intentioned Queen; and with them all France, as it were, become young. Maupeou and his Parlement have to vanish into thick night; respectable Magistrates, not indifferent to the Nation, were it only for having been opponents of the Court, descend now unchained from their 'steep rocks at Croe in Combrailles' and elsewhere, and return singing praises: the old Parlement of Paris resumes its functions. Instead of a profligate bankrupt Abbé Terray, we have now, for Controller-General, a virtuous philosophic Turgot, with a whole Reformed France in his head. By whom whatsoever is wrong, in Finance or otherwise, will be righted,—as far as possible. Is it not as if Wisdom herself were henceforth to have seat and voice in the Council of Kings? Turgot has taken office with the noblest plainness of speech to that effect; been listened to with the noblest royal trustfulness.¹ It is true, as King Louis

¹ Turgot's Letter: Condorcet, *Vie de Turgot* (*Œuvres de Condorcet*, t. v.), p. 67. The date is 24th August 1774.

objects, "They say he never goes to mass;" but liberal France likes him little worse for that; liberal France answers, "The Abbé Terray always went." Philosophism sees, for the first time, a Philosophe (or even a Philosopher) in office: she in all things will applausively second him; neither will light old Maurepas obstruct, if he can easily help it.

Then how 'sweet' are the manners; vice 'losing all its deformity;' becoming *decent* (as established things, making regulations for themselves, do); becoming almost a kind of 'sweet' virtue! Intelligence so abounds; irradiated by wit and the art of conversation. Philosophism sits joyful in her glittering saloons, the dinner-guest of Opulence grown ingenuous, the very nobles proud to sit by her; and preaches, lifted up over all Bastilles, a coming millennium. From far Ferney, Patriarch Voltaire gives sign: veterans Diderot, D'Alembert have lived to see this day; these with their younger Marmontels, Morellets, Chamforts, Raynals, make glad the spicy board of rich ministering Dowager, of philosophic Farmer-General. O nights and suppers of the gods! Of a truth, the long-demonstrated will now be done: 'the Age of Revolutions approaches' (as Jean Jacques wrote), but then of happy blessed ones. Man awakens from his long somnambulism; chases the Phantasms that beleaguered and bewitched him. Behold the new morning glittering down the eastern steeps; fly, false Phantasms, from its shafts of light; let the Absurd fly utterly, forsaking this lower Earth forever. It is Truth and *Astræa Redux* that (in the shape of Philosophism) henceforth reign. For what imaginable purpose was man made, if not to be 'happy'? By victorious Analysis, and Progress of the Species, happiness enough now awaits him. Kings can become philosophers; or else philosophers Kings. Let but Society be once rightly constituted,—by victorious Analysis. The stomach that is empty shall be filled; the throat that is dry shall be wetted with wine. Labour itself shall be all one as rest; not grievous, but joyous. Wheat-fields, one would think, cannot come to grow untilled; no man made clayey, or made weary thereby;—unless indeed machinery will do it? Gratuitous Tailors and Restaurateurs may start up, at fit intervals, one as yet sees not how. But if each will, according to rule of Benevolence, have a care for all, then surely—no one will be uncared for. Nay, who knows but,

by sufficiently victorious Analysis, 'human life may be indefinitely lengthened,' and men get rid of Death, as they have already done of the Devil? We shall then be happy in spite of Death and the Devil.—So preaches magniloquent Philo-
sophism her *Redeunt Saturnia regna*.

The prophetic song of Paris and its Philosophes is audible enough in the Versailles *Œil-de-Bœuf*; and the *Œil-de-Bœuf*, intent chiefly on nearer blessedness, can answer, at worst, with a polite "Why not?" Good old cheery Maurepas is too joyful a Prime Minister to dash the world's joy. Sufficient for the day be its own evil. Cheery old man, he cuts his jokes, and hovers careless along; his cloak well adjusted to the wind, if so be he may please all persons. The simple young King, whom a Maurepas cannot think of troubling with business, has retired into the interior apartments; taciturn, irresolute; though with a sharpness of temper at times: he, at length, determines on a little smith-work; and so, in apprenticeship with a *Sieur Gaimain* (whom one day he shall have little cause to bless), is learning to make locks.² It appears further, he understood Geography; and could read English. Unhappy young King, his childlike trust in that foolish old Maurepas deserved another return. But friend and foe, destiny and himself have combined to do him hurt.

Meanwhile the fair young Queen, in her halls of state, walks like a goddess of Beauty, the cynosure of all eyes; as yet mingles not with affairs; heeds not the future; least of all, dreads it. Weber and Campan³ have pictured her, there within the royal tapestries, in bright boudoirs, baths, peignoirs, and the Grand and Little Toilette; with a whole brilliant world waiting obsequious on her glance: fair young daughter of Time, what things has Time in store for thee! Like Earth's brightest Appearance, she moves gracefully, environed with the grandeur of Earth: a reality, and yet a magic vision; for, behold, shall not utter Darkness swallow it! The soft young heart adopts orphans, portions meritorious maids, delights to succour the poor,—such poor as come picturesquely in her way; and sets the fashion of doing it; for, as was said, Benevolence has now begun reigning. In her Duchess de Polignac, in her Princess de Lamballe, she enjoys something almost like friendship; now

² Campan, i. 125.

³ *Ib.* i. 100-151. Weber, i. 11-50.

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too, after seven long years, she has a child, and soon even a Dauphin, of her own; can reckon herself, as Queens go, happy in a husband.

Events? The grand events are but charitable Feasts of Morals (*Fêtes des mœurs*), with their Prizes and Speeches; Poissarde Processions to the Dauphin's cradle; above all, Flirtations, their rise, progress, decline and fall. There are Snow-statues raised by the poor in hard winter to a Queen who has given them fuel. There are masquerades, theatricals; beautifyings of little Trianon, purchase and repair of St. Cloud; journeyings from the summer Court-Elysium to the winter one. There are poutings and grudgings from the Sardinian Sisters-in-law (for the Princes too are wedded); little jealousies, which Court-Etiquette can moderate. Wholly the lightest-hearted frivolous foam of Existence; yet an artfully refined foam; pleasant were it not so costly, like that which mantles on the wine of Champagne!

Monsieur, the King's elder Brother, has set up for a kind of wit; and leans towards the Philosophe side. Monseigneur d'Artois pulls the mask from a fair impertinent; fights a duel in consequence,—almost drawing blood.⁴ He has breeches of a kind new in this world;—a fabulous kind; 'four tall lackeys,' says Mercier, as if he had seen it, 'hold him up in the air, 'that he may fall into the garment without vestige of wrinkle; 'from which rigorous encasement the same four, in the same 'way, and with more effort, have to deliver him at night.'⁵ This last is he who now, as a gray timeworn man, sits desolate at Grätz;⁶ having winded up his destiny with the Three Days. In such sort are poor mortals swept and shovelled to and fro.

CHAPTER II.

PETITION IN HIEROGLYPHS.

WITH the working people, again, it is not so well. Unlucky! For there are from twenty to twenty-five millions of them. Whom, however, we lump together into a kind of dim

⁴ Besenval, ii. 282-330.⁵ Mercier, *Nouveau Paris*, iii. 147.⁶ A.D. 1834.

compendious unity, monstrous but dim, far off, as the *canaille*; or, more humanely, as 'the masses.' Masses indeed: and yet, singular to say, if, with an effort of imagination, thou follow them, over broad France, into their clay hovels, into their garrrets and hutches, the masses consist all of units. Every unit of whom has his own heart and sorrows; stands covered there with his own skin, and if you prick him he will bleed. O purple Sovereignty, Holiness, Reverence; thou, for example, Cardinal Grand-Almoner, with thy plush covering of honour, who hast thy hands strengthened with dignities and moneys, and art set on thy world watch-tower solemnly, in sight of God, for such ends,—what a thought: that every unit of these masses is a miraculous Man, even as thou thyself art; struggling, with vision or with blindness, for *his* infinite Kingdom (this life which he has got, once only, in the middle of Eternities); with a spark of the Divinity, what thou callest an immortal soul, in him!

Dreary, languid do these struggle in their obscure remoteness; their hearth cheerless, their diet thin. For them, in this world, rises no Era of Hope; hardly now in the other,—if it be not hope in the gloomy rest of Death, for their faith too is failing. Untaught, uncomforted, unfed! A dumb generation; their voice only an inarticulate cry: spokesman, in the King's Council, in the world's forum, they have none that finds credence. At rare intervals (as now, in 1775), they will fling down their hoes and hammers; and, to the astonishment of thinking mankind,¹ flock hither and thither, dangerous, aimless; get the length even of Versailles. Turgot is altering the Corn-trade, abrogating the absurdest Corn-laws; there is dearth, real, or were it even 'factitious;' an indubitable scarcity of bread. And so, on the second day of May 1775, these waste multitudes do here, at Versailles Château, in wide-spread wretchedness, in sallow faces, squalor, winged raggedness, present, as in legible hieroglyphic writing, their Petition of Grievances. The Château gates have to be shut; but the King will appear on the balcony, and speak to them. They have seen the King's face; their Petition of Grievances has been, if not read, looked at. For

¹ Lacroix, *France pendant le 18^{me} Siècle*, ii. 455. *Biographie Universelle*, § Turgot (by Durozoir).

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answer, two of them are hanged, on a 'new gallows forty feet high;' and the rest driven back to their dens,—for a time.

