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HISTORICAL AND MORAL VIEW

OF THE

FRENCH REVOLUTION.

B O O K III.

C H A P T E R I.

A DEPUTATION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ARRIVES AT PARIS. BAILLIE CHOSEN MAYOR, AND LA FAYETTE COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE NATIONAL GUARDS. RESIGNATION OF THE MINISTRY. NECKLER RECALLED. THE KING VISITS PARIS. CHARACTER OF THE PARISIANS. THE REVOLUTION URGED ON PREMATURELY. EMIGRATIONS OF SEVERAL OF THE NOBILITY AND OTHERS. CALONNE ADVISES THE FRENCH PRINCES TO STIR UP FOREIGN POWERS AGAINST FRANCE. FOULON KILLED.

THE presence of the deputies had diffused throughout the capital the most intoxicating joy—for where is joy expressed with such infantile playfulness, such entire forgetfulness of to-morrow, as at Paris? and the citizens, with their usual burst of gratitude, which always resembles adoration, made choice of Baillie, the first acting president of the national

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assembly, for mayor, and of La Fayette for commander in chief of the national guards: the name now given to the *garde-bourgeoise*, and the other soldiers incorporated with them. But the rapture of the parisiens, as transient as lively, dwindled, as their spirits were exhausted, into the murmurs of suspicion.—The ministry, said they, who were chosen to depress us, are not yet dismissed; and the troops, that were to have been their instruments of mischief, still hover round Paris, and are even augmented by the arrival of two fresh regiments at St. Denis. A rumour was spread, that a convoy of flour had been intercepted by the order of the ministers, in its way to Paris; and some disturbances at the Bastille had given colour to a report, that they had attempted to make themselves once more masters of this important fortress. The night of the 15th was then another devoted to watchfulness and anxiety; and in the morning a deputation was sent to the national assembly, praying them to demand the dismissal of the present ministry, and the recall of Necker.

The assembly took the subject into deliberation; but still attentive to *etiquette*, they debated

bated about the decorum of interfering with the appointment of the executive power. This roused the genius of Mirabeau; and the bubbles of fear, and the straw-like objections of timidity, were carried away by the torrent of his eloquence. The discussion grew warm; yet for the present occasion soon became of little importance, because the ministry, finding that they could not stand the brunt of the storm, resigned; Necker also, in whom the public had still the most implicit confidence, was invited to return;—and the king, appearing to be anxious to give every proof of his desire to establish general tranquillity, signified, that he wished to visit Paris. A short time after they were officially informed that the troops were promptly removing to more distant quarters. The national assembly accordingly sent some of their members to communicate to the parisiens this welcome intelligence, to prepare for the reception of the king by calming the fears of the people.

And he, adhering to his purpose, left Versailles the next day (the 17th), though his family ridiculously endeavoured to dissuade him; insinuating, that he ought not to trust

his sacred person to the mercy of an enraged multitude; whilst rumours of projected assassinations were repeated before him, with exaggerated comments. But, being a man of considerable animal courage, and now almost perceiving, that all the evils with which he was struggling had been produced by his headstrong advisers, he seemed determined, at least for the present, not to be governed by their dangerous councils. And he had even the sagacity to foresee, that, convulsed as the kingdom was, they would occasion a civil war, and his life might then be still more exposed. In this instance, as we shall find in many others, Louis appears to have been directed by a kind of glimmering instinct of propriety; for at the present juncture it was particularly discreet, considering the little effect the pageantry of the court had produced at the *séance royale*, to meet the people without the parade of robes or guards. And, in fact, the hundred deputies who followed him, were now the only retinue that would have appeared respectable in the eyes of the people. What too must have been his surprize, in spite of all he had heard, to pass through an immense avenue of armed parisiens with such

a new aspect.—Till now he had always seen a timid multitude flying before the watch, giving vent to their vengeance in vain songs, and to their grief in feeble murmurs :—to-day he saw them triumphant, moving orderly along, calling out on every side, during the procession, for a constitution and laws! marching in unison with their reflections, they advanced, but slowly; for, almost afraid to hope, they proceeded with the measured step of thought, or rather sadness; and the people, whose mind was still agitated, as the swell of the sea continues after the storm has subsided, uttered not the shout of gladness—*vive le roi*;—but the menacing memento—*vive la nation*.

