

he takes up, at the first slake; answers even these.<sup>5</sup> Could blandest suasive eloquence have saved France, she were saved.

Heavy-laden Controller! In the Seven Bureaus seems nothing but hindrance: in Monsieur's Bureau, a Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, with an eye himself to the Controllership, stirs up the Clergy; there are meetings, underground intrigues. Neither from without anywhere comes sign of help or hope. For the Nation (where Mirabeau is now, with stentor-lungs, 'denouncing Agio') the Controller has hitherto done nothing, or less. For Philosophedom he has done as good as nothing,—sent out some scientific Lapérouse, or the like: and is he not in 'angry correspondence' with its Necker? The very Œil-de-Bœuf looks questionable; a falling Controller has no friends. Solid M. de Vergennes, who with his phlegmatic judicious punctuality might have kept down many things, died the very week before these sorrowful Notables met. And now a Seal-keeper, *Garde-des-Sceaux* Miroménil is thought to be playing the traitor: spinning plots for Loménie-Brienne! Queen's-Reader Abbé de Vermond, unloved individual, was Brienne's creature, the work of his hands from the first: it may be feared the backstairs passage is open, the ground getting mined under our feet. Treacherous *Garde-des-Sceaux* Miroménil, at least, should be dismissed; Lamoignon, the eloquent Notable, a stanch man, with connections, and even ideas, Parliament-President yet intent on reforming Parlements, were not he the right Keeper? So, for one, thinks busy Besenval; and, at dinner-table, rounds the same into the Controller's ear,—who always, in the intervals of landlord-duties, listens to him as with charmed look, but answers nothing positive.<sup>6</sup>

Alas, what to answer? The force of private intrigue, and then also the force of public opinion, grows so dangerous, confused! Philosophedom sneers aloud, as if its Necker already triumphed. The gaping populace gapes over Wood-cuts or Copper-cuts; where, for example, a Rustic is represented convoking the Poultry of his barnyard, with this opening address: "Dear animals, I have assembled you to advise me what sauce I shall dress you with;" to which a Cock responding, "We don't want to be eaten," is checked by "You wander from the

<sup>5</sup> Besenval, iii. 196.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.*, iii. 203.



point (*Vous vous écartez de la question*).<sup>7</sup> Laughter and logic; ballad-singer, pamphleteer; epigram and caricature: what wind of public opinion is this,—as if the Cave of the Winds were bursting loose! At nightfall, President Lamoignon steals over to the Controller's; finds him 'walking with large strides in his chamber, like one out of himself.'<sup>8</sup> With rapid confused speech the Controller begs M. de Lamoignon to give him 'an advice.' Lamoignon candidly answers that, except in regard to his own anticipated Keepership, unless that would prove remedial, he really cannot take upon him to advise.

'On the Monday after Easter,' the 9th of April 1787, a date one rejoices to verify, for nothing can excel the indolent falsehood of these *Histoires* and *Mémoires*,—'On the Monday after Easter, as I, Besenval, was riding towards Romainville to the Maréchal de Ségur's, I met a friend on the Boulevards, who told me that M. de Calonne was out. A little further on came M. the Duke d'Orléans, dashing towards me, head to the wind' (trotting *à l'Anglaise*), 'and confirmed the news.'<sup>9</sup> It is true news. Treacherous Garde-des-Sceaux Miroménil is gone, and Lamoignon is appointed in his room: but appointed for his own profit only, not for the Controller's: 'next day' the Controller also has had to move. A little longer he may linger near; be seen among the money-changers, and even 'working in the Controller's office,' where much lies unfinished: but neither will that hold. Too strong blows and beats this tempest of public opinion, of private intrigue, as from the Cave of all the Winds; and blows him (higher Authority giving sign) out of Paris and France,—over the horizon, into Invisibility, or outer Darkness.

Such destiny the magic of genius could not forever avert. Ungrateful Œil-de-Bœuf! did he not miraculously rain gold manna on you; so that, as a Courtier said, "All the world held out its hand, and I held out my hat,"—for a time? Himself is poor; penniless, had not a 'Financier's widow in Lorraine' offered him, though he was turned of fifty, her hand and the rich purse it held. Dim henceforth shall be his activity, though unwearied: Letters to the King, Appeals, Prognostications; Pamphlets (from London), written with the old suasive facility; which however do not persuade. Luckily his widow's purse

<sup>7</sup> Republished in the *Musée de la Caricature* (Paris, 1834).

<sup>8</sup> Besenval, iii. 209.

<sup>9</sup> *Ib.* iii. 211.



April-May.

fails not. Once, in a year or two, some shadow of him shall be seen hovering on the Northern Border, seeking election as National Deputy; but be sternly beckoned away. Dimmer then, far-borne over utmost European lands, in uncertain twilight of diplomacy, he shall hover, intriguing for 'Exiled Princes,' and have adventures; be overset into the Rhine-stream and half-drowned, nevertheless save his papers dry. Unwearied, but in vain! In France he works miracles no more; shall hardly return thither to find a grave. Farewell, thou facile sanguine Controller-General, with thy light rash hand, thy suasive mouth of gold: worse men there have been, and better; but to thee also was allotted a task,—of raising the wind, and the winds; and thou hast done it.

But now, while Ex-Controller Calonne flies storm-driven over the horizon, in this singular way, what has become of the Controllership? It hangs vacant, one may say; extinct, like the Moon in her vacant interlunar cave. Two preliminary shadows, poor M. Fourqueux, poor M. Villedeuil, do hold, in quick succession, some simulacrum of it,<sup>10</sup>—as the new Moon will sometimes shine out with a dim preliminary old one in her arms. Be patient, ye Notables! An actual new Controller is certain, and even ready; were the indispensable manœuvres but gone through. Long-headed Lamoignon, with Home-Secretary Breteuil, and Foreign Secretary Montmorin have exchanged looks; let these three once meet and speak. Who is it that is strong in the Queen's favour, and the Abbé de Vermond's? That is a man of great capacity? Or at least that has struggled, these fifty years, to have it thought great; now, in the Clergy's name, demanding to have Protestant death-penalties 'put in execution;' now flaunting it in the *Œil-de-Bœuf*, as the gayest man-pleaser and woman-pleaser; gleaning even a good word from Philosophedom and your Voltaires and D'Alemberts? That has a party ready-made for him in the Notables?—Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse! answer all the three, with the clearest instantaneous concord; and rush off to propose him to the King; 'in such haste,' says Besenval, 'that M. de Lamoignon had to borrow a *simarre*,' seemingly some kind of cloth apparatus necessary for that.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Besenval, iii. 225.<sup>11</sup> *Ib.* iii. 224.



Loménie-Brienne, who had all his life 'felt a kind of predestination for the highest offices,' has now therefore obtained them. He presides over the Finances; he shall have the title of Prime Minister itself, and the effort of his long life be realised. Unhappy only that it took such talent and industry to *gain* the place; that to *qualify* for it hardly any talent or industry was left disposable! Looking now into his inner man, what qualification he may have, Loménie beholds, not without astonishment, next to nothing but vacuity and possibility. Principles or methods, acquirement outward or inward (for his very body is wasted, by hard tear and wear) he finds none; not so much as a plan, even an unwise one. Lucky, in these circumstances, that Calonne has had a plan! Calonne's plan was gathered from Turgot's and Necker's by compilation; shall become Loménie's by adoption. Not in vain has Loménie studied the working of the British Constitution; for he professes to have some Anglomania, of a sort. Why, in that free country, does one Minister, driven out by Parliament, vanish from his King's presence, and another enter, borne in by Parliament?<sup>12</sup> Surely not for mere change (which is ever wasteful); but that all men may have share of what is going; and so the strife of Freedom indefinitely prolong itself, and no harm be done.

The Notables, mollified by Easter festivities, by the sacrifice of Calonne, are not in the worst humour. Already his Majesty, while the 'interlunar shadows' were in office, had held session of Notables; and from his throne delivered promissory conciliatory eloquence: 'the Queen stood waiting at a window, till his carriage came back; and Monsieur from afar clapped hands 'to her,' in sign that all was well.<sup>13</sup> It has had the best effect; if such do but last. Leading Notables meanwhile can be 'caressed;' Brienne's new gloss, Lamoignon's long head will profit somewhat; conciliatory eloquence shall not be wanting. On the whole, however, is it not undeniable that this of ousting Calonne and adopting the plans of Calonne, is a measure which, to produce its best effect, should be looked at from a certain distance, cursorily; not dwelt on with minute near scrutiny? In a word, that no service the Notables could now do were so obliging as, in some handsome manner, to—take themselves away?

<sup>12</sup> Montgaillard, *Histoire de France*, i. 410-17.

<sup>13</sup> Besenval, iii, 220.



April-May.

Their 'Six Propositions' about Provisional Assemblies, suppression of *Corvées* and suchlike, can be accepted without criticism. The *Subvention* or Land-tax, and much else, one must glide hastily over; safe nowhere but in flourishes of conciliatory eloquence. Till at length, on this 25th of May, year 1787, in solemn final session, there bursts forth what we can call an explosion of eloquence; King, Loménie, Lamoignon and retinue taking up the successive strain; in harangues to the number of ten, besides his Majesty's, which last the livelong day;—whereby, as in a kind of choral anthem, or bravura peal, of thanks, praises, promises, the Notables are, so to speak, organed out, and dismissed to their respective places of abode. They had sat, and talked, some nine weeks: they were the first Notables since Richelieu's, in the year 1626.

By some Historians, sitting much at their ease, in the safe distance, Loménie has been blamed for this dismissal of his Notables: nevertheless it was clearly time. There are things, as we said, which should not be dwelt on with minute close scrutiny: over hot coals you cannot glide too fast. In these Seven Bureaus, where no work could be done, unless talk were work, the questionablest matters were coming up. Lafayette, for example, in Monseigneur d'Artois' Bureau, took upon him to set forth more than one deprecatory oration about *Lettres-de-Cachet*, Liberty of the Subject, *Agio*, and suchlike; which Monseigneur endeavouring to repress, was answered that a Notable being summoned to speak his opinion must speak it.<sup>14</sup>

Thus too his Grace the Archbishop of Aix perorating once, with a plaintive pulpit-tone, in these words: "Tithe, that free-will offering of the piety of Christians"—"Tithe," interrupted Duke la Rochefoucault, with the cold business-manner he has learned from the English, "that free-will offering of the piety of Christians; on which there are now forty-thousand lawsuits in this realm."<sup>15</sup> Nay, Lafayette, bound to speak his opinion, went the length, one day, of proposing to convoke a 'National Assembly.' "You demand States-General?" asked Monseigneur with an air of minatory surprise.—"Yes, Monseigneur; and even better than that."—"Write it," said Monseigneur to the

<sup>14</sup> Montgaillard, i. 360.

<sup>15</sup> Dumont, *Souvenirs sur Mirabeau*, p. 21.



Clerks.<sup>16</sup>—Written accordingly it is ; and what is more, will be acted by and by.

## CHAPTER IV.

### LOMÉNIE'S EDICTS.

THUS, then, have the Notables returned home ; carrying, to all quarters of France, such notions of deficit, decrepitude, distraction ; and that States-General will cure it, or will not cure it but kill it. Each Notable, we may fancy, is as a funereal torch ; disclosing hideous abysses, better left hid ! The unquietest humour possesses all men ; ferments, seeks issue, in pamphleteering, caricaturing, projecting, declaiming ; vain jangling of thought, word and deed.

It is Spiritual Bankruptcy, long tolerated ; verging now towards Economical Bankruptcy, and become intolerable. For from the lowest dumb rank, the inevitable misery, as was predicted, has spread upwards. In every man is some obscure feeling that his position, oppressive or else oppressed, is a false one : all men, in one or the other acrid dialect, as assaulters or as defenders, must give vent to the unrest that is in them. Of such stuff national well-being, and the glory of rulers, is not made. O Loménie, what a wild-heaving, waste-looking, hungry and angry world hast thou, after lifelong effort, got promoted to take charge of !

Loménie's first Edicts are mere soothing ones : creation of Provincial Assemblies, 'for apportioning the imposts,' when we get any ; suppression of *Corvées* or statute-labour ; alleviation of *Gabelle*. Soothing measures, recommended by the Notables ; long clamoured for by all liberal men. Oil cast on the waters has been known to produce a good effect. Before venturing with great essential measures, Loménie will see this singular 'swell of the public mind' abate somewhat.

Most proper, surely. But what if it were not a swell of the abating kind ? There are swells that come of upper tempest and wind-gust. But again there are swells that come of subterranean pent wind, some say ; and even of inward decompo-

<sup>16</sup> Toulangeon, *Histoire de France depuis la Révolution de 1789* (Paris, 1803), i. app. 4.



May-June.

sition, of decay that has become self-combustion:—as when, according to Neptuno-Plutonic Geology, the World is all decayed down into due attritus of this sort; and shall now be *exploded*, and new-made! These latter abate not by oil.—The fool says in his heart, How shall not tomorrow be as yesterday; as all days,—which were once tomorrows? The wise man, looking on this France, moral, intellectual, economical, sees, 'in short, all the symptoms he has ever met with in history,'—*unabatable* by soothing Edicts.

Meanwhile, abate or not, cash must be had; and for that, quite another sort of Edicts, namely 'bursal' or fiscal ones. How easy were fiscal Edicts, did you know for certain that the Parlement of Paris would what they call 'register' them! Such right of registering, properly of mere *writing down*, the Parlement has got by old wont; and, though but a Law-Court, can remonstrate, and higgie considerably about the same. Hence many quarrels; desperate Maupeou devices, and victory and defeat;—a quarrel now near forty years long. Hence fiscal Edicts, which otherwise were easy enough, become such problems. For example, is there not Calonne's *Subvention Territoriale*, universal, unexempting Land-tax; the sheet-anchor of Finance? Or, to show, so far as possible, that one is not without original finance talent, Loménie himself can devise an *Edit du Timbre* or Stamp-tax,—borrowed also, it is true; but then from America: may it prove luckier in France than there!

France has her resources: nevertheless, it cannot be denied, the aspect of that Parlement is questionable. Already among the Notables, in that final symphony of dismissal, the Paris President had an ominous tone. Adrien Duport, quitting magnetic sleep, in this agitation of the world, threatens to rouse himself into preternatural wakefulness. Shallower but also louder, there is magnetic D'Espréménil, with his tropical heat (he was born at Madras); with his dusky confused violence; holding of Illumination, Animal Magnetism, Public Opinion, Adam Weishaupt, Harmodius and Aristogiton, and all manner of confused violent things: of whom can come no good. The very Peerage is infected with the leaven. Our Peers have, in too many cases, laid aside their frogs, laces, bagwigs; and go about in English costume, or ride rising in their stirrups,—in the most headlong



manner ; nothing but insubordination, eleutheromania, confused unlimited opposition in their heads. Questionable : not to be ventured upon, if we had a Fortunatus' Purse ! But Loménie has waited all June, casting on the waters what oil he had ; and now, betide as it may, the two Finance Edicts must out. On the 6th of July, he forwards his proposed Stamp-tax and Land-tax to the Parlement of Paris ; and, as if putting his own leg foremost, not his borrowed Calonne's-leg, places the Stamp-tax first in order.