Clearly a difficult 'point' for Government, that of dealing with these masses;—if indeed it be not rather the sole point and problem of Government, and all other points mere accidental crotchets, superficialities, and beatings of the wind! For let Charter-Chests, Use and Wont, Law common and special say what they will, the masses count to so many millions of units; made, to all appearance, by God,—whose Earth this is declared to be. Besides, these people are not without ferocity; they have sinews and indignation. Do but look what holiday old Marquis Mirabeau, the crabbed old Friend of Men, looked on, in these same years, from his lodging, at the Baths of Mont d'Or: 'The
' savages descending in torrents from the mountains; our people
' ordered not to go out. The Curate in surplice and stole; Jus-
' tice in its peruke; Marechausée sabre in hand, guarding the
' place, till the bagpipes can begin. The dance interrupted, in
' a quarter of an hour, by battle; the cries, the squealings of
' children, of infirm persons, and other assistants, tarring them
' on, as the rabble does when dogs fight: frightful men, or rather
' frightful wild-animals, clad in jupes of coarse woollen, with large
' girdles of leather studded with copper nails; of gigantic stature,
' heightened by high wooden-clogs (*sabots*); rising on tiptoe to
' see the fight; tramping time to it; rubbing their sides with
' their elbows: their faces haggard (*figures hâves*), and covered
' with their long greasy hair; the upper part of the visage wax-
' ing pale, the lower distorting itself into the attempt at a cruel
' laugh and a sort of ferocious impatience. And these people
' pay the *taille*! And you want further to take their salt from
' them! And you know not what it is you are stripping barer,
' or as you call it, governing; what, by the spurt of your pen,
' in its cold dastard indifference, you will fancy you can starve
' always with impunity; always till the catastrophe come!—
' Ah Madame, such Government by Blindman's-buff, stumbling
' along too far, will end in the General Overturn (*culbute géné-
' rale*).'²

Undoubtedly a dark feature this in an Age of Gold,—Age,

² *Mémoires de Mirabeau*, écrits par Lui-même, par son Père, son Oncle et son Fils Adoptif (Paris, 1834-5), ii. 186.

at least, of Paper and Hope! Meanwhile, trouble us not with thy prophecies, O croaking Friend of Men: 'tis long that we have heard such; and still the old world keeps wagging, in its old way.

CHAPTER III.

QUESTIONABLE.

OR is this same Age of Hope itself but a simulacrum; as Hope too often is? Cloud-vapour with rainbows painted on it, beautiful to see, to sail towards,—which hovers over Niagara Falls? In that case, victorious Analysis will have enough to do.

Alas, yes! a whole world to remake, if she could see it: work for another than she! For all is wrong, and gone out of joint; the inward spiritual, and the outward economical; head or heart, there is no soundness in it. As indeed, evils of all sorts are more or less of kin, and do usually go together: especially it is an old truth, that wherever huge physical evil is, there, as the parent and origin of it, has moral evil to a proportionate extent been. Before those five-and-twenty labouring Millions, for instance, could get that haggardness of face, which old Mirabeau now looks on, in a Nation calling itself Christian, and calling man the brother of man,—what unspeakable, nigh infinite Dishonesty (of *seeming* and not *being*) in all manner of Rulers, and appointed Watchers, spiritual and temporal, must there not, through long ages, have gone on accumulating! It will accumulate: moreover, it will reach a head; for the first of all Gospels is this, that a Lie cannot endure forever.

In fact, if we pierce through that rosepink vapour of Sentimentalism, Philanthropy, and Feasts of Morals, there lies behind it one of the sorriest spectacles. You might ask, What bonds that ever held a human society happily together, or held it together at all, are in force here? It is an unbelieving people; which has suppositions, hypotheses, and froth-systems of victorious Analysis; and for *belief* this mainly, that Pleasure is pleasant. Hunger they have for all sweet things; and the law of Hunger: but what other law? Within them, or over them, properly none!

Their King has become a King Popinjay: with his Maurepas Government, gyrating as the weather-cock does, blown

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about by every wind. Above them they see no God; or they even do not look above, except with astronomical glasses. The Church indeed still is; but in the most submissive state; quite tamed by Philosophism; in a singularly short time; for the hour was come. Some twenty years ago, your Archbishop Beaumont would not even let the poor Jansenists get buried: your Loménie Brienne (a rising man, whom we shall meet with yet) could, in the name of the Clergy, insist on having the Anti-protestant Laws, which condemn to death for preaching, 'put in execution.'¹ And alas, now not so much as Baron Holbach's Atheism can be burnt,—except as pipe-matches by the private speculative individual. Our Church stands haltered, dumb, like a dumb ox; lowing only for provender (of tithes); content if it can have that; or, with dumb stupor, expecting its further doom. And the Twenty Millions of 'haggard faces;' and, as finger-post and guidance to them in their dark struggle, 'a gallows forty feet high'! Certainly a singular Golden Age; with its Feasts of Morals, its 'sweet manners,' its sweet institutions (*institutions douces*); betokening nothing but peace among men! —Peace? O Philosophe-Sentimentalism, what hast thou to do with peace, when thy mother's name is Jezebel? Foul Product of still fouler Corruption, thou with the corruption art doomed!

Meanwhile it is singular how long the rotten will hold together, provided you do not handle it roughly. For whole generations it continues standing, 'with a ghastly affectation of life,' after all life and truth has fled out of it: so loth are men to quit their old ways; and, conquering indolence and inertia, venture on new. Great truly is the Actual; is the Thing that has rescued itself from bottomless deeps of theory and possibility, and stands there as a definite indisputable Fact, whereby men do work and live, or once did so. Wisely shall men cleave to that, while it will endure; and quit it with regret, when it gives way under them. Rash enthusiast of Change, beware! Hast thou well considered all that Habit does in this life of ours; how all Knowledge and all Practice hang wondrous over infinite abysses of the Unknown, Impracticable; and our whole being is an infinite abyss, *overarched* by Habit, as by a thin Earth-rind, laboriously built together?

¹ Boissy d'Anglas, *Vie de Malesherbes*, i. 15-22.

But if 'every man,' as it has been written, 'holds confined within him a *mad*-man,' what must every Society do ;—Society, which in its commonest state is called 'the standing miracle of this world' ! 'Without such Earth-rind of Habit,' continues our author, 'call it System of Habits, in a word, *fixed ways* of acting and of believing, — Society would not exist at all. With such it exists, better or worse. Herein too, in this its System of Habits, acquired, retained how you will, lies the true Law-Code and Constitution of a Society ; the only Code, though an unwritten one, which it can in nowise *disobey*. The thing we call written Code, Constitution, Form of Government, and the like, what is it but some miniature image, and solemnly expressed summary of this unwritten Code ? *Is*, — or rather, alas, is *not* ; but only should be, and always tends to be ! In which latter discrepancy lies struggle without end.' And now, we add in the same dialect, let but, by ill chance, in such ever-enduring struggle,—your 'thin Earth-rind' be once *broken* ! The fountains of the great deep boil forth ; fire-fountains, enveloping, engulfing. Your 'Earth-rind' is shattered, swallowed up ; instead of a green flowery world, there is a waste wild-weltering chaos ;—which has again, with tumult and struggle, to *make* itself into a world.

On the other hand, be this conceded : Where thou findest a Lie that is oppressing thee, extinguish it. Lies exist there only to be extinguished ; they wait and cry earnestly for extinction. Think well, meanwhile, in what spirit thou wilt do it : not with hatred, with headlong selfish violence ; but in clearness of heart, with holy zeal, gently, almost with pity. Thou wouldst not *replace* such extinct Lie by a new Lie, which a new Injustice of thy own were ; the parent of still other Lies ? Whereby the latter end of that business were worse than the beginning.

So, however, in this world of ours, which has both an indestructible hope in the Future, and an indestructible tendency to persevere as in the Past, must Innovation and Conservation wage their perpetual conflict, as they may and can. Wherein the 'dæmonic element,' that lurks in all human things, *may* doubtless, some once in the thousand years,—get vent ! But indeed may we not regret that such conflict,—which, after all, is but like that classical one of 'hate-filled Amazons with heroic

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Youths,' and will end in *embraces*,—should usually be so spasmodic? For Conservation, strengthened by that mightiest quality in us, our indolence, sits for long ages, not victorious only, which she should be; but tyrannical, incommunicative. She holds her adversary as if annihilated; such adversary lying, all the while, like some buried Enceladus; who, to gain the smallest freedom, has to stir a whole Trinacria with its *Ætnas*.

Wherefore, on the whole, we will honour a Paper Age too; an Era of hope! For in this same frightful process of Enceladus Revolt; when the task, on which no mortal would willingly enter, has become imperative, inevitable,—is it not even a kindness of Nature that she lures us forward by cheerful promises, fallacious or not; and a whole generation plunges into the Erebus Blackness, lighted on by an Era of Hope? It has been well said: 'Man is based on Hope; he has properly no other possession but Hope; this habitation of his is named the 'Place of Hope.'

CHAPTER IV.

MAUREPAS.

BUT now, among French hopes, is not that of old M. de Maurepas one of the best-grounded; who hopes that he, by dexterity, shall contrive to continue Minister? Nimble old man, who for all emergencies has his light jest; and ever in the worst confusion will emerge, cork-like, unsunk! Small care to him is Perfectibility, Progress of the Species, and *Astræa Redux*: good only, that a man of light wit, verging towards fourscore, can in the seat of authority feel himself important among men. Shall we call him, as haughty Châteauroux was wont of old, '*M. Faquinet* (Diminutive of Scoundrel)? In courtier dialect, he is now named 'the Nestor of France;' such governing Nestor as France has.

At bottom, nevertheless, it might puzzle one to say where the Government of France, in these days, specially is. In that Château of Versailles, we have Nestor, King, Queen, ministers and clerks, with paper-bundles tied in tape: but the Government? For Government is a thing that *governs*, that guides; and it need be, compels. Visible in France there is not such

a thing. Invisible, inorganic, on the other hand, there is : in Philosophe saloons, in Œil-de-Bœuf galleries ; in the tongue of the babbler, in the pen of the pamphleteer. Her Majesty appearing at the Opera is applauded ; she returns all radiant with joy. Anon the applauses wax fainter, or threaten to cease ; she is heavy of heart, the light of her face has fled. Is Sovereignty some poor Montgolfier ; which, blown into by the popular wind, grows great and mounts ; or sinks flaccid, if the wind be withdrawn ? France was long a 'Despotism tempered by Epigrams ;' and now, it would seem, the Epigrams have got the upper hand.