This was as ominous a sound, as the woe! woe! resounding through the silent streets of a besieged city—for it was equally the voice of fate, proclaiming the will of the people, disgusted with courts, and suspicious even of the king. Louis seems to have been forcibly struck by the energy every where displayed; and not more by the eloquent discourses addressed to him at the hôtel-de-ville, than by the countenance of each citizen: for the fire of liberty had already lighted up in every

face the serene lustre of manly firmness.—So impressed, indeed, was his mind by the whole scene, that, when the animated speakers were silent, he exclaimed in reply—‘My people! my people, may always rely on my love.’—And taking the national cockade from the hands of the mayor, he appeared at the window with his heart in his eyes, as if eager to convince the multitude of his sincerity : and perhaps conscious, that, first submitting to necessity, he now yielded to feeling. At these words, the repetition of which flew like lightning from rank to rank, the whole concourse of people caught the electrical sympathy.—*Vive-le-roi* was shouted from every quarter ; and revived affection glowed with the fresh fervour, that effaces the remembrance of doubts, and makes the fear of having been unjust, the most powerful spring of tenderness. And persuading themselves, for the moment, that the disposition of the king was not so much at variance with their happiness as his conduct, they poured blessings on him, bestowing all their execrations on his counsellors.

Pleasure, now almost mounting to a feverish height, set all Paris quickly in motion ; and the

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the sound of the thundering artillery was the swift harbinger of the tidings of reconciliation to Versailles, where the royal family must have been anxiously alive to the events of the day.

These sudden transitions from one extreme to another, without leaving any settled conviction behind, to confirm or eradicate the corroding distrust, could not be seen in such a strong light any where as at Paris, because there a variety of causes have so effeminated reason, that the french may be considered as a nation of women ; and made feeble, probably, by the same combination of circumstances, as has rendered these insignificant. More ingenious than profound in their researches ; more tender than impassioned in their affections ; prompt to act, yet soon weary ; they seem to work only to escape from work, and to reflect merely how they shall avoid reflection. Indolently restless, they make the elegant furniture of their rooms, like their houses, voluptuously handy. Every thing, in short, shows the dexterity of the people, and their attention to present enjoyment,

And so passive appears to be their imagination, it requires to be roused by novelty ; and

then, more lively than strong, the evanescent emotions scarcely leave any traces behind them. From being devoted to pleasure in their youth, old age is commonly passed in such merely animal gratifications, that a respectable looking aged man or woman is very rarely to be seen. Independent, likewise, of the vanity which makes them wish to appear polite, at the very moment they are ridiculing a person, their great susceptibility of disposition leads them to take an interest in all the sensations of others, which are forgotten almost as soon as felt. And these transient gusts of feeling prevent their forming those firm resolves of reason, that, bracing the nerves, when the heart is moved, make sympathy yield to principles, and the mind triumph over the senses.

Besides, the climate of France is so genial, and the blood mounted so cheerily in the veins, even of the oppressed common people, that, living for the day, they continually basked in the sunshine, which broke from behind the heavy clouds that hung over them.

It is impossible, after tracing the horrid conspiracy formed by the court against the
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lives and liberty of the people, not to feel the most ineffable contempt for that kind of government, which leaves the happiness of a nation at the mercy of a capricious minister of state. The awful and interesting lesson, which the developement of this treachery afforded, was such as ought to have made an indelible impression on their minds.—It was a lesson, the very thought of which stops for a moment the genial current of the heart.—It was a lesson, that should be repeated to mankind, to bring home to their very senses a conviction of the lengths to which a depraved and absolute government will go, for the sake of holding fast it's power.—It was, in short, a deduction of experience, which will teach posterity that life, and every thing dear to man, can be secured only by the preservation of liberty.

The want of decision in the character of Louis seems to have been the foundation of all his faults, as well as of all his misfortunes; and every moment fresh occasions to make the observation arise as we trace his misconduct, or compassionate his situation.