Alas, the Parlement will *not* register : the Parlement demands instead a 'state of the expenditure,' a 'state of the contemplated reductions ;' 'states' enough ; which his Majesty must decline to furnish ! Discussions arise ; patriotic eloquence : the Peers are summoned. Does the Nemean Lion begin to bristle ? Here surely is a duel, which France and the Universe may look upon : with prayers ; at lowest, with curiosity and bets. Paris stirs with new animation. The outer courts of the Palais de Justice roll with unusual crowds, coming and going ; their huge outer hum mingles with the clang of patriotic eloquence within, and gives vigour to it. Poor Loménie gazes from the distance, little comforted ; has his invisible emissaries flying to and fro, assiduous, without result.

So pass the sultry dog-days, in the most electric manner ; and the whole month of July. And still, in the Sanctuary of Justice, sounds nothing but Harmodius-Aristogiton eloquence, environed with the hum of crowding Paris ; and no registering accomplished, and no 'states' furnished. "States ?" said a lively Parlementeer : "Messieurs, the states that should be furnished us, in my opinion are the STATES-GENERAL." On which timely joke there follow cachinnatory buzzes of approval. What a word to be spoken in the Palais de Justice ! Old D'Ormesson (the Ex-Controller's uncle) shakes his judicious head ; far enough from laughing. But the outer courts, and Paris and France, catch the glad sound, and repeat it ; shall repeat it, and re-echo and reverberate it, till it grow a deafening peal. Clearly enough here is no registering to be thought of.

The pious Proverb says, 'There are remedies for all things but death.' When a Parlement refuses registering, the remedy, by long practice, has become familiar to the simplest : a Bed of



July.

Justice. One complete month this Parlement has spent in mere idle jargon, and sound and fury; the *Timbre* Edict not registered, or like to be; the *Subvention* not yet so much as spoken of. On the 6th of August let the whole refractory Body roll out, in wheeled vehicles, as far as the King's Château of Versailles; there shall the King, holding his Bed of Justice, *order* them, by his own royal lips, to register. They may remonstrate, in an under tone; but they must obey, lest a worse unknown thing befall them.

It is done: the Parlement has rolled out, on royal summons; has heard the express royal order to register. Whereupon it has rolled back again, amid the hushed expectancy of men. And now, behold, on the morrow, this Parlement, seated once more in its own Palais, with 'crowds inundating the outer courts,' not only does not register, but (O portent!) declares all that was done on the prior day to be *null*, and the Bed of Justice as good as a futility! In the history of France here verily is a new feature. Nay better still, our heroic Parlement, getting suddenly enlightened on several things, declares that, for its part, it is incompetent to register Tax-edicts at all,—having done it by mistake, during these late centuries; that for such act one authority only is competent: the assembled Three Estates of the Realm!

To such length can the universal spirit of a Nation penetrate the most isolated Body-corporate: say rather, with such weapons, homicidal and suicidal, in exasperated political duel, will Bodies-corporate fight! But, in any case, is not this the real death-grapple of war and internecine duel, Greek meeting Greek; whereon men, had they even no interest in it, might look with interest unspeakable? Crowds, as was said, inundate the outer courts: inundation of young eleutheromaniac Noblemen in English costume, uttering audacious speeches; of Procureurs, Basoche-Clerks, who are idle in these days; of Loungers, Newsmongers and other nondescript classes,—rolls tumultuous there. 'From three to four thousand persons,' waiting eagerly to hear the *Arrêtés* (Resolutions) you arrive at within; applauding with bravos, with the clapping of from six to eight thousand hands! Sweet also is the meed of patriotic eloquence, when your D'Espréménil, your Fréteau, or Sabatier, issuing from his Demosthenic Olympus, the thunder being hushed for the day,



is welcomed, in the outer courts, with a shout from four thousand throats; is borne home shoulder-high 'with benedictions,' and strikes the stars with his sublime head.

## CHAPTER V.

### LOMÉNIE'S THUNDERBOLTS.

ARISE, Loménie-Brienne: here is no case for 'Letters of Jussion;' for faltering or compromise. Thou seest the whole loose *fluent* population of Paris (whatsoever is not solid, and fixed to work) inundating these outer courts, like a loud destructive deluge; the very Basoche of Lawyers' Clerks talks sedition. The lower classes, in this duel of Authority with Authority, Greek throttling Greek, have ceased to respect the City-Watch: Police-satellites are marked on the back with chalk (the M signifies *mouchard*, spy); they are hustled, hunted like *feræ naturæ*. Subordinate rural Tribunals send messengers of congratulation, of adherence. Their Fountain of Justice is becoming a Fountain of Revolt. The Provincial Parlements look on, with intent eye, with breathless wishes, while their elder sister of Paris does battle: the whole Twelve are of one blood and temper; the victory of one is that of all.

Ever worse it grows: on the 10th of August, there is '*Plainte*' emitted touching the 'prodigalities of Calonne,' and permission to 'proceed' against him. No registering, but instead of it, denouncing: of dilapidation, peculation; and ever the burden of the song, States-General! Have the royal armories no thunderbolt, that thou couldst, O Loménie, with red right-hand, launch it among these Demosthenic theatrical thunder-barrels, mere resin and noise for most part;—and shatter, and smite them silent? On the night of the 14th of August, Loménie launches his thunderbolt, or handful of them. Letters named of the Seal (*de Cachet*), as many as needful, some sixscore and odd, are delivered overnight. And so, next day betimes, the whole Parliament, once more set on wheels, is rolling incessantly towards Troyes in Champagne; 'escorted,' says History, 'with the blessings of all people;' the very innkeepers and postillions looking gratuitously reverent.<sup>1</sup> This is the 15th of August 1787.

<sup>1</sup> A. Lameth, *Histoire de l'Assemblée Constituante* (Int. 73).



August.

What will not people bless ; in their extreme need ! Seldom had the Parlement of Paris deserved much blessing, or received much. An isolated Body-corporate, which, out of old confusions (while the Sceptre of the Sword was confusedly struggling to become a Sceptre of the Pen), had got itself together, better and worse, as Bodies-corporate do, to satisfy some dim desire of the world, and many clear desires of individuals ; and so had grown, in the course of centuries, on concession, on acquirement and usurpation, to be what we see it : a prosperous Social Anomaly, deciding Lawsuits, sanctioning or rejecting Laws ; and withal disposing of its places and offices by sale for ready-money,—which method sleek President Hénault, after meditation, will demonstrate to be the indifferent-best.<sup>2</sup>

In such a Body, existing by purchase for ready-money, there could not be excess of public spirit ; there might well be excess of eagerness to divide the public spoil. Men in helmets have divided that, with swords ; men in wigs, with quill and inkhorn, do divide it : and even more hatefully these latter, if more peaceably ; for the wig-method is at once irresistibler and baser. By long experience, says Besenval, it has been found useless to sue a Parleunteer at law ; no Officer of Justice will serve a writ on one : his wig and gown are his Vulcan's-panoply, his enchanted cloak-of-darkness.

The Parlement of Paris may count itself an unloved body ; mean, not magnanimous, on the political side. Were the King weak, always (as now) has his Parlement barked, cur-like at his heels ; with what popular cry there might be. Were he strong, it barked before his face ; hunting for him as his alert beagle. An unjust Body ; where foul influences have more than once worked shameful perversion of judgment. Does not, in these very days, the blood of murdered Lally cry aloud for vengeance ? Baited, circumvented, driven mad like the snared lion, Valour had to sink extinguished under vindictive Chicane. Behold him, that hapless Lally, his wild dark soul looking through his wild dark face ; trailed on the ignominious death-hurdle ; the voice of his despair choked by a wooden gag ! The wild fire-soul that has known only peril and toil ; and, for three-score years, has buffeted against Fate's obstruction and men's

<sup>2</sup> *Abrégé Chronologique*, p. 975.



perfidy, like genius and courage amid poltroonery, dishonesty and commonplace; faithfully enduring and endeavouring,—O Parlement of Paris, dost thou reward it with a gibbet and a gag?<sup>3</sup> The dying Lally bequeathed his memory to his boy; a young Lally has arisen, demanding redress in the name of God and man. The Parlement of Paris does its utmost to defend the indefensible, abominable; nay, what is singular, dusky-glowing Aristogiton d'Espréménil is the man chosen to be its spokesman in that.

Such Social Anomaly is it that France now blesses. An unclean Social Anomaly; but in duel against another worse! The exiled Parlement is felt to have 'covered itself with glory.' There are quarrels in which even Satan, bringing help, were not unwelcome; even Satan, fighting stiffly, might cover himself with glory,—of a temporary sort.

But what a stir in the outer courts of the Palais, when Paris finds its Parlement trundled off to Troyes in Champagne; and nothing left but a few mute Keepers of Records; the Demosthenic thunder become extinct, the martyrs of liberty clean gone! Confused wail and menace rises from the four thousand throats of Procureurs, Basoche-Clerks, Nondescripts, and Anglomanic Noblesse; ever new idlers crowd to see and hear; Rascality, with increasing numbers and vigour, hunts *mouchards*. Loud whirlpool rolls through these spaces; the rest of the City, fixed to its work, cannot yet go rolling. Audacious placards are legible; in and about the Palais, the speeches are as good as seditious. Surely the temper of Paris is much changed. On the third day of this business (18th of August), Monsieur and Monseigneur d'Artois, coming in state-carriages, according to use and wont, to have these late obnoxious *Arrêtés* and Protests 'expunged' from the Records, are received in the most marked manner. Monsieur, who is thought to be in opposition, is met with vivats and strewed flowers: Monseigneur, on the other hand, with silence; with murmurs, which rise to hisses and groans; nay an irreverent Rascality presses towards him in floods, with such hissing vehemence, that the Captain of the Guards has to give order, "*Haut les armes* (Handle arms)!"—

<sup>3</sup> 9th May 1766: *Biographie Universelle*, § Lally.



Aug.-Sept.

at which thunder-word, indeed, and the flash of the clear iron, the Rascal-flood recoils, through all avenues, fast enough.<sup>4</sup> New features these. Indeed, as good M. de Malesherbes pertinently remarks, "it is a quite new kind of contest this with the Parliament:" no transitory sputter, as from collision of hard bodies; but more like "the first sparks of what, if not quenched, may become a great conflagration."<sup>5</sup>

This good Malesherbes sees himself now again in the King's Council, after an absence of ten years: Loménie would profit if not by the faculties of the man, yet by the name he has. As for the man's opinion, it is not listened to;—wherefore he will soon withdraw, a second time; back to his books and his trees. In such King's Council what can a good man profit? Turgot tries it not a second time: Turgot has quitted France and this Earth, some years ago; and now cares for none of these things. Singular enough: Turgot, this same Loménie, and the Abbé Morellet were once a trio of young friends; fellow-scholars in the Sorbonne. Forty new years have carried them severally thus far.

Meanwhile the Parlement sits daily at Troyes, calling cases; and daily adjourns, no Procureur making his appearance to plead. Troyes is as hospitable as could be looked for: nevertheless one has comparatively a dull life. No crowds now to carry you, shoulder-high, to the immortal gods; scarcely a Patriot or two will drive out so far, and bid you be of firm courage. You are in furnished lodgings, far from home and domestic comfort: little to do, but wander over the unlovely Champagne fields; seeing the grapes ripen; taking counsel about the thousand-times consulted: a prey to tedium; in danger even that Paris may forget you. Messengers come and go: pacific Loménie is not slack in negotiating, promising; D'Ormesson and the prudent elder Members see no good in strife.

After a dull month, the Parlement, yielding and retaining, makes truce, as all Parlements must. The Stamp-tax is withdrawn: the *Subvention* Land-tax is also withdrawn; but, in its stead, there is granted, what they call a 'Prorogation of the Second Twentieth,'—itself a kind of Land-tax, but not so oppressive to the Influential classes; which lies mainly on the Dumb class. Moreover, secret promises exist (on the part of

<sup>4</sup> Montgaillard, i. 369. Besenval, &c.

<sup>5</sup> Montgaillard, i. 373.



the Elders), that finances may be raised by Loan. Of the ugly word States-General there shall be no mention.

And so, on the 20th of September, our exiled Parlement returns: D'Espréménil said, 'it went out covered with glory, but had come back covered with mud (*de boue*).' Not so, Aristogiton; or if so, thou surely art the man to clean it.

## CHAPTER VI.

### LOMÉNIE'S PLOTS.

WAS ever unfortunate Chief Minister so bested as Loménie-Brienne? The reins of the State fairly in his hand these six months; and not the smallest motive-power (of Finance) to stir from the spot with, this way or that! He flourishes his whip, but advances not. Instead of ready-money, there is nothing but rebellious debating and recalcitrating.

Far is the public mind from having calmed; it goes chafing and fuming ever worse: and in the royal coffers, with such yearly Deficit running on, there is hardly the colour of coin. Ominous prognostics! Malesherbes, seeing an exhausted, exasperated France grow hotter and hotter, talks of 'conflagration': Mirabeau, without talk, has, as we perceive, descended on Paris again, close on the rear of the Parlement,<sup>1</sup>—not to quit his native soil any more.

Over the Frontiers, behold Holland invaded by Prussia;<sup>2</sup> the French party oppressed, England and the Stadtholder triumphing: to the sorrow of War-secretary Montmorin and all men. But without money, sinews of war, as of work, and of existence itself, what can a Chief Minister do? Taxes profit little: this of the Second Twentieth falls not due till next year; and will then, with its 'strict valuation,' produce more controversy than cash. Taxes on the Privileged Classes cannot be got registered; are intolerable to our supporters themselves: taxes on the Unprivileged yield nothing,—as from a thing drained dry more cannot be drawn. Hope is nowhere, if not in the old refuge of Loans.

To Loménie, aided by the long head of Lamoignon, deeply pondering this sea of troubles, the thought suggested itself:

<sup>1</sup> Fils Adoptif, *Mirabeau*, iv. l. 5.

<sup>2</sup> October 1787. Montgaillard, i. 374. Besenval, iii. 283.



Oct.-Nov.

Why not have a Successive Loan (*Emprunt Successif*), or Loan that went on lending, year after year, as much as needful; say, till 1792? The trouble of registering such Loan were the same: we had then breathing time; money to work with, at least to subsist on. Edict of a Successive Loan must be proposed. To conciliate the Philosophes, let a liberal Edict walk in front of it, for emancipation of Protestants; let a liberal Promise guard the rear of it, that when our Loan ends, in that final 1792, the States-General shall be convoked.

Such liberal Edict of Protestant Emancipation, the time having come for it, shall cost a Loménie as little as the 'Death-penalties to be put in execution' did. As for the liberal Promise, of States-General, it can be fulfilled or not: the fulfilment is five good years off; in five years much intervenes. But the registering? Ah, truly, there is the difficulty!—However, we have that promise of the Elders, given secretly at Troyes. Judicious gratuities, cajoleries, underground intrigues, with old Foulon, named '*Ame damnée*, Familiar-demon, of the Parliament,' may perhaps do the rest. At worst and lowest, the Royal Authority has resources,—which ought it not to put forth? If it cannot realise money, the Royal Authority is as good as dead; dead of that surest and miserablest death, inanition. Risk and win; without risk all is already lost! For the rest, as in enterprises of pith, a touch of stratagem often proves furthersome, his Majesty announces *a Royal Hunt*, for the 19th of November next; and all whom it concerns are joyfully getting their gear ready.