Happy were a young 'Louis the Desired' to make France happy ; if it did not prove too troublesome, and he only knew the way. But there is endless discrepancy round him ; so many claims and clamours ; a mere confusion of tongues. Not reconcilable by man ; not manageable, suppressible, save by some strongest and wisest man ;—which only a lightly-jesting lightly-gyrating M. de Maurepas can so much as subsist amidst. Philosophism claims her new Era, meaning thereby innumerable things. And claims it in no faint voice ; for France at large, hitherto mute, is now beginning to speak also ; and speaks in that same sense. A huge, many-toned sound ; distant, yet not unimpressive. On the other hand, the Œil-de-Bœuf, which, as nearest, one can hear best, claims with shrill vehemence that the Monarchy be as heretofore a Horn of Plenty ; wherefrom loyal courtiers may draw,—to the just support of the throne. Let Liberalism and a New Era, if such is the wish, be introduced ; only no curtailment of the royal moneys ! Which latter condition, alas, is precisely the impossible one.

Philosophism, as we saw, has got her Turgot made Controller-General ; and there shall be endless reformation. Unhappily this Turgot could continue only twenty months. With a miraculous *Fortunatus' Purse* in his Treasury, it might have lasted longer ; with such Purse indeed, every French Controller-General, that would prosper in these days, ought first to provide himself. But here again may we not remark the bounty of Nature in regard to Hope ? Man after man advances confident to the Augean Stable, as if *he* could clean it ; expends his little fraction of an ability on it, with such cheerfulness ; does, in so far as he was honest, accomplish something. Turgot

has faculties ; honesty, insight, heroic volition ; but the Fortunatus' Purse he has not. Sanguine Controller-General! a whole pacific French Revolution may stand schemed in the head of the thinker ; but who shall pay the unspeakable 'indemnities' that will be needed? Alas, far from that: on the very threshold of the business, he proposes that the Clergy, the Noblesse, the very Parlements be subjected to taxes like the People! One shriek of indignation and astonishment reverberates through all the Château galleries ; M. de Maurepas has to gyrate : the poor King, who had written few weeks ago, '*Il n'y a que vous et moi qui aimions le peuple*' (There is none but you and I that has 'the people's interest at heart), must write now a dismissal;¹ and let the French Revolution accomplish itself, pacifically or not, as it can.

Hope, then, is deferred? Deferred; not destroyed, or abated. Is not this, for example, our Patriarch Voltaire, after long years of absence, revisiting Paris? With face shrivelled to nothing ; with 'huge peruke *à la Louis Quatorze*, which leaves only two eyes visible, glittering like carbuncles,' the old man is here.² What an outburst! Sneering Paris has suddenly grown reverent ; devotional with Hero-worship. Nobles have disguised themselves as tavern-waiters to obtain sight of him : the loveliest of France would lay their hair beneath his feet. 'His chariot is the nucleus of a Comet ; whose train fills whole streets :' they crown him in the theatre, with immortal vivats ; finally 'stifle him under roses,'—for old Richelieu recommended opium in such state of the nerves, and the excessive Patriarch took too much. Her Majesty herself had some thought of sending for him ; but was dissuaded. Let Majesty consider it, nevertheless. The purport of this man's existence has been to wither-up and annihilate all whereon Majesty and Worship for the present rests : and is it *so* that the world recognises him? With Apotheosis ; as its Prophet and Speaker, who has spoken wisely the thing it longed to say? Add only, that the body of this same rose-stifled, beatified Patriarch cannot get buried except by stealth. It is wholly a notable business ; and France, without doubt, is *big* (what the Germans call 'Of good Hope') : we shall wish her a happy birth-hour, and blessed fruit.

¹ In May 1776.

² February 1778.

Beaumarchais too has now winded-up his Law-Pleadings (*Mémoires*);³ not without result, to himself and to the world. Caron Beaumarchais (or de Beaumarchais, for he got ennobled) had been born poor, but aspiring, esurient; with talents, audacity, adroitness; above all, with the talent for intrigue: a lean, but also a tough indomitable man. Fortune and dexterity brought him to the harpsichord of Mesdames, our good Princesses *Loque*, *Graille* and Sisterhood. Still better, Pâris Duvernier, the Court-Banker, honoured him with some confidence; to the length even of transactions in cash. Which confidence, however, Duvernier's Heir, a person of quality, would not continue. Quite otherwise; there springs a Lawsuit from it: wherein tough Beaumarchais, losing both money and repute, is, in the opinion of Judge-Reporter Gozman, of the Parlement Maupeou, and of a whole indifferent acquiescing world, miserably beaten. In all men's opinion, only not in his own! Inspired by the indignation, which makes, if not verses, satirical law-papers, the withered Music-master, with a desperate heroism, takes up his lost cause in spite of the world; fights for it, against Reporters, Parlements and Principalities, with light banter, with clear logic; adroitly, with an inexhaustible toughness and resource, like the skilfulest fencer; on whom, so skilful is he, the whole world now looks. Three long years it lasts; with wavering fortune. In fine, after labours comparable to the Twelve of Hercules, our unconquerable Caron triumphs; regains his Lawsuit and Lawsuits; strips Reporter Gozman of the judicial ermine; covering him with a perpetual garment of obloquy instead:—and in regard to the Parlement Maupeou (which he has helped to extinguish), to Parlements of all kinds, and to French Justice generally, gives rise to endless reflections in the minds of men. Thus has Beaumarchais, like a lean French Hercules, ventured down, driven by destiny, into the Nether Kingdoms; and victoriously tamed hell-dogs there. He also is henceforth among the notabilities of his generation.

³ 1773-6. See *Œuvres de Beaumarchais*; where they, and the history of them, are given

CHAPTER V.

ASTRÆA REDUX WITHOUT CASH.

OBSERVE, however, beyond the Atlantic, has not the new day verily dawned! Democracy, as we said, is born; storm-girt, is struggling for life and victory. A sympathetic France rejoices over the Rights of Man; in all saloons, it is said, What a spectacle! Now too behold our Deane, our Franklin, American Plenipotentiaries, here in person soliciting:¹ the sons of the Saxon Puritans, with their Old-Saxon temper, Old-Hebrew culture, sleek Silas, sleek Benjamin, here on such errand, among the light children of Heathenism, Monarchy, Sentimentalism, and the Scarlet-woman. A spectacle indeed; over which saloons may cackle joyous; though Kaiser Joseph, questioned on it, gave this answer, most unexpected from a Philosophe: "Madame, the trade I live by is that of royalist (*Mon métier à moi c'est d'être royaliste*)."

So thinks light Maurepas too; but the wind of Philosophism and force of public opinion will blow him round. Best wishes, meanwhile, are sent; clandestine privateers armed. Paul Jones shall equip his *Bon Homme Richard*: weapons, military stores can be smuggled over (if the English do not seize them); wherein, once more Beaumarchais, dimly as the Giant Smuggler, becomes visible,—filling his own lank pocket withal. But surely, in any case, France should have a Navy. For which great object were not now the time; now when that proud Termagant of the Seas has her hands full? It is true, an impoverished Treasury cannot build ships; but the hint once given (which Beaumarchais says *he* gave), this and the other loyal Seaport, Chamber of Commerce, will build and offer them. Goodly vessels bound into the waters; a *Ville de Paris*, Leviathan of ships.

And now when gratuitous three-deckers dance there at anchor, with streamers flying; and eleutheromaniac Philosophedom grows ever more clamorous, what can a Maurepas do—but gyrate? Squadrons cross the ocean: Gateses, Lees, rough Yankee Generals, 'with woollen night-caps under their hats,'

¹ 1777; Deane somewhat earlier: Franklin remained till 1785.

present arms to the far-glancing Chivalry of France ; and new-born Democracy sees, not without amazement, 'Despotism tempered by Epigrams' fight at her side. So, however, it is. King's forces and heroic volunteers ; Rochambeaus, Bouillés, Lameths, Lafayettes, have drawn their swords in this sacred quarrel of mankind ;—shall draw them again elsewhere, in the strangest way.

Off Ushant some naval thunder is heard. In the course of which did our young Prince, Duke de Chartres, 'hide in the hold ;' or did he materially, by *active* heroism, contribute to the victory ? Alas, by a second edition, we learn that there was no victory ; or that English Keppel had it.² Our poor young Prince gets his Opera plaudits changed into mocking tehees ; and cannot become Grand-Admiral,—the source to him of woes which one may call endless.

Wo also for *Ville de Paris*, the Leviathan of ships ! English Rodney has clutched it, and led it home, with the rest ; so successful was his 'new manœuvre of breaking the enemy's line.'³ It seems as if, according to Louis XV., 'France were never to have a Navy.' Brave Suffren must return from Hyder Ally and the Indian Waters ; with small result ; yet with great glory for 'six' *non-defeats* ;—which indeed, with such seconding as he had, one may reckon heroic. Let the old sea-hero rest now, honoured of France, in his native Cevennes mountains ; send smoke, not of gunpowder, but mere culinary smoke, through the old chimneys of the Castle of Jalès,—which one day, in other hands, shall have other fame. Brave Lapérouse shall by and by lift anchor, on philanthropic Voyage of Discovery ; for the King knows Geography.⁴ But, alas, this also will not prosper : the brave Navigator goes, and returns not ; the Seekers search far seas for him in vain. He has vanished trackless into blue Immensity ; and only some mournful mysterious shadow of him hovers long in all heads and hearts.