To give a striking instance, it is only necessary to turn our attention to the fatal effects
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that flowed from his consenting to assemble an army of foreigners, to intimidate the states-general. He could not resist the court, who counselled this measure; or silence the misgivings of his heart, which made him averse to the troops taking any decisive step, that might lead to slaughter. And still governed by these undisciplined feelings, when he dismissed the army, he pursued the advice of the very cabal, that had led him into this error; giving way to the wishes of the people, yet dissembling with them even in the act of reconciliation. Thus, for ever wavering, it is difficult to mark any fixed purpose in his actions; excepting that which does him honour—the desire to prevent the shedding of blood. This principle has, in general, directed his conduct; though the short-sighted measures of timid humanity, devoid of strength of mind, turned all his efforts to a very contrary effect.

From the presence of these troops, and their abortive attempt to crush liberty in the egg, the shell was prematurely broken, and the enthusiasm of frenchmen excited before their judgment was in any considerable degree formed. Intoxicated by conquest, each began
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to descant on the existing abuses, to show his own cleverness in pointing out the remedy ; and arms being once in the hands of the people, it was difficult to persuade them to give them up for the occupations of peace. It is true, had the national assembly been allowed quietly to have made some reforms, paving the way for more, the Bastille, though tottering on it's dungeons, might yet have stood erect.—And, if it had, the sum of human misery could scarcely have been increased. For the *guillotine* not finding it's way to the splendid square it has polluted, streams of innocent blood would not have flowed, to obliterate the remembrance of false imprisonment, and drown the groans of solitary grief in the loud cry of agony—when, the thread of life quickly cut in twain, the quivering light of hope is instantly dashed out—and the billows suddenly closing, the silence of death is felt !—This tale is soon told.—We hear not of years languished away in misery, whilst dissolution by inches palsies the frame, or disturbs the reason : yet, who can estimate the sum of comfort blasted ; or tell how many survivors pine the prey of an imagination distracted by sorrow ?

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The character of the french, indeed, had been so depraved by the inveterate despotism of ages, that even amidst the heroism which distinguished the taking of the Bastille, we are forced to see that suspicious temper, and that vain ambition of dazzling, which have generated all the succeeding follies and crimes. For, even in the most public-spirited actions, celebrity seems to have been the spur, and the glory, rather than the happiness of frenchmen, the end.—This observation enforces the grand truth on mankind, that without morality there can be no great strength of understanding, or real dignity of conduct. The morals of the whole nation were destroyed by the manners formed by the government.—Pleasure had been pursued, to fill up the void of rational employment; and fraud combined with servility to debase the character;—so that, when they changed their system, liberty, as it was called, was only the acme of tyranny—merely with this difference, that, all the force of nature being roused, the magnitude of the evil promised, by some mighty concussion, to effect it's own cure.

The reunion of the king and people not only routed, but terrified, the cabal; and as
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cowardly in adversity, as presumptuous in prosperity, they immediately took to flight different ways, and even disguised. One man, who had long been obnoxious to the people on account of inordinate covetousness, and vulgar tyranny, not softened by the graceful condescension of the nobility, caused it to be reported, that he was dead. The renowned marshal Broglio sought an asylum at Luxemburgh, whilst madame Polignac fled to Basle. Thus went into exile an amiable woman, who had been the instrument of the ambition of a family, that rapaciously availed themselves of her great favour with the queen, whose strange predilection for handsome women blighted the reputation of every one, whom she distinguished.

The count d'Artois, with several others of the blood royal and principal nobility, likewise thought it prudent to leave the kingdom for the present; either to provide for their safety, or to seek vengeance. At Brussels they met the unquiet Calonne, who, having heard of the dismissal of Necker, was lured back by the first glimpse of hope. For wishing to wipe away the indignity, which he had so impatiently brooked; and fondly believing, that

that the army had had sufficient time to quash the verbal disputes of the nation ; he was hastening towards France, to be ready to come in for his share of the triumph.