Royal Hunt indeed; but of two-legged unfeathered game! At eleven in the morning of that Royal-Hunt day, 19th of November 1787, unexpected blare of trumpeting, tumult of charioteering and cavalcading disturbs the Seat of Justice: his Majesty is come, with Garde-des-Sceaux Lamoignon, and Peers and retinue, to hold Royal Session and have Edicts registered. What a change, since Louis XIV. entered here, in boots; and, whip in hand, ordered his registering to be done,—with an Olympian look, which none durst gainsay; and did, without stratagem, in such unceremonious fashion, hunt as well as register!<sup>3</sup> For Louis XVI., on this day, the Registering will be enough; if indeed he and the day suffice for it.

<sup>3</sup> Dulaure, vi. 306.



Meanwhile, with fit ceremonial words, the purpose of the royal breast is signified:—Two Edicts, for Protestant Emancipation, for Successive Loan: of both which Edicts our trusty Garde-des-Sceaux Lamoignon will explain the purport; on both which a trusty Parlement is requested to deliver its opinion, each member having free privilege of speech. And so, Lamoignon too having perorated not amiss, and wound up with that Promise of States-General,—the Sphere-music of Parliamentary eloquence begins. Explosive, responsive, sphere answering sphere, it waxes louder and louder. The Peers sit attentive; of diverse sentiment: unfriendly to States-General; unfriendly to Despotism, which cannot reward merit, and is suppressing places. But what agitates his Highness d'Orléans? The rubicund moon-head goes wagging; darker beams the copper visage, like unscoured copper; in the glazed eye is disquietude; he rolls uneasy in his seat, as if he meant something. Amid unutterable satiety, has sudden new appetite, for new forbidden fruit, been vouchsafed him? Disgust and edacity; laziness that cannot rest; futile ambition, revenge, non-admiralship:—O, within that carbuncled skin what a confusion of confusions sits bottled!

'Eight Couriers,' in the course of the day, gallop from Versailles, where Loménie waits palpitating; and gallop back again, not with the best news. In the outer Courts of the Palais, huge buzz of expectation reigns; it is whispered the Chief Minister has lost six votes overnight. And from within, resounds nothing but forensic eloquence, pathetic and even indignant; heart-rending appeals to the royal clemency, that his Majesty would please to summon States-General forthwith, and be the Saviour of France:—wherein dusky-glowing D'Espréménil, but still more Sabatier de Cabre, and Fréteau, since named *Commère* Fréteau (Goody Fréteau), are among the loudest. For six mortal hours it lasts, in this manner; the infinite hubbub unslackened.

And so now, when brown dusk is falling through the windows, and no end visible, his Majesty, on hint of Garde-des-Sceaux Lamoignon, opens his royal lips once more to say, in brief, That he must have his Loan-Edict registered.—Momentary deep pause!—See! Monseigneur d'Orléans rises; with moon-visage turned towards the royal platform, he asks, with



November.

a delicate graciousness of manner covering unutterable things : "Whether it is a Bed of Justice, then, or a Royal Session?" Fire flashes on him from the throne and neighbourhood : surly answer that "it is a Session." In that case, Monseigneur will crave leave to remark that Edicts cannot be registered by *order* in a Session ; and indeed to enter, against such registry, his individual humble Protest. "*Vous êtes bien le maître* (You will do your pleasure)," answers the King ; and thereupon, in high state, marches out, escorted by his Court-retinue ; D'Orléans himself, as in duty bound, escorting him, but only to the gate. Which duty done, D'Orléans returns in from the gate ; redacts his Protest, in the face of an applauding Parlement, an applauding France ; and so—has *cut* his Court-moorings, shall we say ? And will now sail and drift, fast enough, towards Chaos ?

Thou foolish D'Orléans ; Equality that art to be ! Is Royalty grown a mere wooden Scarecrow ; whereon thou, pert scaldheaded crow, mayest alight at pleasure, and peck ? Not yet wholly.

Next day, a Lettre-de-Cachet sends D'Orléans to bethink himself in his Château of Villers-Cotterets, where, alas, is no Paris with its joyous necessaries of life ; no fascinating indispensable Madame de Buffon, —light wife of a great Naturalist much too old for her. Monseigneur, it is said, does nothing but walk distractedly, at Villers-Cotterets ; cursing his stars. Versailles itself shall hear penitent wail from him, so hard is his doom. By a second, simultaneous Lettre-de-Cachet, Goody Fréteau is hurled into the Stronghold of Ham, amid the Norman marshes ; by a third, Sabatier de Cabre into Mont St. Michel, amid the Norman quicksands. As for the Parlement, it must, on summons, travel out to Versailles, with its Register-Book under its arm, to have the Protest *biffé* (expunged) ; not without admonition, and even rebuke. A stroke of authority, which, one might have hoped, would quiet matters.

Unhappily, no : it is a mere taste of the whip to rearing coursers, which makes them rear worse ! When a team of Twenty-five Millions begins rearing, what is Loménie's whip ? The Parlement will nowise acquiesce meekly ; and set to register the Protestant Edict, and do its other work, in salutary fear of these three Lettres-de-Cachet. Far from that, it begins question-



1787.

ing Lettres-de-Cachet generally, their legality, durability; emits dolorous objurgation, petition on petition to have its three Martyrs delivered; cannot, till that be complied with, so much as think of examining the Protestant Edict, but puts it off always 'till this day week.'<sup>4</sup>

In which objurgatory strain Paris and France joins it, or rather has preceded it; making fearful chorus. And now also the other Parlements, at length opening their mouths, begin to join; some of them, as at Grenoble and at Rennes, with portentous emphasis,—threatening, by way of reprisal, to interdict the very Tax-gatherer.<sup>5</sup> "In all former contests," as Malesherbes remarks, "it was the Parlement that excited the Public; but here it is the Public that excites the Parlement."

## CHAPTER VII.

## INTERNECINE.

WHAT a France, through these winter months of the year 1787! The very Œil-de Bœuf is doleful, uncertain; with a general feeling among the Suppressed, that it were better to be in Turkey. The Wolf-hounds are suppressed, the Bear-hounds, Duke de Coigny, Duke de Polignac: in the Trianon little-heaven, her Majesty, one evening, takes Besenval's arm; asks his candid opinion. The intrepid Besenval,—having, as he hopes, nothing of the sycophant in *him*,—plainly signifies that, with a Parlement in rebellion, and an Œil-de-Bœuf in suppression, the King's Crown is in danger;—whereupon, singular to say, her Majesty, as if hurt, changed the subject, *et ne me parla plus de rien!*<sup>1</sup>

To whom, indeed, can this poor Queen speak? In need of wise counsel, if ever mortal was; yet beset here only by the hubbub of chaos! Her dwelling-place is so bright to the eye, and confusion and black care darkens it all. Sorrows of the Sovereign, sorrows of the woman, thick-coming sorrows environ her more and more. Lamotte, the Necklace-Countess, has in these late months escaped, perhaps been suffered to escape, from the Salpêtrière. Vain was the hope that Paris might

<sup>4</sup> Besenval, iii. 309.<sup>5</sup> Weber, i. 266.<sup>1</sup> Besenval, iii. 264.



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thereby forget her ; and this ever-widening-lie, and heap of lies, subside. The Lamotte, with a V (for *Voleuse*, Thief) branded on both shoulders, has got to England ; and will therefrom emit lie on lie ; defiling the highest queenly name : mere distracted lies ;<sup>2</sup> which, in its present humour, France will greedily believe.

For the rest, it is too clear our Successive Loan is not filling. As indeed, in such circumstances, a Loan registered by expunging of Protests was not the likeliest to fill. Denunciation of *Lettres-de-Cachet*, of Despotism generally, abates not : the Twelve Parlements are busy ; the Twelve hundred Placarders, Balladsingers, Pamphleteers. Paris is what, in figurative speech, they call ‘flooded with pamphlets (*regorge de brochures*) ;’ flooded and eddying again. Hot deluge,—from so many Patriot ready-writers, all at the *fervid* or boiling point ; each ready-writer, now in the hour of eruption, going like an Iceland Geyser ! Against which what can a judicious Friend Morellet do ; a Rivarol, an unruly Linguet (well paid for it),—spouting *cold* !

Now also, at length, does come discussion of the Protestant Edict : but only for new embroilment ; in pamphlet and counter-pamphlet, increasing the madness of men. Not even Orthodoxy, bedrid as she seemed, but will have a hand in this confusion. She once again in the shape of Abbé Lenfant, ‘whom Prelates drive to visit and congratulate,’—raises audible sound from her pulpit-drum.<sup>3</sup> Or mark how D’Espréménil, who has his own confused way in all things, produces at the right moment in Parliamentary harangue, a pocket Crucifix, with the apostrophe : “Will ye crucify him afresh ?” *Him*, O D’Espréménil, without scruple ;—considering what poor stuff, of ivory and filigree, *he* is made of !

To all which add only, that poor Brienne has fallen sick ; so hard was the tear and wear of his sinful youth, so violent, incessant is this agitation of his foolish old age. Baited, bayed at through so many throats, his Grace, growing consumptive, inflammatory (with *humeur de dartre*), lies reduced to milk diet ;

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires justificatifs de la Comtesse de Lamotte* (London, 1788). *Vie de Jeanne de St. Remi, Comtesse de Lamotte, &c. &c.* See *Diamond Necklace* (ut suprà).

<sup>3</sup> Lacretelle, iii. 343. Montgaillard, &c.



in exasperation, almost in desperation ; with 'repose,' precisely the impossible recipe, prescribed as the indispensable.<sup>4</sup>

On the whole, what can a poor Government do, but once more recoil ineffectual? The King's Treasury is running towards the lees ; and Paris 'eddies with a flood of pamphlets.' At all rates, let the *latter* subside a little ! D'Orléans gets back to Raincy, which is nearer Paris and the fair frail Buffon ; finally to Paris itself : neither are Fréteau and Sabatier banished forever. The Protestant Edict is registered ; to the joy of Boissy d'Anglas and good Malesherbes : Successive Loan, all protests expunged or else withdrawn, remains open, —the rather as few or none come to fill it. States-General, for which the Parlement has clamoured, and now the whole Nation clamours, will follow 'in five years,' —if indeed not sooner. O Parlement of Paris, what a clamour was that ! "Messieurs," said old D'Ormesson, "you will get States-General, and you will repent it." Like the Horse in the Fable, who, to be avenged of his enemy, applied to the Man. The Man mounted ; did swift execution on the enemy ; but, unhappily, would not dismount ! Instead of five years, let three years pass, and this clamorous Parlement shall have both seen its enemy hurled prostrate, and been itself ridden to foundering (say rather, jugulated for hide and shoes), and lie dead in the ditch.

Under such omens, however, we have reached the spring of 1788. By no path can the King's Government find passage for itself, but is everywhere shamefully flung back. Beleagured by Twelve rebellious Parlements, which are grown to be the organs of an angry Nation, it can advance nowhither ; can accomplish nothing, obtain nothing, not so much as money to subsist on ; but must sit there, seemingly, to be eaten up of Deficit.

The measure of the Iniquity, then, of the Falsehood which has been gathering through long centuries, is nearly full ? At least, that of the Misery is ! From the hovels of the Twenty-five Millions, the misery, permeating upwards and forwards, as its law is, has got so far, —to the very *Œil-de-Bœuf* of Versailles. Man's hand, in this blind pain, is set against man : not only the low against the higher, but the higher against each other ; Provincial Noblesse is bitter against Court Noblesse ;

<sup>4</sup> Besenval, iii. 317.



April.

Robe against Sword ; Rochet against Pen. But against the King's Government who is *not* bitter? Not even Besenval, in these days. To it all men and bodies of men are become as enemies ; it is the centre whereon infinite contentions unite and clash. What new universal vertiginous movement is this ; of Institutions, social Arrangements, individual Minds, which once worked coöperative ; now rolling and grinding in distracted collision? Inevitable : it is the breaking-up of a World-Solecism, worn out at last, down even to bankruptcy of money ! And so this poor Versailles Court, as the chief or central Solecism, finds all the other Solecisms arrayed against it. Most natural ! For your human Solecism, be it Person or Combination of Persons, is ever, by law of Nature, uneasy ; if verging towards bankruptcy, it is even miserable :—and when would the meanest Solecism consent to blame or amend *itself*, while there remained another to amend ?

These threatening signs do not terrify Loménie, much less teach him. Loménie, though of light nature, is not without courage, of a sort. Nay, have we not read of lightest creatures, trained Canary-birds, that could fly cheerfully with lighted matches, and fire cannon ; fire whole powder-magazines? To sit and die of Deficit is no part of Loménie's plan. The evil is considerable ; but can he not remove it, can he not attack it? At lowest, he can attack the *symptom* of it : these rebellious Parlements he can attack, and perhaps remove. Much is dim to Loménie, but two things are clear : that such Parliamentary duel with Royalty is growing perilous, nay internecine ; above all, that money must be had. Take thought, brave Loménie ; thou Garde-des-Sceaux Lamoignon, who hast ideas ! So often defeated, balked cruelly when the golden fruit seemed within clutch, rally for one other struggle. To tame the Parlement, to fill the King's coffers : these are now life-and-death questions.

Parlements have been tamed, more than once. Set to perch 'on the peaks of rocks inaccessible except by ladders,' a Parlement grows reasonable. O Maupeou, thou bold bad man, had we left thy work where it was !—But apart from exile, or other violent methods, is there not one method, whereby all things are tamed, even lions? The method of hunger ! What if the Parlement's supplies were cut off ; namely its Lawsuits !

Minor Courts, for the trying of innumerable minor causes,



might be instituted: these we could call *Grand Bailliages*. Whereon the Parlement, shortened of its prey, would look with yellow despair; but the Public, fond of cheap justice, with favour and hope. Then for Finance, for registering of Edicts, why not, from our own *Œil-de-Bœuf* Dignitaries, our Princes, Dukes, Marshals, make a thing we could call *Plenary Court*; and there, so to speak, do our registering ourselves? Saint Louis had his Plenary Court, of Great Barons;<sup>5</sup> most useful to him: our Great Barons are still here (at least the Name of them is still here); our necessity is greater than his.

Such is the Loménie-Lamoignon device; welcome to the King's Council, as a light-beam in great darkness. The device seems feasible, it is eminently needful: be it once well executed, great deliverance is wrought. Silent, then, and steady; now or never!—the World shall see one other Historical Scene; and so singular a man as Loménie de Brienne still the Stage-manager there.

Behold, accordingly, a Home-Secretary Bréteuil 'beautifying Paris,' in the peaceablest manner, in this hopeful spring weather of 1788; the old hovels and hutches disappearing from our Bridges: as if for the State too there were halcyon weather, and nothing to do but beautify. Parlement seems to sit acknowledged victor. Brienne says nothing of Finance; or even says, and prints, that it is all well. How is this; such halcyon quiet; though the Successive Loan did not fill? In a victorious Parlement, Counsellor Goeslard de Monsabert even denounces that 'levying of the Second Twentieth on strict valuation;' and gets decree that the valuation shall not be strict,—not on the Privileged classes. Nevertheless Brienne endures it, launches no *Lettre-de-Cachet* against it. How is this?