Neither, while the War yet lasts, will Gibraltar surrender. Not though Crillon, Nassau-Siegen, with the ablest projectors extant, are there ; and Prince Condé and Prince d'Artois have hastened to help. Wondrous leather-roofed Floating-batteries,

² 27th July 1778.

³ 9th and 12th April 1782.

⁴ August 1st, 1785.

set afloat by French-Spanish *Pacte de Famille*, give gallant summons: to which, nevertheless, Gibraltar answers Plutonically, with mere torrents of red-hot iron,—as if stone Calpe had become a throat of the Pit; and utters such a Doom's-blast of a *No*, as all men must credit.⁵

And so, with this loud explosion, the noise of War has ceased; an Age of Benevolence may hope, forever. Our noble volunteers of Freedom have returned, to be her missionaries. Lafayette, as the matchless of his time, glitters in the Versailles *Œil-de-Bœuf*; has his Bust set up in the Paris *Hôtel-de-Ville*. Democracy stands inexpugnable, immeasurable, in her New World; has even a foot lifted towards the Old;—and our French Finances, little strengthened by such work, are in no healthy way.

What to do with the Finances? This indeed is the great question: a small but most black weather-symptom, which no radiance of universal hope can cover. We saw Turgot cast forth from the Controllership, with shrieks,—for want of a Fortunatus' Purse. As little could M. de Clugny manage the duty; or indeed do anything, but consume his wages; attain 'a place in History,' where as an ineffectual shadow thou beholdest him still lingering;—and let the duty manage itself. Did Genevese Necker *possess* such a Purse, then? He possessed banker's skill, banker's honesty; *credit* of all kinds, for he had written Academic Prize Essays, struggled for India Companies, given dinners to Philosophes, and 'realised a fortune in twenty years.' He possessed, further, a taciturnity and solemnity; of depth, or else of dulness. How singular for Celadon Gibbon, false swain as he had proved; whose father, keeping most probably his own gig, 'would not hear of such a union,'—to find now his forsaken Demoiselle Curchod sitting in the high places of the world, as Minister's Madame, and 'Necker not jealous!'⁶

A new young Demoiselle, one day to be famed as a Madame and De Staël, was romping about the knees of the Decline and Fall: the lady Necker founds Hospitals; gives solemn Philosopher dinner-parties, to cheer her exhausted Controller-General. Strange things have happened: by clamour of Philosophism,

⁵ *Annual Register* (Dodsley's), xxv. 258-267. September, October, 1782.

⁶ Gibbon's *Letters*: date, 16th June 1777, &c.

management of Marquis de Pezay, and Poverty constraining even Kings. And so Necker, Atlas-like, sustains the burden of the Finances, for five years long.⁷ Without wages, for he refused such; cheered only by Public Opinion, and the ministering of his noble Wife. With many thoughts in him, it is hoped;—which, however, he is shy of uttering. His *Compte Rendu*, published by the royal permission, fresh sign of a New Era, shows wonders;—which what but the genius of some Atlas-Necker can prevent from becoming portents? In Necker's head too there is a whole pacific French Revolution, of its kind; and in that taciturn dull depth, or deep dulness, ambition enough.

Meanwhile, alas, his Fortunatus' Purse turns out to be little other than the old '*vectigal* of Parsimony.' Nay, he too has to produce his scheme of taxing: Clergy, Noblesse to be taxed; Provincial Assemblies, and the rest,—like a mere Turgot! The expiring M. de Maurepas must gyrate one other time. Let Necker also depart; not unlamented.

Great in a private station, Necker looks on from the distance; abiding his time. 'Eighty thousand copies' of his new Book, which he calls *Administration des Finances*, will be sold in few days. He is gone; but shall return, and that more than once, borne by a whole shouting Nation. Singular Controller-General of the Finances; once Clerk in Thelusson's Bank!

CHAPTER VI.

WINDBAGS.

So marches the world, in this its Paper Age, or Era of Hope. Not without obstructions, war-explosions; which, however, heard from such distance, are little other than a cheerful marching-music. If indeed that dark living chaos of Ignorance and Hunger, five-and-twenty million strong, under your feet, were to begin playing!

For the present, however, consider Longchamp; now when Lent is ending, and the glory of Paris and France has gone forth, as in annual wont. Not to assist at *Tenebris* Masses, but

⁷ Till May 1781.

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to sun itself and show itself, and salute the young Spring.¹ Manifest, bright-tinted, glittering with gold; all through the Bois de Boulogne, in longdrawn variegated rows;—like longdrawn living flower-borders, tulips, dahlias, lilies of the valley; all in their moving flower-pots (of new-gilt carriages): pleasure of the eye, and pride of life! So rolls and dances the Procession: steady, of firm assurance, as if it rolled on adamant and the foundations of the world; not on mere heraldic parchment,—under which smoulders a lake of fire. Dance on, ye foolish ones; ye sought not wisdom, neither have ye found it. Ye and your fathers have sown the wind, ye shall reap the whirlwind. Was it not, from of old, written: *The wages of sin is death?*

But at Longchamp, as elsewhere, we remark for one thing, that dame and cavalier are waited on each by a kind of human familiar, named *jokei*. 'Little elf, or imp; though young, already withered; with its withered air of premature vice, of knowingness, of completed elf-hood: useful in various emergencies. The name *jokei* (jockey) comes from the English; as the thing also fancies that it does. Our Anglomania, in fact, is grown considerable; prophetic of much. If France is to be free, why shall she not, now when mad war is hushed, love neighbouring Freedom? Cultivated men, your Dukes de Liancourt, de la Rochefoucault admire the English Constitution, the English National Character; would import what of it they can.

Of what is lighter, especially if it be light as wind, how much easier the freightage! Non-Admiral Duke de Chartres (not yet d'Orléans or Egalité) flies to and fro across the Strait; importing English Fashions: this he, as hand-and-glove with an English Prince of Wales, is surely qualified to do. Carriages and saddles; top-boots and *rédingotes*, as we call riding-coats. Nay the very mode of riding: for now no man on a level with his age but will trot *à l'Anglaise*, rising in the stirrups; scornful of the old sitfast method, in which, according to Shakspeare, 'butter and eggs' go to market. Also, he can urge the fervid wheels, this brave Chartres of ours; no whip in Paris is rasher and surer than the unprofessional one of Monseigneur.

Elf *jokeis*, we have seen; but see now real Yorkshire jockeys, and what they ride on, and train: English racers for French

¹ Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, ii. 51. Louvet, *Roman de Faublas*, &c.

Races. These likewise we owe first (under the Providence of the Devil) to Monseigneur. Prince d'Artois also has his stud of racers. Prince d'Artois has withal the strangest horseleech: a moonstruck, much-enduring individual, of Neuchâtel in Switzerland,—named *Jean Paul Marat*. A problematic Chevalier d'Eon, now in petticoats, now in breeches, is no less problematic in London than in Paris; and causes bets and lawsuits. Beautiful days of international communion! Swindlery and Blackguardism have stretched hands across the Channel, and saluted mutually: on the racecourse of Vincennes or Sablons, behold, in English curricule-and-four, wafted glorious among the principalities and rascalities, an English Dr. Dodd,²—for whom also the too early gallows gapes.

Duke de Chartres was a young Prince of great promise, as young princes often are; which promise unfortunately has belied itself. With the huge Orléans Property, with Duke de Penthièvre for Father-in-law (and now the young Brother-in-law Lamballe killed by excesses),—he will one day be the richest man in France. Meanwhile, 'his hair is all falling out, his blood is quite spoiled,'—by early transcendentalism of debauchery. Carbuncles stud his face; dark studs on a ground of burnished copper. A most signal failure, this young Prince! The stuff prematurely burnt out of him: little left but foul smoke and ashes of expiring sensualities: what might have been Thought, Insight, and even Conduct, gone now, or fast going,—to confused darkness, broken by bewildering dazzlements; to obstreperous crotchets; to activities which you may call semi-delirious, or even semi-galvanic! Paris affects to laugh at his charioteering; but he heeds not such laughter.

On the other hand, what a day, not of laughter, was that, when he threatened, for lucre's sake, to lay sacrilegious hand on the Palais-Royal Garden!³ The flower-parterres shall be riven up; the Chestnut Avenues shall fall: time-honoured boscages, under which the Opera Hamadryads were wont to wander, not inexorable to men. Paris moans aloud. Philidor, from his Café de la Régence, shall no longer look on greenness; the loungers and losels of the world, where now shall they haunt?

² Adelung, *Geschichte der menschlichen Narrheit*, § Dodd.

³ 1781-82. (Dulaure, viii. 423.)

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In vain is moaning. The axe glitters; the sacred groves fall crashing,—for indeed Monseigneur was short of money: the Opera Hamadryads fly with shrieks. Shriek not, ye Opera Hamadryads; or not as those that have no comfort. He will surround your Garden with new edifices and piazzas: though narrowed, it shall be replanted; dized with hydraulic jets, cannon which the sun fires at noon; things bodily, things spiritual, such as man has not imagined;—and in the Palais-Royal shall again, and more than ever, be the *Sorcerer's Sabbath* and *Satan-at-Home* of our Planet.

What will not mortals attempt? From remote Annonay in the Vivarais, the Brothers Montgolfier send up their paper-dome, filled with the smoke of burnt wool.⁴ The Vivarais Provincial Assembly is to be prorogued this same day: Vivarais Assembly-members applaud, and the shouts of congregated men. Will victorious Analysis scale the very Heavens, then?