Smiling is such vernal weather; but treacherous, sudden! For one thing, we hear it whispered, 'the Intendants of Provinces have all got order to be at their posts on a certain day.' Still more singular, what incessant Printing is this that goes on at the King's Château, under lock and key? Sentries occupy all gates and windows; the Printers come not out; they sleep in their workrooms; their very food is handed in to them!<sup>6</sup> A victorious Parlement smells new danger. D'Espréménil has ordered horses to Versailles; prowls round that guarded Printing-

<sup>5</sup> Montgaillard, i. 405.

<sup>6</sup> Weber, i. 276.



1788.

Office ; prying, snuffing, if so be the sagacity and ingenuity of man may penetrate it.

To a shower of gold most things are penetrable. D'Espréménil descends on the lap of a Printer's Danaë, in the shape of 'five hundred louis d'or:' the Danaë's Husband smuggles a ball of clay to her ; which she delivers to the golden Counsellor of Parlement. Kneaded within it, there stick printed proof-sheets :—by Heaven ! the royal Edict of that same self-registering *Plenary Court* ; of those *Grand Bailliages* that shall cut short our Lawsuits ! It is to be promulgated over all France on one and the same day.

This, then, is what the Intendants were bid wait for at their posts : this is what the Court sat hatching, as its accursed cockatrice-egg ; and would not stir, though provoked, till the brood were out ! Hie with it, D'Espréménil, home to Paris ; convoke instantaneous Sessions ; let the Parlement, and the Earth, and the Heavens know it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## LOMÉNIE'S DEATH-THROES.

ON the morrow, which is the 3d of May 1788, an astonished Parlement sits convoked ; listens speechless to the speech of D'Espréménil, unfolding the infinite misdeed. Deed of treachery ; of unhallowed darkness, such as Despotism loves ! Denounce it, O Parlement of Paris ; awaken France and the Universe ; roll what thunder-barrels of forensic eloquence thou hast ; with thee too it is verily Now or never !

The Parlement is not wanting, at such juncture. In the hour of his extreme jeopardy, the lion first incites himself by roaring, by lashing his sides. So here the Parlement of Paris. On the motion of D'Espréménil, a most patriotic Oath, of the One-and-all sort, is sworn, with united throat ;—an excellent new-idea, which, in these coming years, shall not remain unimitated. Next comes indomitable Declaration, almost of the rights of man, at least of the rights of Parlement ; Invocation to the friends of French Freedom, in this and in subsequent time. All which, or the essence of all which, is brought to paper ; in a tone wherein something of plaintiveness blends with, and tempers, heroic valour. And thus, having sounded the storm-bell,



—which Paris hears, which all France will hear; and hurled such defiance in the teeth of Loménie and Despotism, the Parlement retires as from a tolerable first day's work.

But how Loménie felt to see his cockatrice-egg (so essential to the salvation of France) broken in this premature manner, let readers fancy! Indignant he clutches at his thunderbolts (*de Cachet*, of the Seal); and launches two of them: a bolt for D'Espréménil; a bolt for that busy Goeslard, whose service in the Second Twentieth and 'strict valuation' is not forgotten. Such bolts clutched promptly overnight, and launched with the early new morning, shall strike agitated Paris if not into requiescence, yet into wholesome astonishment.

Ministerial thunderbolts may be launched; but if they do not *hit*? D'Espréménil and Goeslard, warned, both of them, as is thought, by the singing of some friendly bird, elude the Loménie Tipstaves; escape disguised through skywindows, over roofs, to their own Palais de Justice: the thunderbolts have *missed*. Paris (for the buzz flies abroad) is struck into astonishment *not* wholesome. The two Martyrs of Liberty doff their disguises; don their long gowns: behold, in the space of an hour, by aid of ushers and swift runners, the Parlement, with its Counsellors, Presidents, even Peers, sits anew assembled. The assembled Parlement declares that these its two Martyrs cannot be given up, to any sublunary authority; moreover that the 'session is permanent,' admitting of no adjournment, till pursuit of them has been relinquished.

And so, with forensic eloquence, denunciation and protest, with couriers going and returning, the Parlement, in this state of continual explosion that shall cease neither night nor day, waits the issue. Awakened Paris once more inundates those outer courts; boils, in floods wilder than ever, through all avenues. Dissonant hubbub there is; jargon as of Babel, in the hour when they were first smitten (as here) with mutual unintelligibility, and the people had not yet dispersed!

Paris City goes through its diurnal epochs, of working and slumbering; and now, for the second time, most European and African mortals are asleep. But here, in this Whirlpool of Words, sleep falls not; the Night spreads her coverlid of Darkness over it in vain. Within is the sound of mere martyr invincibility; tempered with the due tone of plaintiveness.



May.

Without is the infinite expectant hum,—growing drowsier a little. So has it lasted for six-and-thirty hours.

But hark, through the dead of midnight, what tramp is this? Tramp as of armed men, foot and horse; Gardes Françaises, Gardes Suisses: marching hither; in silent regularity; in the flare of torchlight! There are Sappers too, with axes and crow-bars: apparently, if the doors open not, they will be forced!—It is Captain D'Agoust, missioned from Versailles. D'Agoust, a man of known firmness;—who once forced Prince Condé himself, by mere incessant looking at him, to give satisfaction and fight:<sup>1</sup> he now, with axes and torches, is advancing on the very sanctuary of Justice. Sacrilegious; yet what help? The man is a soldier; looks merely at his orders; impassive, moves forward like an inanimate engine.

The doors open on summons, there need no axes; door after door. And now the innermost door opens; discloses the long-gowned Senators of France: a hundred and sixty-seven by tale, seventeen of them Peers; sitting there, majestic, 'in permanent session.' Were not the man military, and of cast-iron, this sight, this silence reëchoing the clank of his own boots, might stagger him! For the hundred and sixty-seven receive him in perfect silence; which some liken to that of the Roman Senate overfallen by Brennus; some to that of a nest of coiners surprised by officers of the Police.<sup>2</sup> *Messieurs*, said D'Agoust, *De par le Roi!* Express order has charged D'Agoust with the sad duty of arresting two individuals: M. Duval d'Espréménil and M. Goeslard de Monsabert. Which respectable individuals, as he has not the honour of knowing them, are hereby invited, in the King's name, to surrender themselves.—Profound silence! Buzz, which grows a murmur: "We are all D'Espréménils!" ventures a voice; which other voices repeat. The President inquires, Whether he will employ violence? Captain D'Agoust, honoured with his Majesty's commission, has to execute his Majesty's order; would so gladly do it without violence, will in any case do it; grants an august Senate space to deliberate which method *they* prefer. And thereupon D'Agoust, with grave military courtesy, has withdrawn for the moment.

What boots it, august Senators? All avenues are closed with fixed bayonets. Your Courier gallops to Versailles, through

<sup>1</sup> Weber, i. 283.

<sup>2</sup> Besenval, iii. 355.



the dewy Night; but also gallops back again, with tidings that the order is authentic, that it is irrevocable. The outer courts simmer with idle population; but D'Agoust's grenadier-ranks stand there as immovable floodgates: there will be no revolting to deliver you. "Messieurs!" thus spoke D'Espréménil, "when the victorious Gauls entered Rome, which they had carried by assault, the Roman Senators, clothed in their purple, sat there, in their curule chairs, with a proud and tranquil countenance, awaiting slavery or death. Such too is the lofty spectacle, which you, in this hour, offer to the universe (*à l'univers*), after having generously"—with much more of the like, as can still be read.<sup>3</sup>

In vain, O D'Espréménil! Here is this cast-iron Captain D'Agoust, with his cast-iron military air, come back. Despotism, constraint, destruction sit waving in his plumes. D'Espréménil must fall silent; heroically give himself up, lest worst befall. Him Goeslard heroically imitates. With spoken and speechless emotion, they fling themselves into the arms of their Parliamentary brethren, for a last embrace: and so amid plaudits and plaints, from a hundred and sixty-five throats; amid wavings, sobbings, a whole forest-sigh of Parliamentary pathos,—they are led through winding passages, to the rear-gate; where, in the gray of the morning, two Coaches with *Exempts* stand waiting. There must the victims mount; bayonets menacing behind. D'Espréménil's stern question to the populace, 'Whether they have courage?' is answered by silence. They mount, and roll; and neither the rising of the May sun (it is the 6th morning), nor its setting shall lighten their heart: but they fare forward continually; D'Espréménil towards the utmost Isles of Sainte Marguerite, or Hières (supposed by some, if that is any comfort, to be Calypso's Island); Goeslard towards the land-fortress of Pierre-en-Cize, extant then, near the City of Lyons.

Captain D'Agoust may now therefore look forward to Majorship, to Commandantship of the Tuileries;<sup>4</sup>—and withal vanish from History; where nevertheless he has been fated to do a notable thing. For not only are D'Espréménil and Goeslard safe whirling southward, but the Parlement itself has straightway to march out: to that also his inexorable order reaches. Gathering up their long skirts, they file out, the whole Hundred and Sixty-five of them, through two rows of unsympathetic grenadiers:

<sup>3</sup> Toulangeon, i. App. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Montgaillard, i. 404.



May-July.

a spectacle to gods and men. The people revolt not; they only wonder and grumble: also, we remark, these unsympathetic grenadiers are *Gardes Françaises*,—who, one day, will sympathise! In a word, the Palais de Justice is swept clear, the doors of it are locked; and D'Agoust returns to Versailles with the key in his pocket,—having, as was said, merited preferment.

As for this Parlement of Paris, now turned out to the street, we will without reluctance leave it there. The Beds of Justice it had to undergo, in the coming fortnight, at Versailles, in registering, or rather refusing to register, those new-hatched Edicts; and how it assembled in taverns and tap-rooms there, for the purpose of Protesting;<sup>5</sup> or hovered disconsolate, with outspread skirts, not knowing where to assemble; and was reduced to lodge Protest 'with a Notary;' and in the end, to sit still (in a state of forced 'vacation'), and do nothing: all this, natural now, as the burying of the dead after battle, shall not concern us. The Parlement of Paris has as good as performed its part; doing and misdoing, so far, but hardly further, could it stir the world.

Loménie has removed the evil, then? Not at all: not so much as the symptom of the evil; scarcely the *twelfth* part of the symptom, and exasperated the other eleven! The Intendants of Provinces, the Military Commandants are at their posts, on the appointed 8th of May: but in no Parlement, if not in the single one of Douai, can these new Edicts get registered. Not peaceable signing with ink; but browbeating, bloodshedding, appeal to primary club-law! Against these Bailliages, against this Plenary Court, exasperated Themis everywhere shows face of battle; the Provincial Noblesse are of her party, and whoever hates Loménie and the evil time; with her Attorneys and Tipstaves, she enlists and operates down even to the populace. At Rennes in Brittany, where the historical Bertrand de Moleville is Intendant, it has passed from fatal continual duelling, between the military and gentry, to street-fighting; to stone-volleys and musket-shot: and still the Edicts remain unregistered. The afflicted Bretons send remonstrance to Loménie, by a Deputation of Twelve; whom, however, Loménie, having heard them, shuts up in the Bastille. A second larger Deputation he meets, by his scouts, on the road, and persuades or

<sup>5</sup> Weber, i. 299-303.



frightens back. But now a third largest Deputation is indignantly sent by *many* roads: refused audience on arriving, it meets to take counsel; invites Lafayette and all Patriot Bretons in Paris to assist; agitates itself; becomes the *Breton Club*, first germ of—the *Jacobins' Society*.<sup>6</sup>

So many as eight Parlements get exiled:<sup>7</sup> others might need that remedy, but it is one not always easy of appliance. At Grenoble, for instance, where a Mounier, a Barnave have not been idle, the Parlement had due order (by *Lettres-de-Cachet*) to depart, and exile itself: but on the morrow, instead of coaches getting yoked, the alarm-bell bursts forth, ominous; and peals and booms all day: crowds of mountaineers rush down, with axes, even with firelocks,—whom (most ominous of all!) the soldiery shows no eagerness to deal with. 'Axe over head,' the poor General has to sign capitulation; to engage that the *Lettres-de-Cachet* shall remain unexecuted, and a beloved Parlement stay where it is. Besançon, Dijon, Rouen, Bourdeaux, are not what they should be! At Pau in Bearn, where the old Commandant had failed, the new one (a Grammont, native to them) is met by a Procession of townsmen with the Cradle of Henri Quatre, the Palladium of their Town; is conjured as he venerates this old Tortoise-shell, in which the great Henri was rocked, not to trample on Bearnese liberty; is informed, withal, that his Majesty's cannon are all safe—in the keeping of his Majesty's faithful Burghers of Pau, and do now lie pointed on the walls there; ready for action!<sup>8</sup>

At this rate, your Grand Bailliages are like to have a stormy infancy. As for the Plenary Court, it has literally expired in the birth. The very Courtiers looked shy at it; old Marshal Broglie declined the honour of sitting therein. Assaulted by a universal storm of mingled ridicule and execration,<sup>9</sup> this poor

<sup>6</sup> A. F. de Bertrand-Moleville, *Mémoires Particuliers* (Paris, 1816), i. ch. i. Marmontel, *Mémoires*, iv. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Montgaillard, i. 308.

<sup>8</sup> Besenval, iii. 348.

<sup>9</sup> *La Cour Plénière*, héroï-tragi-comédie en trois actes et en prose; jouée le 14 Juillet 1788, par une société d'amateurs dans un Château aux environs de Versailles; par M. l'Abbé de Vermond, Lecteur de la Reine: A Bâville (*Lamoignon's Country-house*), et se trouve à Paris, chez la Veuve Liberté, à l'enseigne de la Révolution, 1788.—*La Passion, la Mort et la Résurrection du Peuple*: Imprimé à Jerusalem, &c. &c.—See Montgaillard, i. 407.



May-July.

Plenary Court met once, and never any second time. Distracted country! Contention hisses up, with forked hydra-tongues, where-soever poor Loménie sets his foot. 'Let a Commandant, a 'Commissioner of the King,' says Weber, 'enter one of these 'Parlements to have an Edict registered, the whole Tribunal 'will disappear, and leave the Commandant alone with the Clerk 'and First President. The Edict registered and the Command- 'ant gone, the whole Tribunal hastens back, to declare such 'registration null. The highways are covered with *Grand Depu- 'tations* of Parlements, proceeding to Versailles, to have their 'registers expunged by the King's hand; or returning home, 'to cover a new page with a new resolution still more auda- 'cious.'<sup>10</sup>

Such is the France of this year 1788. Not now a Golden or Paper Age of Hope; with its horse-racings, balloon-flyings, and finer sensibilities of the heart: ah, gone is that; its golden effulgence paled, bedarkened in *this* singular manner,—brewing towards preternatural weather! For, as in that wreck-storm of *Paul et Virginie* and *Saint-Pierre*,—'One huge motionless 'cloud' (say, of Sorrow and Indignation) 'girdles our whole 'horizon; streams up, hairy, copper-edged, over a sky of the 'colour of lead.' Motionless itself; but 'small clouds' (as exiled Parlements and suchlike), 'parting from it, fly over the zenith, 'with the velocity of birds:—till at last, with one loud howl, the whole Four Winds be dashed together, and all the world exclaim, There is the tornado! *Tout le monde s'écria, Voilà l'ouragan!*

For the rest, in such circumstances, the Successive Loan, very naturally, remains unfilled; neither, indeed, can that impost of the Second Twentieth, at least not on 'strict valuation,' be levied to good purpose: 'Lenders,' says Weber, in his hysterical vehement manner, 'are afraid of ruin; tax-gatherers of hanging.' The very Clergy turn away their face: convoked in Extraordinary Assembly, they afford no gratuitous gift (*don gratuit*),—if it be not that of advice; here too instead of cash is clamour for States-General.<sup>11</sup>

O Loménie-Brienne, with thy poor flimsy mind all bewildered, and now 'three actual cauteries' on thy worn-out body;

<sup>10</sup> Weber, i. 275.