Paris hears with eager wonder; Paris shall ere long see. From Réveillon's Paper-warehouse there, in the Rue St. Antoine (a noted Warehouse),—the new Montgolfier air-ship launches itself. Ducks and poultry have been borne skyward: but now shall men be borne.⁵ Nay, Chemist Charles thinks of hydrogen and glazed silk. Chemist Charles will himself ascend, from the Tuileries Garden; Montgolfier solemnly cutting the cord. By Heaven, this Charles does also mount, he and another! Ten times ten thousand hearts go palpitating; all tongues are mute with wonder and fear;—till a shout, like the voice of seas, rolls after him, on his wild way. He soars, he dwindles upwards; has become a mere gleaming circlet,—like some Turgotine snuffbox, what we call '*Turgotine-Platitude*;' like some new daylight Moon! Finally he descends; welcomed by the universe. Duchess Polignac, with a party, is in the Bois de Boulogne, waiting; though it is drizzly winter, the 1st of December 1783. The whole chivalry of France, Duke de Chartres foremost, gallops to receive him.⁶

Beautiful invention; mounting heavenward, so beautifully,—so unguidably! Emblem of much, and of our Age of Hope itself; which shall mount, specifically-light, majestically in this

⁴ 5th June 1783.⁵ October and November 1783.⁶ Lacroix, *18^{me} Siècle*, iii. 258.

same manner; and hover,—tumbling whither Fate will. Well if it do not, Pilâtre-like, explode; and *démont* all the more tragically!—So, riding on windbags, will men scale the Empyrean.

Or observe Herr Doctor Mesmer, in his spacious Magnetic Halls. Long-stoled he walks; reverend, glancing upwards, as in rapt commerce; an Antique Egyptian Hierophant in this new age. Soft music flits; breaking fitfully the sacred stillness. Round their Magnetic Mystery, which to the eye is mere tubs with water,—sit breathless, rod in hand, the circles of Beauty and Fashion, each circle a living circular *Passion-Flower*: expecting the magnetic afflatus, and new-manufactured Heaven-on-Earth. O women, O men, great is your infidel-faith! A Parliamentary Dupont, a Bergasse, D'Espréménil we notice there; Chemist Berthollet too,—on the part of Monseigneur de Chartres.

Had not the Academy of Sciences, with its Baillys, Franklins, Lavoisiers, interfered! But it did interfere.⁷ Mesmer may pocket his hard money, and withdraw. Let him walk silent by the shore of the Bodensee, by the ancient town of Constance; meditating on much. For so, under the strangest new vesture, the old great truth (since no vesture can hide it) begins again to be revealed: That man is what we call a miraculous creature, with miraculous power over men; and, on the whole, with such a Life in him, and such a World round him, as victorious Analysis, with her Physiologies, Nervous-systems, Physic and Metaphysic, will never completely *name*, to say nothing of explaining. Wherein also the Quack shall, in all ages, come in for his share.

CHAPTER VII.

CONTRAT SOCIAL.

IN such succession of singular prismatic tints, flush after flush suffusing our horizon, does the Era of Hope dawn on towards fulfilment. Questionable! As indeed, with an Era of Hope that rests on mere universal Benevolence, victorious Analysis, Vice cured of its deformity; and, in the longrun, on Twenty-five dark savage Millions, looking up, in hunger and weariness, to that *Ecce-signum* of theirs 'forty feet high,'—how could it but be questionable?

⁷ August 1784.

Through all time, if we read aright, sin was, is, will be, the parent of misery. This land calls itself most Christian, and has crosses and cathedrals; but its High-priest is some Roche-Aymon, some Necklace-Cardinal Louis de Rohan. The voice of the poor, through long years, ascends inarticulate, in *Jacqueries*, meal-mobs; low-whimpering of infinite moan: unheeded of the Earth; not unheeded of Heaven. Always moreover where the Millions are wretched, there are the Thousands straitened, unhappy; only the Units can flourish; or say rather, be ruined the last. Industry, all noosed and haltered, as if it too were some beast of chase for the mighty hunters of this world to bait, and cut slices from,—cries passionately to these its well-paid guides and watchers, not, *Guide me*; but, *Laissez faire*, Leave me alone of *your* guidance! What market has Industry in this France? For two things there may be market and demand: for the coarser kind of field-fruits, since the Millions will live: for the finer kinds of luxury and spicery,—of multiform taste, from opera-melodies down to racers and courtesans; since the Units will be amused. It is at bottom but a mad state of things.

To mend and remake all which we have, indeed, victorious Analysis. Honour to victorious Analysis; nevertheless, out of the Workshop and Laboratory, what thing was victorious Analysis yet known to make? Detection of incoherences, mainly; destruction of the incoherent. From of old, Doubt was but half a magician; she evokes the spectres which she cannot quell. We shall have 'endless vortices of froth-logic;' whereon first words, and then things, are whirled and swallowed. Remark, accordingly, as acknowledged grounds of Hope, at bottom mere precursors of Despair, this perpetual theorising about Man, the Mind of Man, Philosophy of Government, Progress of the Species and such-like; the main thinking furniture of every head. Time, and so many Montesquieus, Mablys, spokesmen of Time, have discovered innumerable things: and now has not Jean Jacques promulgated his new Evangel of a *Contrat Social*; explaining the whole mystery of Government, and how it is *contracted* and bargained for,—to universal satisfaction? Theories of Government! Such have been, and will be; in ages of decadence. Acknowledge them in their degree; as processes of Nature, who does nothing in vain; as steps in her great process. Meanwhile, what theory is so certain as this, That all

theories, were they never so earnest, painfully elaborated, are, and, by the very conditions of them, must be incomplete, questionable, and even false? Thou shalt know that this Universe is, what it professes to be, an *infinite* one. Attempt not to swallow *it*, for thy logical digestion; be thankful, if skilfully planting down this and the other fixed pillar in the chaos, thou prevent its swallowing *thee*. That a new young generation has exchanged the Sceptic Creed, *What shall I believe?* for passionate Faith in this Gospel according to Jean Jacques is a further step in the business; and betokens much.

Blessed also is Hope; and always from the beginning there was some Millennium prophesied; Millennium of Holiness; but (what is notable) never till this new Era, any Millennium of mere Ease and plentiful Supply. In such prophesied Lubberland, of Happiness, Benevolence, and Vice cured of its deformity, trust not, my friends! Man is not what one calls a happy animal; his appetite for sweet victual is so enormous. How, in this wild Universe, which storms in on him, infinite, vague-menacing, shall poor man find, say not happiness, but existence, and footing to stand on, if it be not by girding himself together for continual endeavour and endurance? Wo, if in his heart there dwelt no devout Faith; if the word Duty had lost its meaning for him! For as to this of Sentimentalism, so useful for weeping with over romances and on pathetic occasions, it otherwise verily will avail nothing; nay less. The healthy heart that said to itself, "How healthy am I!" was already fallen into the fatalest sort of disease. Is not Sentimentalism twin-sister to Cant, if not one and the same with it? Is not Cant the *materia prima* of the Devil; from which all falsehoods, imbecilities, abominations body themselves; from which no true thing *can* come? For Cant is itself properly a double-distilled Lie; the second-power of a Lie.

And now if a whole Nation fall into that? In such case, I answer, infallibly they will return out of it! For life is no cunningly-devised deception or self-deception: it is a great truth that thou art alive, that thou hast desires, necessities; neither can these subsist and satisfy themselves on delusions, but on fact. To fact, depend on it, we shall come back: to such fact, blessed or cursed, as we have wisdom for. The lowest, least blessed fact one knows of, on which necessitous mortals have

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ever based themselves, seems to be the primitive one of Cannibalism : That *I* can devour *Thee*. What if such Primitive Fact were precisely the one we had (with our improved methods) to revert to, and begin anew from !

CHAPTER VIII.

PRINTED PAPER.

IN such a practical France, let the theory of Perfectibility say what it will, discontents cannot be wanting : your promised Reformation is so indispensable ; yet it comes not ; who will begin it—with himself ? Discontent with what is around us, still more with what is above us, goes on increasing ; seeking ever new vents.

Of Street Ballads, of Epigrams that from of old tempered Despotism, we need not speak. Nor of Manuscript Newspapers (*Nouvelles à la main*) do we speak. Bachaumont and his journeymen and followers may close those 'thirty volumes of scurrilous eaves-dropping,' and quit that trade ; for at length if not liberty of the Press, there is license. Pamphlets can be surreptitiously vended and read in Paris, did they even bear to be 'Printed at Pekin.' We have a *Courrier de l'Europe* in those years, regularly published at London ; by a De Morande, whom the guillotine has not yet devoured. There too an unruly Linguet, still unguillotined, when his own country has become too hot for him, and his brother Advocates have cast him out, can emit his hoarse wailings, and *Bastille Dévoilée* (Bastille Unveiled). Loquacious Abbé Raynal, at length, has his wish ; sees the *Histoire Philosophique*, with its 'lubricity,' unverity, loose loud eleutheromaniac rant (contributed, they say, by Philosophedom at large, though in the Abbé's name, and to his glory), burnt by the common hangman ;—and sets out on his travels as a martyr. It was the Edition of 1781 ; perhaps the last notable Book that had such fire-beatitude,—the hangman discovering now that it did not serve.

Again, in Courts of Law, with their money-quarrels, divorce-cases, wheresoever a glimpse into the household existence can be had, what indications ! The Parlements of Besançon and Aix ring, audible to all France, with the amours and destinies

of a young Mirabeau. He, under the nurture of a 'Friend of Men,' has, in State Prisons, in marching Regiments, Dutch Authors'-garrets, and quite other scenes, 'been for twenty years learning to resist despotism :' despotism of men, and alas also of gods. How, beneath this rose-coloured veil of Universal Benevolence and *Astræa Redux*, is the sanctuary of Home so often a dreary void, or a dark contentious Hell-on-Earth ! The old Friend of Men has his own divorce-case too ; and at times, 'his whole family but one' under lock and key : he writes much about reforming and enfranchising the world ; and for his own private behoof he has needed sixty *Lettres-de-Cachet*. A man of insight too ; with resolution, even with manful principle : but in such an element, inward and outward ; which he could not rule, but only madden. Edacity, rapacity ;—quite contrary to the finer sensibilities of the heart ! Fools, that expect your verdant Millennium, and nothing but Love and Abundance, brooks running wine, winds whispering music,—with the whole ground and basis of your existence champéd into a mud of Sensuality ; which, daily growing deeper, will soon have no bottom but the Abyss !