<sup>11</sup> Lameth, *Assemb. Const.* (Introd.) p. 87.



who art like to die of inflammation, provocation, milk-diet, *dartres* *vives* and *maladie*—(best untranslated);<sup>12</sup> and presidest over a France with innumerable *actual cauteries*, which also is dying of inflammation and the rest! Was it wise to quit the bosky verdures of Brienne, and thy new ashlar Château there, and what it held, for *this*? Soft were those shades and lawns; sweet the hymns of Poetasters, the blandishments of high-rouged Graces:<sup>13</sup> and always this and the other Philosophe Morellet (nothing deeming himself or thee a questionable Sham-Priest) could be so happy in making happy:—and also (hadst thou known it), in the Military School hard by, there sat, studying mathematics, a dusky-complexioned taciturn Boy, under the name of: NAPOLEON BONAPARTE!—With fifty years of effort, and one final dead-lift struggle, thou hast made an exchange! Thou hast got thy robe of office,—as Hercules had his Nessus'-shirt.

On the 13th of July of this 1788, there fell, on the very edge of harvest, the most frightful hailstorm; scattering into wild waste the Fruits of the Year; which had otherwise suffered grievously by drought. For sixty leagues round Paris especially, the ruin was almost total.<sup>14</sup> To so many other evils, then, there is to be added, that of dearth, perhaps of famine.

Some days before this hailstorm, on the 5th of July; and still more decisively some days after it, on the 8th of August,—Loménie announces that the States-General are actually to meet in the following month of May. Till after which period, this of the Plenary Court, and the rest, shall remain *postponed*. Further, as in Loménie there is no plan of forming or holding these most desirable States-General, 'thinkers are invited' to furnish him with one,—through the medium of discussion by the public press!

What could a poor Minister do? There are still ten months of respite reserved: a sinking pilot will fling out all things, his very biscuit-bags, lead, log, compass and quadrant, before flinging out *himself*. It is on this principle, of sinking, and the incipient delirium of despair, that we explain likewise the almost miraculous 'invitation to thinkers.' Invitation to Chaos to be so kind as build, out of its tumultuous drift-wood, an Ark of Escape for him! In these cases, not invitation but command.

<sup>12</sup> Montgaillard, i. 424.

<sup>14</sup> Marmontel, iv. 30.

<sup>13</sup> See *Mémoires de Morellet*.



August.

has usually proved serviceable.—The Queen stood, that evening, pensive, in a window, with her face turned towards the Garden. The *Chef de Gobelet* had followed her with an obsequious cup of coffee; and then retired till it were sipped. Her Majesty beckoned Dame Campan to approach: "*Grand Dieu!*" murmured she, with the cup in her hand, "what a piece of news will be made public today! The King grants States-General." Then raising her eyes to Heaven (if Campan were not mistaken), she added: "'Tis a first beat of the drum, of ill-omen for France. This Noblesse will ruin us."<sup>15</sup>

During all that hatching of the Plenary Court, while Lamoignon looked so mysterious, Besenval had kept asking him one question: Whether they had cash? To which as Lamoignon always answered (on the faith of Loménie) that the cash was safe, judicious Besenval rejoined that then all was safe. Nevertheless, the melancholy fact is, that the royal coffers are almost getting literally void of coin. Indeed, apart from all other things, this 'invitation to thinkers,' and the great change now at hand are enough to 'arrest the circulation of capital,' and forward only that of pamphlets. A few thousand gold louis are now all of money or money's worth that remains in the King's Treasury. With another movement as of desperation, Loménie invites Necker to come and be Controller of Finances! Necker has other work in view than controlling Finances for Loménie: with a dry refusal he stands taciturn; awaiting his time.

What shall a desperate Prime Minister do? He has grasped at the strongbox of the King's Theatre: some Lottery had been set on foot for those sufferers by the hailstorm; in his extreme necessity, Loménie lays hands even on this.<sup>16</sup> To make provision for the passing day, on any terms, will soon be impossible.—On the 16th of August, poor Weber heard, at Paris and Versailles, hawkers, 'with a hoarse stifled tone of voice (*voix étouffée, sourde*),' drawling and snuffling, through the streets, an *Edict concerning Payments* (such was the soft title Rivarol had contrived for it): all Payments at the Royal Treasury shall be made henceforth, three-fifths in Cash, and the remaining two-fifths—in Paper bearing interest! Poor Weber almost swooned

<sup>15</sup> Campan, iii. 104, III.

<sup>16</sup> Besenval, iii. 360.



at the sound of these cracked voices, with their bodeful raven-note ; and will never forget the effect it had on him.<sup>17</sup>

But the effect on Paris, on the world generally ? From the dens of Stock-brokerage, from the heights of Political Economy, of Neckerism and Philosophism ; from all articulate and inarticulate throats, rise hootings and howlings, such as ear had not yet heard. Sedition itself may be imminent ! Monseigneur d'Artois, moved by Duchess Polignac, feels called to wait upon her Majesty ; and explain frankly what crisis matters stand in. 'The Queen wept ;' Brienne himself wept ;—for it is now visible and palpable that he must go.

Remains only that the Court, to whom his manners and garrulities were always agreeable, shall make his fall soft. The grasping old man has already got his Archbishopship of Toulouse exchanged for the richer one of Sens : and now, in this hour of pity, he shall have the Coadjutorship for his nephew (hardly yet of due age) ; a Dameship of the Palace for his niece ; a Regiment for her husband ; for himself a red Cardinal's-hat, a *Coupe de Bois* (cutting from the royal forests), and on the whole 'from five to six hundred thousand livres of revenue :'<sup>18</sup> finally, his Brother, the Comte de Brienne, shall still continue War-minister. Buckled-round with such bolsters and huge featherbeds of Promotion, let him now fall as soft as he can !

And so Loménie departs : rich if Court-titles and Money-bonds can enrich him ; but if these cannot, perhaps the poorest of all extant men. 'Hissed at by the people of Versailles,' he drives forth to Jardi ; southward to Brienne,—for recovery of health. Then to Nice, to Italy ; but shall return ; shall glide to and fro, tremulous, faint-twinkling, fallen on awful times : till the Guillotine—snuff out his weak existence ? Alas, worse : for it is *blown* out, or choked out, foully, pitiably, on the way to the Guillotine ! In his Palace of Sens, rude Jacobin Bailiffs made him drink with them from his own wine-cellars, feast with them from his own larder ; and on the morrow morning, the miserable old man lies dead. This is the end of Prime Minister, Cardinal Archbishop Loménie de Brienne. Flimsier mortal was seldom fated to do as weighty a mischief ; to have a life as despicable-envied, an exit as frightful. *Fired*, as the phrase is,

<sup>17</sup> Weber, i. 339.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. i. 341.



August.

with ambition : blown, like a kindled rag, the sport of winds, not this way, not that way, but of all ways, straight towards *such* a powder-mine,—which he kindled ! Let us pity the hapless Loménie ; and forgive him ; and, as soon as possible, forget him.

## CHAPTER IX.

### BURIAL WITH BONFIRE.

BESENVAL, during these extraordinary operations, of Payment two-fifths in Paper, and change of Prime Minister, had been out on a tour through his District of Command ; and indeed, for the last months, peacefully drinking the waters of Contrexéville. Returning now, in the end of August, towards Moulins, and ‘knowing nothing,’ he arrives one evening at Langres ; finds the whole Town in a state of uproar (*grande rumeur*). Doubtless some sedition ; a thing too common in these days ! He alights nevertheless ; inquires of a ‘man tolerably dressed,’ what the matter is ?—“How ?” answers the man, “you have not heard the news ? The Archbishop is thrown out, and M. Necker is recalled ; and all is going to go well !”<sup>1</sup>

Such *rumeur* and vociferous acclaim has risen round M. Necker, ever from ‘that day when he issued from the Queen’s Apartments,’ a nominated Minister. It was on the 24th of August : ‘the galleries of the Château, the courts, the streets of Versailles ; in few hours, the Capital ; and, as the news flew, all France, resounded with the cry of *Vive le Roi ! Vive M. Necker !*’<sup>2</sup> In Paris indeed it unfortunately got the length of ‘turbulence.’ Petards, rockets go off, in the Place Dauphine, more than enough. A ‘wicker Figure (*Mannequin d’osier*),’ in Archbishop’s stole, made emblematically, three-fifths of it satin, two-fifths of it paper, is promenaded, not in silence, to the popular judgment-bar ; is doomed ; shriven by a mock Abbé de Vermond ; then solemnly consumed by fire, at the foot of Henri’s Statue on the Pont Neuf ;—with such petarding and huzzaing that Chevalier Dubois and his City-watch see good finally to make a charge (more or less ineffectual) ; and there wanted not burning of sentry-boxes, forcing of guard-houses, and also ‘dead

<sup>1</sup> Besenval, iii. 366.

<sup>2</sup> Weber, i. 342.



bodies thrown into the Seine over-night,' to avoid new effervescence.<sup>3</sup>

Parlements therefore shall return from exile : Plenary Court, Payment two-fifths in Paper have vanished ; gone off in smoke, at the foot of Henri's Statue. States-General (with a Political Millennium) are now certain ; nay, it shall be announced, in our fond haste, for January next : and all, as the Langres man said, is 'going to go.'

To the prophetic glance of Besenval, one other thing is too apparent : that Friend Lamoignon cannot keep his Keepership. Neither he nor War-minister Comte de Brienne ! Already old Foulon, with an eye to be war-minister himself, is making underground movements. This is that same Foulon named *âme damnée du Parlement* ; a man grown gray in treachery, in griping, projecting, intriguing and iniquity : who once when it was objected, to some finance-scheme of his, "What will the people do?"—made answer, in the fire of discussion, "The people may eat grass : " hasty words, which fly abroad irrevocable,—and will send back tidings !

Foulon, to the relief of the world, fails on this occasion ; and will always fail. Nevertheless it steads not M. de Lamoignon. It steads not the doomed man that he have interviews with the King ; and be 'seen to return *radioux*,' emitting *rays*. Lamoignon is the hated of Parlements : Comte de Brienne is Brother to the Cardinal Archbishop. The 24th of August has been ; and the 14th September is not yet, when they two, as their great Principal had done, descend,—made to fall *soft*, like him.

And now, as if the last burden had been rolled from its heart, and assurance were at length perfect, Paris bursts forth anew into extreme jubilee. The Basoche rejoices aloud, that the foe of Parlements is fallen ; Nobility, Gentry, Commonalty have rejoiced ; and rejoice. Nay now, with new emphasis, Rascality itself, starting suddenly from its dim depths, will arise and do it,—for down even thither the new Political Evangel, in some rude version or other, has penetrated. It is Monday, the 14th

<sup>3</sup> *Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution Française ; ou Journal des Assemblées Nationales depuis 1789* (Paris, 1833 et seqq.), i. 253. Lameth, *Assemblée Constituante*, i. (Introd.) p. 89.



Sept. 14th-16th.

of September 1788 : Rascality assembles anew, in great force, in the Place Dauphine ; lets off petards, fires blunderbusses, to an incredible extent, without interval, for eighteen hours. There is again a wicker Figure, '*Mannequin* of osier : ' the centre of endless howlings. Also Necker's Portrait snatched, or purchased, from some Printshop, is borne processionally, aloft on a perch, with huzzas ;—an example to be remembered.

But chiefly on the Pont Neuf, where the Great Henri, in bronze, rides sublime ; there do the crowds gather. All passengers must stop, till they have bowed to the People's King, and said audibly : *Vive Henri Quatre ; au diable Lamoignon !* No carriage but must stop ; not even that of his Highness d'Orléans. Your coach-doors are opened : Monsieur will please to put forth his head and bow ; or even, if refractory, to alight altogether, and kneel : from Madame a wave of her plumes, a smile of her fair face, there where she sits, shall suffice :—and surely a coin or two (to buy *fusées*) were not unreasonable, from the Upper Classes, friends of Liberty ? In this manner it proceeds for days ; in such rude horse-play,—not without kicks. The City-watch can do nothing ; hardly save its own skin : for the last twelvemonth, as we have sometimes seen, it has been a kind of pastime to *hunt* the Watch. Besenval indeed is at hand with soldiers ; but they have orders to avoid firing, and are not prompt to stir.

On Monday morning the explosion of petards began : and now it is near midnight of Wednesday ; and the '*wicker Mannequin*' is to be buried,—apparently in the Antique fashion. Long rows of torches, following it, move towards the Hôtel Lamoignon ; but 'a servant of mine' (Besenval's) has run to give warning, and there are soldiers come. Gloomy Lamoignon is not to die by conflagration, or this night ;—not yet for a year, and then by gunshot (suicidal or accidental is unknown).<sup>4</sup> Foiled Rascality burns its '*Mannikin* of osier,' under his windows ; 'tears up the sentry-box,' and rolls off : to try Brienne ; to try Dubois Captain of the Watch. Now, however, all is bestirring itself ; Gardes Françaises, Invalides, Horse-patrol : the Torch Procession is met with sharp shot, with the thrusting of bayonets, the slashing of sabres. Even Dubois makes a charge, with that Cavalry of his, and the cruelest charge of all : 'there are a great

<sup>4</sup> *Histoire de la Révolution*, par Deux Amis de la Liberté, i. 50.



many killed and wounded.' Not without clangour, complaint; subsequent criminal trials, and official persons dying of heart-break!<sup>5</sup> So, however, with steel-besom, Rascality is brushed back into its dim depths, and the streets are swept clear.

Not for a century and half had Rascality ventured to step forth in this fashion; not for so long, showed its huge rude lineaments in the light of day. A Wonder and new Thing: as yet gamboling merely, in awkward Brobdignag sport, not without quaintness; hardly in anger: yet in its huge half-vacant laugh lurks a shade of grimness,—which could unfold itself!

However, the thinkers invited by Loménie are now far on with their pamphlets: States-General, on one plan or another, will infallibly meet; if not in January, as was once hoped, yet at latest in May. Old Duke de Richelieu, moribund in these autumn days, opens his eyes once more, murmuring, "What would Louis Fourteenth" (whom he remembers) "have said!"—then closes them again, forever, before the evil time.

<sup>5</sup> *Histoire de la Révolution*, par Deux Amis de la Liberté, i, 58.