Or consider that unutterable business of the Diamond Necklace. Red-hatted Cardinal Louis de Rohan ; Sicilian jail-bird Balsamo Cagliostro ; milliner Dame de Lamotte, 'with a face of some piquancy :' the highest Church Dignitaries waltzing, in Walpurgis Dance, with quack-prophets, pickpurses and public women ;—a whole Satan's Invisible World displayed ; working there continually under the daylight visible one ; the smoke of its torment going up forever ! The Throne has been brought into scandalous collision with the Treadmill. Astonished Europe rings with the mystery for nine months ; sees only lie unfold itself from lie ; corruption among the lofty and the low, gulosity, credulity, imbecility, strength nowhere but in the hunger. Weep, fair Queen, thy first tears of unmixed wretchedness ! Thy fair name has been tarnished by foul breath ; irremediably while life lasts. No more shalt thou be loved and pitied by living hearts, till a new generation has been born, and thy own heart lies cold, cured of all its sorrows.—The Epigrams henceforth become, not sharp and bitter ; but cruel, atrocious, unmentionable. On that 31st of May 1786, a miserable Cardinal Grand-Almoner Rohan, on issuing from his Bastille, is escorted by hurraing crowds :

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unloved he, and worthy of no love; but important since the Court and Queen are his enemies.¹

How is our bright Era of Hope dimmed; and the whole sky growing bleak with signs of hurricane and earthquake! It is a doomed world: gone all 'obedience that made men free;' fast going the obedience that made men slaves,—at least to one another. Slaves only of their own lusts they now are, and will be. Slaves of sin; inevitably also of sorrow. Behold the mouldering mass of Sensuality and Falsehood; round which plays foolishly, itself a corrupt phosphorescence, some glimmer of Sentimentalism;—and over all, rising, as Ark of *their* Covenant, the grim Patibulary Fork 'forty feet high;' which also is now nigh rotted. Add only that the French Nation distinguishes itself among Nations by the characteristic of Excitability; with the good, but also with the perilous evil, which belongs to that. Rebellion, explosion, of unknown extent is to be calculated on. There are, as Chesterfield wrote, 'all the symptoms I have ever met with in History!'

Shall we say, then: Wo to Philosophism, that it destroyed Religion, what it called 'extinguishing the abomination (*écraser l'infâme*)'? Wo rather to those that made the Holy an abomination, and extinguishable; wo to all men that live in such a time of world-abomination and world-destruction! Nay, answer the Courtiers, it was Turgot, it was Necker, with their mad innovating; it was the Queen's want of etiquette; it was he, it was she, it was that. Friends! it was every scoundrel that had lived, and quack-like pretended to be doing, and been only eating and *misdoing*, in all provinces of life, as Shoeblick or as Sovereign Lord, each in his degree, from the time of Charlemagne and earlier. All this (for be sure no falsehood perishes, but is as seed sown out to grow) has been storing itself for thousands of years; and now the account-day has come. And rude will the settlement be: of wrath laid up against the day of wrath. O my Brother, be not thou a Quack! Die rather, if thou wilt take counsel; 'tis but dying once, and thou art quit of it forever. Cursed is that trade; and bears curses, thou knowest not how, long ages after thou art departed, and the wages thou hadst are

¹ Fils Adoptif, *Mémoires de Mirabeau*, iv. 325.—See Carlyle's *Biographical Essays*, § Diamond Necklace, § Count Cagliostro.

all consumed ; nay, as the ancient wise have written,—through Eternity itself, and is verily marked in the Doom-Book of a God !

Hope deferred maketh the heart sick. And yet, as we said, Hope is but deferred ; not abolished, not abolishable. It is very notable, and touching, how this same Hope does still light onwards the French Nation through all its wild destinies. For we shall still find Hope shining, be it for fond invitation, be it for anger and menace ; as a mild heavenly light it shone ; as a red conflagration it shines : burning sulphurous-blue, through darkest regions of Terror, it still shines ; and goes not out at all, since Desperation itself is a kind of Hope. Thus is our Era still to be named of Hope, though in the saddest sense,—when there is nothing left but Hope.

But if any one would know summarily what a Pandora's Box lies there for the opening, he may see it in what by its nature is the symptom of all symptoms, the surviving Literature of the Period. Abbé Raynal, with his lubricity and loud loose rant, has spoken *his* word ; and already the fast-hastening generation responds to another. Glance at Beaumarchais' *Mariage de Figaro* ; which now (in 1784), after difficulty enough, has issued on the stage ; and 'runs its hundred nights,' to the admiration of all men. By what virtue or internal vigour it so ran, the reader of our day will rather wonder :—and indeed will know so much the better that it flattered some pruriency of the time ; that it spoke what all were feeling, and longing to speak. Small substance in that *Figaro* : thin wiredrawn intrigues, thin wire-drawn sentiments and sarcasms ; a thing lean, barren ; yet which winds and whisks itself, as through a wholly mad universe, adroitly, with a high-sniffing air : wherein each, as was hinted, which is the grand secret, may see some image of himself, and of his own state and ways. So it runs its hundred nights, and all France runs with it ; laughing applause. If the soliloquising Barber ask : "What has your Lordship done to earn all this ?" and can only answer : "You took the trouble to be born (*Vous vous êtes donné la peine de naître*)," all men must laugh : and a gay horse-racing Anglomanic Noblesse loudest of all. For how can small books have a great danger in them ? asks the Sieur Caron ; and fancies his thin epigram

may be a kind of reason. Conqueror of a golden fleece, by giant smuggling ; tamer of hell-dogs, in the Parlement Maupeou ; and finally crowned Orpheus in the *Théâtre Français*, Beaumarchais has now culminated, and unites the attributes of several demi-gods. We shall meet him once again, in the course of his decline.

Still more significant are two Books produced on the eve of the ever-memorable Explosion itself, and read eagerly by all the world : Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*, and Louvet's *Chevalier de Faublas*. Noteworthy Books ; which may be considered as the last-speech of old Feudal France. In the first there rises melodiously, as it were, the wail of a moribund world : everywhere wholesome Nature in unequal conflict with diseased perfidious Art ; cannot escape from it in the lowest hut, in the remotest island of the sea. Ruin and death must strike down the loved one ; and, what is most significant of all, death even here not by necessity but by etiquette. What a world of prurient corruption lies visible in that super-sublime of modesty ! Yet, on the whole, our good Saint-Pierre is musical, poetical though most morbid : we will call his Book the swan-song of old dying France.

Louvet's, again, let no man account musical. Truly, if this wretched *Faublas* is a death-speech, it is one under the gallows, and by a felon that does not repent. Wretched *cloaca* of a Book ; without depth even as a *cloaca* ! What 'picture of French society' is here ? Picture properly of nothing, if not of the mind that gave it out as some sort of picture. Yet symptom of much ; above all, of the world that could nourish itself thereon.

BOOK THIRD.

THE PARLEMENT OF PARIS.

CHAPTER I.

DISHONOURED BILLS.

WHILE the unspeakable confusion is everywhere weltering within, and through so many cracks in the surface sulphur-smoke is issuing, the question arises: Through what crevice will the main Explosion carry itself? Through which of the old craters or chimneys; or must it, at once, form a new crater for itself? In every Society are such chimneys, are Institutions serving as such: even Constantinople is not without its safety-valves; there too Discontent can vent itself,—in material fire; by the number of nocturnal conflagrations, or of hanged bakers, the Reigning Power can read the signs of the times, and change course according to these.

We may say that this French Explosion will doubtless first try all the old Institutions of escape; for by each of these there is, or at least there used to be, some communication with the interior deep; they are national Institutions in virtue of that. Had they even become personal Institutions, and what we can call choked up from their original uses, there nevertheless must the impediment be weaker than elsewhere. Through which of them, then? An observer might have guessed: Through the Law Parlements; above all, through the Parlement of Paris.

Men, though never so thickly clad in dignities, sit not inaccessible to the influences of their time; especially men whose life is business; who at all turns, were it even from behind judgment-seats, have come in contact with the actual workings

of the world. The Counsellor of Parlement, the President himself, who has bought his place with hard money that he might be looked up to by his fellow-creatures, how shall he, in all *Philosophe-soirées*, and saloons of elegant culture, become notable as a Friend of Darkness? Among the Paris Long-robés there may be more than one patriotic Malesherbes, whose rule is conscience and the public good; there are clearly more than one hotheaded D'Espréménil, to whose confused thought any loud reputation of the Brutus sort may seem glorious. The Lepelletiers, Lamoignons have titles and wealth; yet, at Court, are only styled 'Noblesse of the Robe.' There are Duports of deep scheme; Fréteaus, Sabatiers, of incontinent tongue: all nursed more or less on the milk of the *Contrat Social*. Nay, for the whole Body, is not this patriotic opposition also a fighting for oneself? Awake, Parlement of Paris, renew thy long warfare! Was not the Parlement Maupeou abolished with ignominy? Not now hast thou to dread a Louis XIV., with the crack of his whip, and his Olympian looks; not now a Richelieu and Bastilles: no, the whole Nation is behind thee. Thou too (O heavens!) mayest become a Political Power; and with the shakings of thy horse-hair wig shake principalities and dynasties, like a very Jove with his ambrosial curls!

Light old M. de Maurepas, since the end of 1781, has been fixed in the frost of death: "Never more," said the good Louis, "shall I hear his step in the room there overhead;" his light jestings and gyratings are at an end. No more can the importunate reality be hidden by pleasant wit, and today's evil be deftly rolled over upon tomorrow. The morrow itself has arrived; and now nothing but a solid phlegmatic M. de Vergennes sits there, in dull matter of fact, like some dull punctual Clerk (which he originally was); admits what cannot be denied, let the remedy come whence it will. In him is no remedy; only clerklike 'despatch of business' according to routine. The poor King, grown older yet hardly more experienced, must himself, with such no-faculty as he has, begin governing; wherein also his Queen will give help. Bright Queen, with her quick clear glances and impulses; clear, and even noble; but all too superficial, vehement-shallow, for that work! To govern France were such a problem; and now it has grown well-nigh too hard

to govern even the *Œil-de-Bœuf*. For if a distressed People has its cry, so likewise, and more audibly, has a bereaved Court. To the *Œil-de-Bœuf* it remains inconceivable how, in a France of such resources, the Horn of Plenty should run dry: did it not *use* to flow? Nevertheless Necker, with his revenue of parsimony, has 'suppressed above six hundred places,' before the Courtiers could oust him; parsimonious finance-pedant as he was. Again, a military pedant, Saint-Germain, with his Prussian manœuvres; with his Prussian notions, as if merit and not coat-of-arms should be the rule of promotion, has disaffected military men; the Mousquetaires, with much else are suppressed: for he too was one of your suppressors; and unsettling and oversetting, did mere mischief—to the *Œil-de-Bœuf*. Complaints abound; scarcity, anxiety: it is a changed *Œil-de-Bœuf*. Besenval says, already in these years (1781) there was such a melancholy (such a *tristesse*) about Court, compared with former days, as made it quite dispiriting to look upon.

No wonder that the *Œil-de-Bœuf* feels melancholy, when you are suppressing its places! Not a place can be suppressed, but some purse is the lighter for it; and more than one heart the heavier; for did it not employ the working-classes too,—manufacturers, male and female, of laces, essences; of Pleasure generally, whosoever could manufacture Pleasure? Miserable economies; never felt over Twenty-five Millions! So, however, it goes on: and is not yet ended. Few years more and the Wolf-hounds shall fall suppressed, the Bear-hounds, the Falconry; places shall fall, thick as autumnal leaves. Duke de Polignac demonstrates, to the complete silencing of ministerial logic, that his place cannot be abolished; then gallantly, turning to the Queen, surrenders it, since her Majesty so wishes. Less chivalrous was Duke de Coigny, and yet not luckier: "We got into a real quarrel, Coigny and I," said King Louis; "but if he had even struck me, I could not have blamed him."¹ In regard to such matters there can be but one opinion. Baron Besenval, with that frankness of speech which stamps the independent man, plainly assures her Majesty that it is frightful (*affreux*); "you go to bed, and are not sure but you shall rise impoverished on the morrow: one might as well be in Turkey." It is indeed a dog's life.

¹ Besenval, iii. 255-58.

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How singular this perpetual distress of the royal treasury ! And yet it is a thing not more incredible than undeniable. A thing mournfully true : the stumbling-block on which all Ministers successively stumble, and fall. Be it 'want of fiscal genius,' or some far other want, there is the palpablest discrepancy between Revenue and Expenditure ; a *Deficit* of the Revenue : you must 'choke (*combler*) the Deficit,' or else it will swallow you ! This is the stern problem ; hopeless seemingly as squaring of the circle. Controller Joly de Fleury, who succeeded Necker, could do nothing with it ; nothing but propose loans, which were tardily filled up ; impose new taxes, unproductive of money, productive of clamour and discontent. As little could Controller d'Ormesson do, or even less ; for if Joly maintained himself beyond year and day, D'Ormesson reckons only by months : till 'the King purchased Rambouillet without consulting him,' which he took as a hint to withdraw. And so, towards the end of 1783, matters threaten to come to a still-stand. Vain seems human ingenuity. In vain has our newly-devised 'Council of Finances' struggled, our Intendants of Finance, Controller-General of Finances : there are unhappily no Finances to control. Fatal paralysis invades the social movement ; clouds, of blindness or of blackness, envelop us : are we breaking down, then, into the black horrors of NATIONAL BANKRUPTCY ?

Great is Bankruptcy : the great bottomless gulf into which all Falsehoods, public and private, do sink, disappearing ; whither, from the first origin of them, they were all doomed. For Nature is true and not a lie. No lie you can speak or act but it will come, after longer or shorter circulation, like a Bill drawn on Nature's Reality, and be presented there for payment,—with the answer, *No effects*. Pity only that it often had so long a circulation : that the original forger were so seldom he who bore the final smart of it ! Lies, and the burden or evil they bring, are passed on ; shifted from back to back, and from rank to rank ; and so land ultimately on the dumb lowest rank, who with spade and mattock, with sore heart and empty wallet, daily come in *contact* with reality, and can pass the cheat no further.

Observe nevertheless how, by a just compensating law, if the lie with its burden (in this confused whirlpool of Society) sinks and is shifted ever downwards, then in return the distress

of it rises ever upwards and upwards. Whereby, after the long pining and demi-starvation of those Twenty Millions, a Duke de Coigny and his Majesty come also to have their 'real quarrel.' Such is the law of just Nature; bringing, though at long intervals, and were it only by Bankruptcy, matters round again to the mark.

But with a Fortunatus' Purse in his pocket, through what length of time might not almost any Falsehood last! Your Society, your Household, practical or spiritual Arrangement, is untrue, unjust, offensive to the eye of God and man. Nevertheless its hearth is warm, its larder well replenished: the innumerable Swiss of Heaven, with a kind of natural loyalty, gather round it; will prove, by pamphleteering, musketeering, that it is a truth; or if not an unmixed (unearthly, impossible) Truth, then better, a wholesomely attempered one (as wind is to the shorn lamb), and works well. Changed outlook, however, when purse and larder grow empty! Was your Arrangement so true, so accordant to Nature's ways, then how, in the name of wonder, has Nature, with her infinite bounty, come to leave it famishing there? To all men, to all women and all children, it is now indubitable that your Arrangement was *false*. Honour to Bankruptcy; ever righteous on the great scale, though in detail it is so cruel! Under all Falsehoods it works, unweariedly mining. No Falsehood, did it rise heaven-high and cover the world, but Bankruptcy, one day, will sweep it down, and make us free of it.

CHAPTER II.

CONTROLLER CALONNE.

UNDER such circumstances of *tristesse*, obstruction and sick languor, when to an exasperated Court it seems as if fiscal genius had departed from among men, what apparition could be welcomer than that of M. de Calonne? Calonne, a man of indisputable genius; even fiscal genius, more or less; of experience both in managing Finance and Parlements, for he has been Intendant at Metz, at Lille; King's Procureur at Douai. A man of weight, connected with the moneyed classes; of unstained name,—if it were not some peccadillo (of showing a Client's Letter) in that old D'Aiguillon-Lachalotais business, as

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good as forgotten now. He has kinsmen of heavy purse, felt on the Stock Exchange. Our Foulons, Berthiers intrigue for him:—old Foulon, who has now nothing to do but intrigue; who is known and even seen to be what they call a scoundrel; but of unmeasured wealth; who, from Commissariat-clerk which he once was, may hope, some think, if the game go right, to be Minister himself one day.

Such propping and backing has M. de Calonne; and then intrinsically such qualities! Hope radiates from his face; persuasion hangs on his tongue. For all straits he has present remedy, and will make the world roll on wheels before him. On the 3d of November 1783, the *Œil-de-Bœuf* rejoices in its new Controller-General. Calonne also shall have trial; Calonne also, in his way, as Turgot and Necker had done in theirs, shall forward the consummation; suffuse, with one other flush of brilliancy, our now too leaden-coloured Era of Hope, and wind it up—into fulfilment.

Great, in any case, is the felicity of the *Œil-de-Bœuf*. Stinginess has fled from these royal abodes: suppression ceases; your Besenval may go peaceably to sleep, sure that he shall awake unplundered. Smiling Plenty, as if conjured by some enchanter, has returned; scatters contentment from her new-flowing horn. And mark what suavity of manners! A bland smile distinguishes our Controller: to all men he listens with an air of interest, nay of anticipation; makes their own wish clear to themselves, and grants it; or at least, grants conditional promise of it. "I fear this is a matter of difficulty," said her Majesty.—"Madame," answered the Controller, "if it is but difficult, it is done; if it is impossible, it shall be done (*se fera*)." A man of such 'facility' withal. To observe him in the pleasure-vortex of society, which none partakes of with more gusto, you might ask, When does he work? And yet his work, as we see, is never behindhand; above all, the fruit of his work: ready-money. Truly a man of incredible facility; facile action, facile elocution, facile thought: how, in mild suasion, philosophic depth sparkles up from him, as mere wit and lambent sprightliness; and in her Majesty's Soirées, with the weight of a world lying on him, he is the delight of men and women! By what magic does he accomplish miracles? By the only true

magic, that of genius. Men name him '*the Minister*;' as indeed, when was there another such? Crooked things are become straight by him, rough places plain; and over the *Œil-de-Bœuf* there rests an unspeakable sunshine.

Nay, in seriousness, let no man say that Calonne had not genius: genius for Persuading; before all things, for Borrowing. With the skilfulest judicious appliances of underhand money, he keeps the Stock-Exchanges flourishing; so that Loan after Loan is filled up as soon as opened. 'Calculators likely 'to know'¹ have calculated that he spent, in extraordinaries, 'at the rate of one million daily;' which indeed is some fifty thousand pounds sterling: but did he not procure something with it; namely peace and prosperity, for the time being? Philosophedom grumbles and croaks; buys, as we said, 80,000 copies of Necker's new Book: but Nonpareil Calonne, in her Majesty's Apartment, with the glittering retinue of Dukes, Duchesses, and mere happy admiring faces, can let Necker and Philosophedom croak.