# BOOK FOURTH.

## STATES-GENERAL.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE NOTABLES AGAIN.

THE universal prayer, therefore, is to be fulfilled! Always in days of national perplexity, when wrong abounded and help was not, this remedy of States-General was called for; by a Malesherbes, nay by a Fénelon;<sup>1</sup> even Parlements calling for it were 'escorted with blessings.' And now behold it is vouchsafed us; States-General shall verily be!

To say, let States-General be, was easy; to say in what manner they shall be, is not so easy. Since the year 1614, there have no States-General met in France, all trace of them has vanished from the living habits of men. Their structure, powers, methods of procedure, which were never in any measure fixed, have now become wholly a vague possibility. Clay which the potter may shape, this way or that:—say rather, the twenty-five millions of potters; for so many have now, more or less, a vote in it! How to shape the States-General? There is a problem. Each Body-corporate, each privileged, each organised Class has secret hopes of its own in that matter; and also secret misgivings of its own,—for, behold, this monstrous twenty-million Class, hitherto the dumb sheep which these others had to agree about the manner of shearing, is now also arising with hopes! It has ceased or is ceasing to be dumb; it speaks through Pamphlets, or at least brays and growls behind them, in unison,—increasing wonderfully their volume of sound.

<sup>1</sup> Montgaillard, i. 461.



As for the Parlement of Paris, it has at once declared for the 'old form of 1614.' Which form had this advantage, that the *Tiers Etat*, Third Estate, or Commons, figured there as a show mainly: whereby the Noblesse and Clergy had but to avoid quarrel between themselves, and decide unobstructed what *they* thought best. Such was the clearly declared opinion of the Paris Parlement. But, being met by a storm of mere hooting and howling from all men, such opinion was blown straightway to the winds; and the popularity of the Parlement along with it,—never to return. The Parlement's part, we said above, was as good as played. Concerning which, however, there is this further to be noted: the proximity of dates. It was on the 22d of September that the Parlement returned from 'vacation' or 'exile in its estates;' to be reinstalled amid boundless jubilee from all Paris. Precisely next day it was, that this same Parlement came to its 'clearly declared opinion:' and then on the morrow after that, you behold it 'covered with outrages;' its outer court, one vast sibilation, and the glory departed from it for evermore.<sup>2</sup> A popularity of twenty-four hours was, in those times, no uncommon allowance.

On the other hand, how superfluous was that invitation of Loménie's: the invitation to thinkers! Thinkers and unthinkers, by the million, are spontaneously at their post, doing what is in them. Clubs labour: *Société Publicole*; Breton Club; Enraged Club, *Club des Enragés*. Likewise Dinner-parties in the Palais Royal; your Mirabeaus, Talleyrands dining there, in company with Chamforts, Morellets, with Duponts and hot Parlemeuteers, not without object! For a certain *Neckerean* Lion's-provider, whom one could name, assembles them there;<sup>3</sup>—or even their own private determination to have dinner does it. And then as to Pamphlets—in figurative language, 'it is a sheer 'snowing of pamphlets; like to snow-up the Government thoroughfares!' Now is the time for Friends of Freedom; sane, and even insane.

Count, or self-styled Count, d'Aintrigues, 'the young Languedocian gentleman,' with perhaps Chamfort the Cynic to help him, rises into furor almost Pythic; highest, where many are high.<sup>4</sup> Foolish young Languedocian gentleman; who himself

<sup>2</sup> Weber, i. 347.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. i. 360.

<sup>4</sup> *Mémoire sur les Etats-Généraux*. See Montgaillard, i. 457-9.



so soon, 'emigrating among the foremost,' has to fly indignant over the marches, with the *Contrat Social* in his pocket,—towards outer darkness, thankless intriguings, *ignis-fatuus* hoverings, and death by the stiletto! Abbé Sieyes has left Chartres Cathedral, and canonry and book-shelves there; has let his tonsure grow, and come to Paris with a secular head, of the most irrefragable sort, to ask three questions, and answer them: *What is the Third Estate? All.—What has it hitherto been in our form of government? Nothing.—What does it want? To become Something.*

D'Orléans,—for be sure he, on his way to Chaos, is in the thick of this,—promulgates his *Deliberations*,<sup>5</sup> fathered by him, written by Laclos of the *Liaisons Dangereuses*. The result of which comes out simply: 'The Third Estate is the Nation.' On the other hand, Monseigneur d'Artois, with other Princes of the Blood, publishes, in solemn *Memorial* to the King, that if such things be listened to, Privilege, Nobility, Monarchy, Church, State and Strongbox are in danger.<sup>6</sup> In danger truly: and yet if you do not listen, are they out of danger? It is the voice of all France, this sound that rises. Immeasurable, manifold; as the sound of outbreaking waters: wise were he who knew what to do in it,—if not to fly to the mountains, and hide himself?

How an ideal, all-seeing Versailles Government, sitting there on such principles, in such an environment, would have determined to demean itself at this new juncture, may even yet be a question. Such a Government would have felt too well that its long task was now drawing to a close; that, under the guise of these States-General, at length inevitable, a new omnipotent Unknown of Democracy was coming into being; in presence of which no Versailles Government either could or should, except in a provisory character, continue extant. To enact which provisory character, so unspeakably important, might its whole faculties but have sufficed; and so a peaceable, gradual, well-conducted Abdication and *Domine-dimittas* have been the issue!

<sup>5</sup> *Délibérations à prendre pour les Assemblées des Bailliages.*

<sup>6</sup> *Mémoire présenté au Roi*, par Monseigneur Comte d'Artois, M. le Prince de Condé, M. le Duc de Bourbon, M. le Duc d'Enghien, et M. le Prince de Conti. (Given in *Hist. Parl.* i. 256.)



This for our ideal, all-seeing Versailles Government. But for the actual irrational Versailles Government? Alas, that is a Government existing there only for its own behoof: without right, except possession; and now also without might. It foresees nothing, sees nothing; has not so much as a purpose, but has only purposes,—and the instinct whereby all that exists will struggle to keep existing. Wholly a vortex; in which vain counsels, hallucinations, falsehoods, intrigues, and imbecilities whirl; like withered rubbish in the meeting of winds! The *Œil-de-Bœuf* has its irrational hopes, if also its fears. Since hitherto all States-General have done as good as nothing, why should these do more? The Commons, indeed, look dangerous; but on the whole is not revolt, unknown now for five generations, an impossibility? The Three Estates can, by management, be set against each other; the Third will, as heretofore, join with the King; will, out of mere spite and self-interest, be eager to tax and vex the other two. The other two are thus delivered bound into our hands, that we may fleece them likewise. Whereupon, money being got, and the Three Estates all in quarrel, dismiss them, and let the future go as it can! As good Archbishop Loménie was wont to say: “There are so many accidents; and it needs but one to save us.”—Yes; and how many to destroy us?

Poor Necker in the midst of such an anarchy does what is possible for him. He looks into it with obstinately hopeful face; lauds the known rectitude of the kingly mind; listens indulgent-like to the known perverseness of the queenly and courtly;—emits if any proclamation or regulation, one favouring the *Tiers Etat*; but settling nothing; hovering afar off rather, and advising all things to settle themselves. The grand questions, for the present, have got reduced to two: the Double Representation, and the Vote by Head. Shall the Commons have a ‘double representation,’ that is to say, have as many members as the Noblesse and Clergy united? Shall the States-General, when once assembled, vote and deliberate, in one body, or in three separate bodies; ‘vote by head, or vote by class,’—*ordre* as they call it? These are the moot-points now filling all France with jargon, logic and eleutheromania. To terminate which, Necker bethinks him, Might not a second Convocation of the Notables be fittest? Such second Convocation is resolved on.



On the 6th of November of this year 1788, these Notables accordingly have reassembled ; after an interval of some eighteen months. They are Calonne's old Notables, the same Hundred and Forty-four,—to show one's impartiality ; likewise to save time. They sit there once again, in their Seven Bureaus, in the hard winter weather : it is the hardest winter seen since 1709 ; thermometer below zero of Fahrenheit, Seine River frozen over.<sup>7</sup> Cold, scarcity and eleutheromaniac clamour : a changed world since these Notables were 'organed out,' in May gone a year ! They shall see now whether, under their Seven Princes of the Blood, in their Seven Bureaus, they can settle the moot-points.

To the surprise of Patriotism, these Notables, once so patriotic, seem to incline the wrong way ; towards the anti-patriotic side. They stagger at the Double Representation, at the Vote by Head : there is not affirmative decision ; there is mere debating, and that not with the best aspects. For, indeed, were not these Notables themselves mostly of the Privileged Classes ? They clamoured once ; now they have their misgivings ; make their dolorous representations. Let them vanish, ineffectual ; and return no more ! They vanish, after a month's session, on this 12th of December, year 1788 : the *last* terrestrial Notables ; not to reappear any other time, in the History of the World.

And so, the clamour still continuing, and the Pamphlets ; and nothing but patriotic Addresses, louder and louder, pouring in on us from all corners of France,—Necker himself some fortnight after, before the year is yet done, has to present his *Report*,<sup>8</sup> recommending at his own risk that same Double Representation ; nay almost enjoining it, so loud is the jargon and eleutheromania. What dubitating, what circumambulating ! These whole six noisy months (for it began with Brienne in July), has not *Report* followed *Report*, and one Proclamation flown in the teeth of the other ?<sup>9</sup>

However, that first moot-point, as we see, is now settled. As for the second, that of voting by Head or by Order, it unfortunately is still left hanging. It hangs there, we may say,

<sup>7</sup> Marmontel, *Mémoires* (London, 1805), iv. 33. *Hist. Parl.* &c.

<sup>8</sup> *Rapport fait au Roi dans son Conseil, le 27 Décembre 1788.*

<sup>9</sup> 5th July ; 8th August ; 23d September, &c. &c.



between the Privileged Orders and the Unprivileged; as a ready-made battle-prize, and necessity of war, from the very first: which battle-prize whosoever seizes it—may thenceforth bear as battle-flag, with the best omens!

But so, at least, by Royal Edict of the 24th of January,<sup>10</sup> does it finally, to impatient expectant France, become not only indubitable that National Deputies *are* to meet, but possible (so far and hardly farther has the royal Regulation gone) to begin electing them.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE ELECTION.

UP, then, and be doing! The royal signal-word flies through France, as through vast forests the rushing of a mighty wind. At Parish Churches, in Townhalls, and every House of Convocation; by Bailliages, by Seneschalsies, in whatsoever form men convene; there, with confusion enough, are Primary Assemblies forming. To elect your Electors; such is the form prescribed: then to draw up your 'Writ of Complaints and Grievances (*Cahier de plaintes et doléances*),' of which latter there is no lack.

With such virtue works this Royal January Edict; as it rolls rapidly, in its leathern mails, along these frostbound highways, towards all the four winds. Like some *fiat*, or magic spell-word;—which such things do resemble! For always, as it sounds out 'at the market-cross,' accompanied with trumpet-blast; presided by Bailli, Seneschal, or other minor Functionary, with beef-eaters; or, in country churches, is droned forth after sermon, '*au prône des messes paroissiales*;' and is registered, posted and let fly over all the world,—you behold how this multitudinous French People, so long simmering and buzzing in eager expectancy, begins heaping and shaping itself into organic groups. Which organic groups, again, hold smaller organic grouplets: the inarticulate buzzing becomes articulate speaking and acting. By Primary Assembly, and then by Secondary; by 'successive elections,' and infinite elaboration and scrutiny, according to prescribed process,—shall the genuine

<sup>10</sup> *Réglement du Roi pour la Convocation des Etats-Généraux à Versailles.* (Reprinted, wrong dated, in *Histoire Parlementaire*, i. 262.)



Jan.

'Plaints and Grievances' be at length got to paper; shall the fit National Representative be at length laid hold of.

How the whole People shakes itself, as if it had one life; and, in thousand-voiced rumour, announces that it is awake, suddenly out of long death-sleep, and will thenceforth sleep no more! The long looked-for has come at last; wondrous news, of Victory, Deliverance, Enfranchisement, sounds magical through every heart. To the proud strong man it has come; whose strong hands shall no more be gyved; to whom boundless unconquered continents lie disclosed. The weary day-drudge has heard of it; the beggar with his crust moistened in tears. What! To us also has hope reached; down even to us? Hunger and hardship are not to be eternal? The bread we extorted from the rugged glebe, and, with the toil of our sinews, reaped and ground, and kneaded into loaves, was not wholly for another, then; but we also shall eat of it, and be filled? Glorious news (answer the prudent elders), but all-too unlikely!—Thus, at any rate, may the lower people, who pay no money-taxes and have no right to vote,<sup>1</sup> assiduously crowd round those that do; and most Halls of Assembly, within doors and without, seem animated enough.

Paris, alone of Towns, is to have Representatives; the number of them twenty. Paris is divided into Sixty Districts; each of which (assembled in some church, or the like) is choosing two Electors. Official deputations pass from District to District, for all is inexperience as yet, and there is endless consulting. The streets swarm strangely with busy crowds, pacific yet restless and loquacious; at intervals, is seen the gleam of military muskets; especially about the Palais, where the Parlement, once more on duty, sits querulous, almost tremulous.

Busy is the French world! In those great days, what poorest speculative craftsman but will leave his workshop; if not to vote, yet to assist in voting? On all highways is a rustling and bustling. Over the wide surface of France, ever and anon, through the spring months, as the Sower casts his corn abroad upon the furrows, sounds of congregating and dispersing; of crowds in deliberation, acclamation, voting by ballot and by voice,—rise discrepant towards the ear of Heaven. To which

<sup>1</sup> *Réglement du Roi* (in *Histoire Parlementaire*, as above, i. 267-307).



political phenomena add this economical one, that Trade is stagnant, and also Bread getting dear; for before the rigorous winter there was, as we said, a rigorous summer, with drought, and on the 13th of July with destructive hail. What a fearful day! all cried while that tempest fell. Alas, the next anniversary of it will be a worse.<sup>2</sup> Under such aspects is France electing National Representatives.

The incidents and specialties of these Elections belong not to Universal, but to Local or Parish History: for which reason let not the new troubles of Grenoble or Besançon; the bloodshed on the streets of Rennes, and consequent march thither of the Breton 'Young Men' with Manifesto by their 'Mothers, Sisters and Sweethearts';<sup>3</sup> nor suchlike, detain us here. It is the same sad history everywhere; with superficial variations. A reinstated Parlement (as at Besançon), which stands astonished at this Behemoth of a States-General it had itself evoked, starts forward, with more or less audacity, to fix a thorn in its nose; and, alas, is instantaneously struck down, and hurled quite out,—for the new popular force can use not only arguments but brickbats! Or else, and perhaps combined with this, it is an order of Noblesse (as in Brittany), which will beforehand tie up the Third Estate, that it harm not the old privileges. In which act of tying up, never so skilfully set about, there is likewise no possibility of prospering; but the Behemoth-Briareus snaps your cords like green rushes. Tie up? Alas, Messieurs! And then, as for your chivalry rapiers, valour and wager-of-battle, think one moment, how can that answer? The plebeian heart too has red life in it, which changes not to paleness at glance even of you; and 'the six hundred Breton gentlemen assembled in arms, for seventy-two hours, in the Cordeliers' Cloister, at Rennes,'—have to come out again, *wiser* than they entered. For the Nantes Youth, the Angers Youth, all Brittany was astir; 'mothers, sisters and sweethearts' shriek-

<sup>2</sup> Bailly, *Mémoires*, i. 336.