The misery is, such a time cannot last! Squandering, and Payment by Loan is no way to choke a Deficit. Neither is oil the substance for quenching conflagrations;—alas no, only for assuaging them, *not* permanently! To the Nonpareil himself, who wanted not insight, it is clear at intervals, and dimly certain at all times, that his trade is by nature temporary, growing daily more difficult; that changes incalculable lie at no great distance. Apart from financial Deficit, the world is wholly in such a newfangled humour; all things working loose from their old fastenings, towards new issues and combinations. There is not a dwarf *jokei*, a cropt Brutus'-head, or Anglomaniac horseman rising on his stirrups, that does not betoken change. But what then? The day, in any case, passes pleasantly; for the morrow, if the morrow come, there shall be counsel too. Once mounted (by munificence, suasion, magic of genius) high enough in favour with the *Œil-de-Bœuf*, with the King, Queen, Stock-Exchange, and so far as possible with all men, a Nonpareil Controller may hope to go careering through the Inevitable, in some unimagined way, as handsomely as another.

At all events, for these three miraculous years, it has been

¹ Besenval, iii. 216.

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expedient heaped on expedient : till now, with such cumulation and height, the pile topples perilous. And here has this world's-wonder of a Diamond Necklace brought it at last to the clear verge of tumbling. Genius in that direction can no more : mounted high enough, or not mounted, we must fare forth. Hardly is poor Rohan, the Necklace-Cardinal, safely bestowed in the Auvergne Mountains, Dame de Lamotte (unsafely) in the Salpêtrière, and that mournful business hushed up, when our sanguine Controller once more astonishes the world. An expedient, unheard of for these hundred and sixty years, has been propounded ; and, by dint of suasion (for his light audacity, his hope and eloquence are matchless) has been got adopted,—*Convocation of the Notables*.

Let notable persons, the actual or virtual rulers of their districts, be summoned from all sides of France : let a true tale, of his Majesty's patriotic purposes and wretched pecuniary impossibilities, be suavisely told them ; and then the question put : What are we to do ? Surely to adopt healing measures ; such as the magic of genius will unfold ; such as, once sanctioned by Notables, all Parlements and all men must, with more or less reluctance, submit to.

CHAPTER III.

THE NOTABLES.

HERE, then, is verily a sign and wonder ; visible to the whole world ; bodeful of much. The Œil-de-Bœuf dolorously grumbles ; were we not well as we stood,—quenching conflagrations by oil ? Constitutional Philosophedom starts with joyful surprise ; stares eagerly what the result will be. The public creditor, the public debtor, the whole thinking and thoughtless public have their several surprises, joyful or sorrowful. Count Mirabeau, who has got his matrimonial and other Lawsuits huddled up, better or worse ; and works now in the dimmest element at Berlin ; compiling *Prussian Monarchies*, Pamphlets *On Cagliostro* ; writing, with pay, but not with honourable recognition, innumerable Despatches for his Government,—scents or descries richer quarry from afar. He, like an eagle or vulture, or mixture of both, preens his wings for flight homewards.¹

¹ Fils Adoptif, *Mémoires de Mirabeau*, t. iv. livv. 4 et 5.

M. de Calonne has stretched out an Aaron's Rod over France; miraculous; and is summoning quite unexpected things. Audacity and hope alternate in him with misgivings; though the sanguine-valiant side carries it. Anon he writes to an intimate friend, "*Je me fais pitié à moi-même* (I am an object of pity to myself);" anon, invites some dedicating Poet or Poetaster to sing 'this Assembly of the Notables, and the Revolution that is preparing.'² Preparing indeed; and a matter to be sung,—only not till we have *seen* it, and what the issue of it is. In deep obscure unrest, all things have so long gone rocking and swaying: will M. de Calonne, with this his alchemy of the Notables, fasten all together again, and get new revenues? Or wrench all asunder; so that it go no longer rocking and swaying, but clashing and colliding?

Be this as it may, in the bleak short days, we behold men of weight and influence threading the great vortex of French Locomotion, each on his several line, from all sides of France, towards the Château of Versailles: summoned thither *de par le roi*. There, on the 22d day of February 1787, they have met, and got installed: Notables to the number of a Hundred and Thirty-seven, as we count them name by name:³ add Seven Princes of the Blood, it makes the round Gross of Notables. Men of the sword, men of the robe; Peers, dignified Clergy, Parliamentary Presidents: divided into Seven Boards (*Bureaux*); under our Seven Princes of the Blood, Monsieur, D'Artois, Penthievre, and the rest; among whom let not our new Duke d'Orléans (for, since 1785, he is Chartres no longer) be forgotten. Never yet made Admiral, and now turning the corner of his fortieth year, with spoiled blood and prospects; half-weary of a world which is more than half-weary of him, Monseigneur's future is most questionable. Not in illumination and insight, not even in conflagration; but, as was said, 'in dull smoke and ashes of outburnt sensualities,' does he live and digest. Sumptuousness and sordidness; revenge, life-weariness, ambition, darkness, putrescence; and, say, in sterling money, three hundred thousand a year,—were this poor Prince once to burst loose from his Court-moorings, to what regions, with

² *Biographie Universelle*, § Calonne (by Guizot).

³ Lacroix, iii. 286. Montgaillard, i. 347.

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what phenomena, might he not sail and drift! Happily as yet he 'affects to hunt daily;' sits there, since he must sit, presiding that Bureau of his, with dull moon-visage, dull glassy eyes, as if it were a mere tedium to him.

We observe finally, that Count Mirabeau has actually arrived. He descends from Berlin, on the scene of action; glares into it with flashing sun-glance; discerns that it will do nothing for him. He had hoped these Notables might need a Secretary. They do need one; but have fixed on Dupont de Nemours; a man of smaller fame, but then of better;—who indeed, as his friends often hear, labours under this complaint, surely not a universal one, of having 'five kings to correspond with.'⁴ The pen of a Mirabeau cannot become an official one; nevertheless it remains a pen. In defect of Secretaryship, he sets to denouncing Stock-brokerage (*Dénonciation de l'Agiotage*); testifying, as his wont is, by loud bruit, that he is present and busy;—till, warned by friend Talleyrand, and even by Calonne himself underhand, that 'a seventeenth *Lettre-de-Cachet* may be launched against him,' he timefully flits over the marches.

And now, in stately royal apartments, as Pictures of that time still represent them, our hundred and forty-four Notables sit organised; ready to hear and consider. Controller Calonne is dreadfully behindhand with his speeches, his preparatives; however, the man's 'facility of work' is known to us. For freshness of style, lucidity, ingenuity, largeness of view, that opening Harangue of his was unsurpassable:—had not the subject-matter been so appalling. A Deficit, concerning which accounts vary, and the Controller's own account is not unquestioned; but which all accounts agree in representing as 'enormous.' This is the epitome of our Controller's difficulties: and then his means? Mere Turgotism; for thither, it seems, we must come at last: Provincial Assemblies; new Taxation; nay, strangest of all, new Land-tax, what he calls *Subvention Territoriale*, from which neither Privileged nor Unprivileged, Noblemen, Clergy, nor Parlementeers, shall be exempt!

Foolish enough! These Privileged Classes have been used to tax; levying toll, tribute and custom, at all hands, while a penny was left: but to be themselves taxed? Of such Privi-

⁴ Dumont, *Souvenirs sur Mirabeau* (Paris, 1832), p. 20.

leged persons, meanwhile, do these Notables, all but the merest fraction, consist. Headlong Calonne had given no heed to the 'composition,' or judicious packing of them; but chosen such Notables as were really notable; trusting for the issue to off-hand ingenuity, good fortune, and eloquence that never yet failed. Headlong Controller-General! Eloquence can do much, but not all. Orpheus, with eloquence grown rhythmic, musical (what we call Poetry), drew iron tears from the cheek of Pluto: but by what witchery of rhyme or prose wilt thou from the pocket of Plutus draw gold?

Accordingly, the storm that now rose and began to whistle round Calonne, first in these Seven Bureaus, and then on the outside of them, awakened by them, spreading wider and wider over all France, threatens to become unappeasable. A Deficit so enormous! Mismanagement, profusion is too clear. Peculation itself is hinted at; nay, Lafayette and others go so far as to speak it out, with attempts at proof. The blame of his Deficit our brave Calonne, as was natural, had endeavoured to shift from himself on his predecessors; not excepting even Necker. But now Necker vehemently denies; whereupon an 'angry Correspondence,' which also finds its way into print.

In the *Œil-de-Bœuf*, and her Majesty's private Apartments, an eloquent Controller, with his "Madame, if it is but difficult," had been persuasive: but, alas, the cause is now carried elsewhere. Behold him, one of these sad days, in Monsieur's Bureau; to which all the other Bureaus have sent deputies. He is standing at bay: alone; exposed to an incessant fire of questions, interpellations, objurgations, from those 'hundred and thirty-seven' pieces of logic-ordnance,—what we may well call *bouches à feu*, fire-mouths literally! Never, according to Besenval, or hardly ever, had such display of intellect, dexterity, coolness, suasive eloquence, been made by man. To the raging play of so many fire-mouths he opposes nothing angrier than light-beams, self-possession and fatherly smiles. With the imperturbablest bland clearness, he, for five hours long, keeps answering the incessant volley of fiery captious questions, reproachful interpellations; in words prompt as lightning, quiet as light. Nay, the cross-fire too: such side-questions and incidental interpellations as, in the heat of the main-battle, he (having only one tongue) could not get answered; these also