<sup>3</sup> *Protestation et Arrêté des Jeunes Gens de la Ville de Nantes, du 28 Janvier 1789, avant leur départ pour Rennes. Arrêté des Jeunes Gens de la Ville d'Angers, du 4 Février 1789. Arrêté des Mères, Sœurs, Épouses et Amantes des Jeunes Citoyens d'Angers, du 6 Février 1789.* (Reprinted in *Histoire Parlementaire*, i. 290-3.)



Jan.-Feb.

ing after them, *March!* The Breton Noblesse must even let the mad world have its way.<sup>4</sup>

In other Provinces, the Noblesse, with equal goodwill, finds it better to stick to Protests, to well-redacted '*Cahiers* of grievances,' and satirical writings and speeches. Such is partially their course in Provence; whither indeed Gabriel Honoré Riquetti Comte de Mirabeau has rushed down from Paris, to speak a word in season. In Provence, the Privileged, backed by their Aix Parliament, discover that such novelties, enjoined though they be by Royal Edict, tend to National detriment; and what is still more indisputable, 'to impair the dignity of the Noblesse.' Whereupon Mirabeau protesting aloud, this same Noblesse, amid huge tumult within doors and without, flatly determines to expel him from their Assembly. No other method, not even that of successive duels, would answer with him, the obstreperous fierce-glaring man. Expelled he accordingly is.

'In all countries, in all times,' exclaims he departing, 'the Aristocrats have implacably pursued every friend of the People; and with tenfold implacability, if such a one were himself born of the Aristocracy. It was thus that the last of the Gracchi perished, by the hands of the Patricians. But he, being struck with the mortal stab, flung dust towards heaven, and called on the Avenging Deities; and from this dust there was born Marius,—Marius not so illustrious for exterminating the Cimbri, as for overturning in Rome the tyranny of the Nobles.'<sup>5</sup> Casting up *which* new curious handful of dust (through the Printing-press), to breed what it can and may, Mirabeau stalks forth into the Third Estate.

That he now, to ingratiate himself with this Third Estate, 'opened a cloth-shop in Marseilles,' and for moments became a furnishing tailor, or even the fable that he did so, is to us always among the pleasant memorabilities of this era. Stranger Clothier never wielded the ell-wand, and rent webs for men, or fractional parts of men. The *Fils Adoptif* is indignant at such disparaging fable,<sup>6</sup>—which nevertheless was widely believed in those days.<sup>7</sup> But indeed, if Achilles, in the heroic ages, killed

<sup>4</sup> *Hist. Parl.* i. 287. *Deux Amis de la Liberté*, i. 105-128.

<sup>5</sup> *Fils Adoptif*, v. 256.

<sup>6</sup> *Mémoires de Mirabeau*, v. 307.

<sup>7</sup> Marat, *Ami-du-Peuple* Newspaper (in *Histoire Parlementaire*, ii. 103), &c.



mutton, why should not Mirabeau, in the unheroic ones, measure broadcloth?

More authentic are his triumph-progresses through that disturbed district, with mob jubilee, flaming torches, 'windows hired for two louis,' and voluntary guard of a hundred men. He is Deputy Elect, both of Aix and of Marseilles; but will prefer Aix. He has opened his far-sounding voice, the depths of his far-sounding soul; he can quell (such virtue is in a spoken word) the pride-tumults of the rich, the hunger-tumults of the poor; and wild multitudes move under him, as under the moon do billows of the sea: he has become a world-compeller, and ruler over men.

One other incident and specialty we note; with how different an interest! It is of the Parlement of Paris; which starts forward, like the others (only with less audacity, seeing better how it lay), to nose-ring that Behemoth of a States-General. Worthy Doctor Guillotin, respectable practitioner in Paris, has drawn up his little 'Plan of a *Cahier of doléances*;'—as had he not, having the wish and gift, the clearest liberty to do? He is getting the people to sign it; whereupon the surly Parlement summons him to give account of himself. He goes; but with all Paris at his heels; which floods the outer courts, and copiously signs the *Cahier* even there, while the Doctor is giving account of himself within! The Parlement cannot too soon dismiss Guillotin, with compliments; to be borne home shoulder-high.<sup>8</sup> This respectable Guillotin we hope to behold once more, and perhaps only once; the Parlement not even once, but let it be engulfed unseen by us.

Meanwhile such things, cheering as they are, tend little to cheer the national creditor, or indeed the creditor of any kind. In the midst of universal portentous doubt, what certainty can seem so certain as money in the purse, and the wisdom of keeping it there? Trading Speculation, Commerce of all kinds, has as far as possible come to a dead pause; and the hand of the industrious lies idle in his bosom. Frightful enough, when now the rigour of seasons has also done its part, and to scarcity of work is added scarcity of food! In the opening spring, there come rumours of forestalment, there come King's Edicts, Peti-

<sup>8</sup> *Deux Amis de la Liberté*, i. 141.



Feb.-April.

tions of bakers against millers ; and at length, in the month of April,—troops of ragged Lackalls, and fierce cries of starvation ! These are the thrice-famed *Brigands* : an actual existing quantity of persons ; who, long reflected and reverberated through so many millions of heads, as in concave multiplying mirrors, become a whole Brigand World ; and, like a kind of Supernatural Machinery, wondrously move the Epos of the Revolution. The Brigands are here ; the Brigands are there ; the Brigands are coming ! Not otherwise sounded the clang of Phœbus Apollo's silver bow, scattering pestilence and pale terror : for this clang too was of the imagination ; preternatural ; and it too walked in formless immeasurability, *having made itself like to the Night* (*νυκτὶ ἰσοικῶς*) !

But remark at least, for the first time, the singular empire of Suspicion, in those lands, in those days. If poor famishing men shall, prior to death, gather in groups and crowds, as the poor fieldfares and plovers do in bitter weather, were it but that they may chirp mournfully together, and misery look in the eyes of misery ; if famishing men (what famishing fieldfares cannot do) should discover, once congregated, that they need not die while food is in the land, since they are many, and with empty wallets have right hands : in all this, what need were there of Preternatural Machinery ? To most people none ; but not to French people, in a time of Revolution. These Brigands (as Turgot's also were, fourteen years ago) have all been set on ; enlisted, though without tap of drum,—by Aristocrats, by Democrats, by D'Orléans, D'Artois, and enemies of the public weal. Nay Historians, to this day, will prove it by one argument : these Brigands, pretending to have no victual, nevertheless contrive to drink, nay have been seen drunk.<sup>9</sup> An unexampled fact ! But on the whole, may we not predict that a people, with such a width of Credulity and of Incredulity (the proper union of which makes Suspicion, and indeed unreason generally), will see Shapes enough of Immortals fighting in its battle-ranks, and never want for Epical Machinery ?

Be this as it may, the Brigands are clearly got to Paris, in considerable multitudes :<sup>10</sup> with sallow faces, lank hair (the true enthusiast complexion), with sooty rags ; and also with large clubs, which they smite angrily against the pavement ! These

<sup>9</sup> Lacretelle, *18<sup>me</sup> Siècle*, ii. 155.

<sup>10</sup> Besenval, iii. 385, &c.



mingle in the Election tumult; would fain sign Guillotin's *Cahier*, or any *Cahier* or Petition whatsoever, could they but write. Their enthusiast complexion, the smiting of their sticks bodes little good to any one; least of all to rich master-manufacturers of the Suburb Saint-Antoine, with whose workmen they consort.

### CHAPTER III.

#### GROWN ELECTRIC.

BUT now also National Deputies from all ends of France are in Paris, with their commissions, what they call *pouvoirs*, or powers, in their pockets; inquiring, consulting; looking out for lodgings at Versailles. The States-General shall open there, if not on the First, then surely on the Fourth of May; in grand procession and gala. The *Salle des Menus* is all new-carpen-tered, bedizened for them; their very costume has been fixed: a grand controversy which there was, as to 'slouch-hats or slouched-hats,' for the Commons Deputies, has got as good as adjusted. Ever new strangers arrive: loungers, miscellaneous persons, officers on furlough,—as the worthy Captain Damp-*martin*, whom we hope to be acquainted with: these also, from all regions, have repaired hither, to see what is toward. Our Paris Committees, of the Sixty Districts, are busier than ever; it is now too clear, the Paris Elections will be late.

On Monday, the 27th day of April, Astronomer Bailly notices that the *Sieur Réveillon* is not at his post. The *Sieur Réveillon*, 'extensive Paper Manufacturer of the Rue Saint-Antoine:' he, commonly so punctual, is absent from Electoral Committee;—and even will never reappear there. In those 'immense Magazines of velvet paper' has aught befallen? Alas, yes! Alas, it is no *Montgolfier* rising there today; but *Drudgery*, *Rascality* and the Suburb that is rising! Was the *Sieur Réveillon*, himself once a journeyman, heard to say that 'a journeyman might live handsomely on fifteen *sous* a-day'? Some seven-pence halfpenny: 'tis a slender sum! Or was he only thought, and believed, to be heard saying it? By this long chafing and friction, it would appear, the National temper has got *electric*.



April 27th-28th.

Down in those dark dens, in those dark heads and hungry hearts, who knows in what strange figure the new Political Evangel may have shaped itself; what miraculous 'Communion of Drudges' may be getting formed! Enough: grim individuals, soon waxing to grim multitudes, and other multitudes crowding to see, beset that Paper-Warehouse; demonstrate, in loud ungrammatical language (addressed to the passions too), the insufficiency of sevenpence halfpenny a-day. The City-watch cannot dissipate them; broils arise and bellowings: Réveillon, at his wits' end, entreats the Populace, entreats the Authorities. Besenval, now in active command, Commandant of Paris, does, towards evening, to Réveillon's earnest prayer, send some thirty Gardes Françaises. These clear the street, happily without firing; and take post there for the night, in hope that it may be all over.<sup>1</sup>

Not so: on the morrow it is far worse. Saint-Antoine has arisen anew, grimmer than ever;—reinforced by the unknown Tatterdemalion Figures, with their enthusiast complexion and large sticks. The City, through all streets, is flowing thitherward to see: 'two cartloads of paving-stones, that happened to pass that way,' have been seized as a visible godsend. Another detachment of Gardes Françaises must be sent; Besenval and the Colonel taking earnest counsel. Then still another; they hardly, with bayonets and menace of bullets, penetrate to the spot. What a sight! A street choked up, with lumber, tumult and the endless press of men. A Paper-Warehouse eviscerated by axe and fire: mad din of Revolt; musket-volleys responded to by yells, by miscellaneous missiles, by tiles raining from roof and window,—tiles, execrations and slain men!

The Gardes Françaises like it not, but have to persevere. All day it continues, slackening and rallying; the sun is sinking, and Saint-Antoine has not yielded. The City flies hither and thither: alas, the sound of that musket-volleying booms into the far dining-rooms of the Chaussée d'Antin; alters the tone of the dinner-gossip there. Captain Dampmartin leaves his wine; goes out with a friend or two, to see the fighting. Unwashed men growl on him, with murmurs of "*À bas les Aristocrates* (Down with the Aristocrats);" and insult the cross of St. Louis! They elbow him, and hustle him; but do not

<sup>1</sup> Besenval, iii. 385-8.



pick his pocket;—as indeed at Réveillon's too there was not the slightest stealing.<sup>2</sup>

At fall of night, as the thing will not end, Besenval takes his resolution: orders out the *Gardes Suisses* with two pieces of artillery. The Swiss Guards shall proceed thither; summon that rabble to depart, in the King's name. If disobeyed, they shall load their artillery with grape-shot, visibly to the general eye; shall again summon; if again disobeyed, fire,—and keep firing 'till the last man' be in this manner blasted off, and the street clear. With which spirited resolution, as might have been hoped, the business is got ended. At sight of the lit matches, of the foreign red-coated Switzers, Saint-Antoine dissipates; hastily, in the shades of dusk. There is an encumbered street; there are 'from four to five hundred' dead men. Unfortunate Réveillon has found shelter in the Bastille; does therefrom, safe behind stone bulwarks, issue plaint, protestation, explanation, for the next month. Bold Besenval has thanks from all the respectable Parisian classes; but finds no special notice taken of him at Versailles,—a thing the man of true worth is used to.<sup>3</sup>

But how it originated, this fierce electric sputter and explosion? From D'Orléans! cries the Court-party: he, with his gold, enlisted these Brigands,—surely in some surprising manner, without sound of drum: he raked them in hither, from all corners; to ferment and take fire; evil is his good. From the Court! cries enlightened Patriotism: it is the cursed gold and wiles of Aristocrats that enlisted them; set them upon ruining an innocent Sieur Réveillon; to frighten the faint, and disgust men with the career of Freedom.

Besenval, with reluctance, concludes that it came from 'the English, our natural enemies.' Or, alas, might not one rather attribute it to Diana in the shape of Hunger? To some twin *Dioscuri*, OPPRESSION and REVENGE; so often seen in the battles of men? Poor Lackalls, all betoiled, besoiled, encrusted into dim defacement;—into whom nevertheless the breath of the Almighty has breathed a living soul! To them it is clear

<sup>2</sup> *Evènemens qui se sont passés sous mes yeux pendant la Révolution Française*, par A. H. Dampmartin (Berlin, 1799), i. 25-27.

<sup>3</sup> Besenval, iii. 389.



May 4th.

only that eleutheromaniac Philosophism has yet baked no bread; that Patriot Committee-men will level down to their own level, and no lower. Brigands or whatever they might be, it was bitter earnest with them. They bury their dead with the title of *Défenseurs de la Patrie*, Martyrs of the good Cause.

Or shall we say: Insurrection has now *served* its Apprenticeship; and this was its proof-stroke, and no inconclusive one? Its next will be a master-stroke; announcing indisputable Mastership to a whole astonished world. Let that rock-fortress, Tyranny's stronghold, which they name *Bastille*, or *Building*, as if there were no other building,—look to its guns!

But, in such wise, with primary and secondary Assemblies, and *Cahiers* of Grievances; with motions, congregations of all kinds; with much thunder of froth-eloquence, and at last with thunder of platoon-musquetry,—does agitated France accomplish its Elections. With confused winnowing and sifting, in this rather tumultuous manner, it has now (all except some remnants of Paris) sifted out the true wheat-grains of National Deputies, Twelve Hundred and Fourteen in number; and will forthwith open its States-General.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PROCESSION.

ON the first Saturday of May, it is gala at Versailles; and Monday, fourth of the month, is to be a still greater day. The Deputies have mostly got thither, and sought out lodgings; and are now successively, in long well-ushered files, kissing the hand of Majesty in the Château. Supreme Usher de Brézé does not give the highest satisfaction: we cannot but observe that in ushering Noblesse or Clergy into the anointed Presence, he liberally opens *both* his folding-doors; and on the other hand, for members of the Third Estate opens only one! However, there is room to enter; Majesty has smiles for all.

The good Louis welcomes his Honourable Members, with smiles of hope. He has prepared for them the Hall of *Menus*, the largest near him; and often surveyed the workmen as they went on. A spacious Hall: with raised platform for Throne,



Court and Blood-royal ; space for six hundred Commons Deputies in front ; for half as many Clergy on this hand, and half as many Noblesse on that. It has lofty galleries ; wherefrom dames of honour, splendent in *gaze d'or* ; foreign Diplomacies, and other gilt-edged white-frilled individuals, to the number of two thousand,—may sit and look. Broad passages flow through it ; and, outside the inner wall, all round it. There are committee-rooms, guard-rooms, robing-rooms : really a noble Hall ; where upholstery, aided by the subject fine-arts, has done its best ; and crimson tasseled cloths, and emblematic *fleurs-de-lys* are not wanting.

The Hall is ready : the very costume, as we said, has been settled ; and the Commons are *not* to wear that hated slouch-hat (*chapeau clabaud*), but one not quite so slouched (*chapeau rabattu*). As for their manner of *working*, when all dressed ; for their ‘voting by head or by order’ and the rest,—this, which it were perhaps still time to settle, and in few hours will be no longer time, remains unsettled ; hangs dubious in the breast of Twelve Hundred men.

But now finally the Sun, on Monday the 4th of May, has risen ;—unconcerned, as if it were no special day. And yet, as his first rays could strike music from the Memnon's Statue on the Nile, what tones were these, so thrilling, tremulous of preparation and foreboding, which he awoke in every bosom at Versailles ! Huge Paris, in all conceivable and inconceivable vehicles, is pouring itself forth ; from each Town and Village come subsidiary rills : Versailles is a very sea of men. But above all, from the Church of St. Louis to the Church of Notre-Dame : one vast suspended-billow of Life,—with *spray* scattered even to the chimney-tops ! For on chimney-tops too, as over the roofs, and up thitherwards on every lamp-iron, sign-post, breakneck coign of vantage, sits patriotic Courage ; and every window bursts with patriotic Beauty : for the Deputies are gathering at St. Louis Church ; to march in procession to Notre-Dame, and hear sermon.

Yes, friends, ye may sit and look : bodily or in thought, all France, and all Europe, may sit and look ; for it is a day like few others. Oh, one might weep like Xerxes :—So many serried rows sit perched there ; like winged creatures, alighted



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out of Heaven : all these, and so many more that follow them, shall have wholly fled aloft again, vanishing into the blue Deep ; and the memory of this day still be fresh. It is the baptism-day of Democracy ; sick Time has given it birth, the numbered months being run. The extreme-unction day of Feudalism ! A superannuated System of Society, decrepit with toils (for has it not done much ; produced *you*, and what ye have and know ! ) —and with thefts and brawls, named glorious-victories ; and with profligacies, sensualities, and on the whole with dotage and senility, —is now to die : and so, with death-throes and birth-throes, a new one is to be born. What a work, O Earth and Heavens, what a work ! Battles and bloodshed, September Massacres, Bridges of Lodi, retreats of Moscow, Waterloos, Peterloos, Tenpound Franchises, Tarbarrels and Guillotines ; —and from this present date, if one might prophesy, some two centuries of it still to fight ! Two centuries ; hardly less ; before Democracy go through its due, most baleful, stages of *Quackocracy* ; and a pestilential World be burnt up, and have begun to grow green and young again.

Rejoice nevertheless, ye Versailles multitudes ; to you, from whom all this is hid, the glorious end of it is visible. This day, sentence of death is pronounced on Shams ; judgment of resuscitation, were it but afar off, is pronounced on Realities. This day it is declared aloud, as with a Doom-trumpet, that *a Lie is unbelievable*. Believe that, stand by that, if more there be not ; and let what thing or things soever will follow it follow. ‘Ye can no other ; God be your help !’ So spake a greater than any of you ; opening *his* Chapter of World-History.

Behold, however ! The doors of St. Louis Church flung wide ; and the Procession of Processions advancing towards Notre-Dame ! Shouts rend the air ; one shout, at which Grecian birds might drop dead. It is indeed a stately, solemn sight. The Elected of France, and then the Court of France ; they are marshalled and march there, all in prescribed place and costume. Our Commons ‘in plain black mantle and white cravat ;’ Noblesse, in gold-worked, bright-dyed cloaks of velvet, resplendent, rustling with laces, waving with plumes ; the Clergy in rochet, alb, or other best *pontificalibus* : lastly comes the King himself, and King’s Household, also in their brightest



blaze of pomp,—their brightest and final one. Some Fourteen Hundred Men blown together from all winds, on the deepest errand.

Yes, in that silent marching mass there lies Futurity enough. No symbolic Ark, like the old Hebrews, do these men bear: yet with them too is a Covenant; they too preside at a new Era in the History of Men. The whole Future is there, and Destiny dim-brooding over it; in the hearts and unshaped thoughts of these men, it lies illegible, inevitable. Singular to think: *they* have it in them; yet not they, not mortal, only the Eye above can read it,—as it shall unfold itself, in fire and thunder, of siege, and field-artillery; in the rustling of battle-banners, the tramp of hosts, in the glow of burning cities, the shriek of strangled nations! Such things lie hidden, safe-wrapt in this Fourth day of May;—say rather, had lain in some other unknown day, of which this latter is the public fruit and outcome. As indeed what wonders lie in every Day,—had we the sight, as happily we have not, to decipher it: for is not every meanest Day ‘the conflux of two Eternities!’

Meanwhile, suppose we too, good Reader, should, as now without miracle Muse Clio enables us,—take *our* station also on some coign of vantage; and glance momentarily over this Procession, and this Life-sea; with far other eyes than the rest do, namely with prophetic? We can mount, and stand there, without fear of falling.

As for the Life-sea, or onlooking unnumbered Multitude, it is unfortunately all-too dim. Yet as we gaze fixedly, do not nameless Figures not a few, which shall not always be nameless, disclose themselves; visible or presumable there! Young Baroness de Staël—she evidently looks from a window; among older honourable women.<sup>1</sup> Her father is Minister, and one of the gala personages; to his own eyes the chief one. Young spiritual Amazon, thy rest is not there; nor thy loved Father’s: ‘as Malebranche saw all things in God, so M. Necker sees all ‘things in Necker,’—a theorem that will not hold.

But where is the brown-locked, light-behaved, fire-hearted Demoiselle Théroigne? Brown eloquent Beauty; who, with thy

<sup>1</sup> Madame de Staël, *Considérations sur la Révolution Française* (London, 1818), i. 114-191.



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winged words and glances, shalt thrill rough bosoms, whole steel battalions, and persuade an Austrian Kaiser,—pike and helm lie provided for thee in due season; and, alas, also strait-waistcoat and long lodging in the Salpêtrière! Better hadst thou staid in native Luxemburg, and been the mother of some brave man's children: but it was not thy task, it was not thy lot.

Of the rougher sex how, without tongue, or hundred tongues, of iron, enumerate the notabilities! Has not Marquis Valadi hastily quitted his Quaker broadbrim; his Pythagorean Greek in Wapping, and the city of Glasgow?<sup>2</sup> De Morande from his *Courrier de l'Europe*; Linguet from his *Annales*, they looked eager through the London fog, and became Ex-Editors,—that they might feed the guillotine, and have their due. Does Louvet (of *Faublas*) stand a-tiptoe? And Brissot, hight De Warville, friend of the Blacks? He, with Marquis Condorcet, and Clavière the Genevese 'have created the *Moniteur* Newspaper,' or are about creating it. Able Editors must give account of such a day.

Or seest thou with any distinctness, low down probably, not in places of honour, a Stanislas Maillard, riding-tipstaff (*huissier à cheval*) of the Châtelet; one of the shiftiest of men? A Captain Hulin of Geneva, Captain Elie of the Queen's Regiment; both with an air of half-pay? Jourdan, with tile-coloured whiskers, not yet with tile-beard; an unjust dealer in mules? He shall be, in few months, Jourdan the Headsman, and have other work.

Surely also, in some place not of honour, stands or sprawls up querulous, that he too, though short, may see,—one squalidest bleared mortal, redolent of soot and horse-drugs: Jean Paul Marat of Neuchâtel! O Marat, Renovator of Human Science, Lecturer on Optics; O thou remarkablest Horseleech, once in D'Artois' Stables,—as thy bleared soul looks forth, through thy bleared, dull-acrid, wo-stricken face, what sees it in all this? Any faintest light of hope; like dayspring after Nova-Zembla night? Or is it but *blue* sulphur-light, and spectres; wo, suspicion, revenge without end?

Of Draper Lecointre, how he shut his cloth-shop hard by, and stepped forth, one need hardly speak. Nor of Santerre, the sonorous Brewer from the Faubourg St. Antoine. Two other Figures, and only two, we signalise there. The huge, brawny

<sup>2</sup> *Founders of the French Republic* (London, 1798), § Valadi.



Figure; through whose black brows, and rude flattened face (*figure écrasée*), there looks a waste energy as of Hercules not yet furibund,—he is an esurient, unprovided Advocate; Danton by name: him mark. Then that other, his slight-built comrade and craft-brother; he with the long curling locks; with the face of dingy blackguardism, wondrously irradiated with genius, as if a naphtha-lamp burnt within it: that Figure is Camille Desmoulins. A fellow of infinite shrewdness, wit, nay humour; one of the sprightliest clearest souls in all these millions. Thou poor Camille, say of thee what they may, it were but falsehood to pretend one did not almost love thee, thou headlong lightly-sparkling man! But the brawny, not yet furibund Figure, we say, is Jacques Danton; a name that shall be ‘tolerably known in the Revolution.’ He is President of the electoral Cordeliers District at Paris, or about to be it; and shall open his lungs of brass.

We dwell no longer on the mixed shouting Multitude: for now, behold, the Commons Deputies are at hand!

Which of these Six Hundred individuals, in plain white cravat, that have come up to regenerate France, might one guess would become their *king*? For a king or leader they, as all bodies of men, must have: be their work what it may, there is one man there who, by character, faculty, position, is fittest of all to do it; that man, as future not yet elected king, walks there among the rest. He with the thick black locks, will it be? With the *hure*, as himself calls it, or black *boar’s-head*, fit to be ‘shaken’ as a senatorial portent? Through whose shaggy beetle-brows, and rough-hewn, seamed, carbuncled face, there look natural ugliness, small-pox, incontinence, bankruptcy, — and burning fire of genius; like comet-fire glaring fuliginous through murkiest confusions? It is *Gabriel Honoré Riquetti de Mirabeau*, the world-compeller; man-ruling Deputy of Aix! According to the Baroness de Staël, he steps proudly along, though looked at askance here; and shakes his black *chevelure*, or lion’s-mane; as if prophetic of great deeds.

Yes, Reader, that is the Type-Frenchman of this epoch; as Voltaire was of the last. He is French in his aspirations, acquisitions, in his virtues, in his vices; perhaps more French than any other man;—and intrinsically such a mass of manhood too.



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Mark him well. The National Assembly were all different without that one; nay, he might say with the old Despot: "The National Assembly? I am that."

Of a southern climate, of wild southern blood: for the Riquettis, or Arrighettis, had to fly from Florence and the Guelfs, long centuries ago, and settled in Provence; where from generation to generation they have ever approved themselves a peculiar kindred: irascible, indomitable, sharp-cutting, true, like the steel they wore; of an intensity and activity that sometimes verged towards madness, yet did not reach it. One ancient Riquetti, in mad fulfilment of a mad vow, chains two Mountains together; and the chain, with its 'iron star of five rays,' is still to be seen. May not a modern Riquetti *unchain* so much, and set it drifting,—which also shall be seen?

Destiny has work for that swart burly-headed Mirabeau; Destiny has watched over him, prepared him from afar. Did not his Grandfather, stout *Col-d'Argent* (Silver-Stock, so they named him), shattered and slashed by seven-and-twenty wounds in one fell day, lie sunk together on the Bridge at Casano; while Prince Eugene's cavalry galloped and regalloped over him,—only the flying sergeant had thrown a camp-kettle over that loved head; and Vendôme, dropping his spyglass, moaned out, 'Mirabeau is *dead*, then!' Nevertheless he was not dead: he awoke to breath, and miraculous surgery;—for Gabriel was yet to be. With his *silver stock* he kept his scarred head erect, through long years; and wedded; and produced tough Marquis Victor, the *Friend of Men*. Whereby at last in the appointed year 1749, this long-expected rough-hewn Gabriel Honoré did likewise see the light: roughest lion's-whelp ever littered of that rough breed. How the old lion (for our old Marquis too was lion-like, most unconquerable, kingly-genial, most perverse) gazed wondering on his offspring; and determined to train him as no lion had yet been! It is in vain, O Marquis! This cub, though thou slay him and flay him, will not learn to draw in dogcart of Political Economy, and be a *Friend of Men*; he will not be Thou, but must and will be Himself, another than Thou. Divorce lawsuits, 'whole family save one in prison, and three-score *Lettres-de-Cachet*' for thy own sole use, do but astonish the world.

Our luckless Gabriel, sinned against and sinning, has been in the Isle of Rhé, and heard the Atlantic from his tower; in



the Castle of If, and heard the Mediterranean at Marseilles. He has been in the Fortress of Joux; and forty-two months, with hardly clothing to his back, in the Dungeon of Vincennes;—all by *Lettre-de-Cachet*, from his lion father. He has been in Pontarlier Jails (self-constituted prisoner); was noticed fording estuaries of the sea (at low water), in flight from the face of men. He has pleaded before Aix Parlements (to get back his wife); the public gathering on roofs, to see since they could not hear: “the clatter-teeth (*claque-dents*)!” snarls singular old Mirabeau; discerning in such admired forensic eloquence nothing but two clattering jaw-bones, and a head vacant, sonorous, of the drum species.

But as for Gabriel Honoré, in these strange wayfarings, what has he not seen and tried! From drill-sergeants, to prime-ministers, to foreign and domestic booksellers, all manner of men he has seen. All manner of men he has gained; for at bottom it is a social, loving heart, that wild unconquerable one:—more especially all manner of women. From the Archer's Daughter at Saintes to that fair young Sophie Madame Monnier, whom he could not but ‘steal,’ and be beheaded for—in effigy! For indeed hardly since the Arabian Prophet lay dead to Ali's admiration, was there seen such a Love-hero, with the strength of thirty men. In War, again, he has helped to conquer Corsica; fought duels, irregular brawls; horsewhipped calumnious barons. In Literature, he has written on *Despotism*, on *Lettres-de-Cachet*; Erotics Sapphic-Wertereian, Obscenities, Profanities; Books on the *Prussian Monarchy*, on *Cagliostro*, on *Calonne*, on the *Water-Companies of Paris*:—each Book comparable, we will say, to a bituminous alarum-fire; huge, smoky, sudden! The firepan, the kindling, the bitumen were his own; but the lumber, of rags, old wood and nameless combustible rubbish (for all is fuel to him), was gathered from hucksters, and ass-panniers, of every description under heaven. Whereby, indeed, hucksters enough have been heard to exclaim: Out upon it, the fire is *mine*!

Nay, consider it more generally, seldom had man such a talent for borrowing. The idea, the faculty of another man he can make his; the man himself he can make his. “All reflex and echo (*tout de reflet et de réverbère*)!” snarls old Mirabeau, who can see, but will not. Crabbed old Friend of Men! it is his sociality, his aggregative nature; and will now be the quality