To his country this meeting has proved a source of evil, that could only have been hatched in such an unprincipled brain, fertile in plans of mischief, and prone to puzzle the cause which he wanted force to subvert. His last effort for power had been to obtain a seat in the states-general. And, had not the remembrance of his former administration stood in his way, it is probable he would have succeeded, and there have become a flaming patriot, could he have been the leader of a party ; for he possessed the showy talents necessary to procure instantaneous applause in a popular assembly—a deceiving, rather than a commanding eloquence. Mirabeau, on the contrary, seems to have had from nature a strong perception of a dignified propriety of conduct ; and truth appearing to give earnestness to his arguments, his hearers were compelled to agree with him out of respect to themselves. Leaving then plausibility far behind, he always stood forth as the sturdy champion of reason ; even when, lay
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ing down his club, he loitered to dally with the imagination. Whilst therefore Mirabeau was teaching the national assembly dignity*, the resentment of the vain-glorious Calonne, sharpened to the keenest edge by disappointment, made him suggest to those crest-fallen princes, the necessity of engaging foreign aid, to reinstate the king in his former plenitude of power, and to heal their wounded pride. Unfortunately, the plausibility of his manners, and the ingenuity of his arguments, awakened their fears, and nourished their prejudices; and quickly persuaded to assert what they wished to believe, they protested against the conduct of the national assembly; insinuating, that the body of the people did not support their pretensions. The delusion, however, did not rest here; for he even convinced them, that, if the appeal made to the national honour of the french did not recall crowds to their chivalrous allegiance, it would not be a difficult task to engage all the powers of Europe in behalf of his most christian majesty, by showing them, that,

* Mirabeau appears to have been continually hurt by the want of dignity in the assembly.---By the inconsistency, which made them stalk as heroes one moment, with a true theatrical stride, and the next cringe with the flexible backs of habitual slaves.

that, if freedom were once established in France, it would soon extend beyond its confines, bounding over the Alps and Pyrenees.

Such are the opposite sentiments, or rather conduct of court parasites, and men struggling to be free, that it is sufficient to contrast them. The deputies, whose lives had been threatened, and their persons grossly insulted, not only excused the ill advised monarch for the countenance which he had given to the violation of the most sacred principles; but expressed a conciliatory disposition to all parties. The mob, it is true, in the heat of rage, inhumanly butchered two of the vile instruments of despotism. But this violence offered to justice ought not to be attributed to the temper of the people, much less to the connivance of the national assembly, who acted with a degree of magnanimity, at this time, of which it can never be enough lamented that they have since lost sight. The behaviour however of the hardened children of oppression in all countries is the same; whether in the amphitheatre at Rome, or around the lantern-post in Paris.

The king's eldest brother alone remained with the court, a man with more resources
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of understanding in himself, than the rest of his family; yet, making it a point of honour to be treated like his younger brother the count d'Artois, he contributed by his rapacity to drain the royal treasure, though such an expensive variety of amusements was not necessary to give a zest to his pleasures.

The noble depredators had now escaped; yet Foulon, the minister, the most desperate and pusillanimous of the gang, was taken, in spite of his mock funeral.—I purposely use the word gang; for a squeamish delicacy with respect to terms makes us sometimes confound characters to such a degree, that the great villain is not stigmatized with the epithet associated with the idea of a gallows; because, by the grossest subversion of reason, the aggravation of guilt has so palliated the punishment, that the head, which would have disgraced a halter, has been respectfully severed on a block.

Once seized, no authority could prevent the murder of this miserable wretch; and the same evening the intendant of Paris, his son-in-law, met a death still more shocking, being

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prolonged by the humane interposition of the respectable mayor, and La Fayette, in his favour.

Strange, that a people, who often leave the theatre before the catastrophe, should have bred up such monsters! Still we ought to recollect, that the sex, called the tender, commit the most flagrant acts of barbarity when irritated.—So weak is the tenderness produced merely by sympathy, or polished manners, compared with the humanity of a cultivated understanding. Alas!—It is morals, not feelings, which distinguish men from the beasts of prey! These were transactions, over which, for the honour of human nature, it were to be wished oblivion could draw the winding-sheet, that has often enwrapped a heart, whose benevolence has been felt, but not known. But, if it be impossible to erase from the memory these foul deeds, which, like the stains of deepest dye revived by remorse in the conscience, can never be rubbed out—why dwell circumstantially on the excesses that revolt humanity, and dim the lustre of the picture, on which the eye has gazed with rapture,
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often obliged to look up to heaven to forget the misery endured on earth? Since, however, we cannot 'out the damned spot,' it becomes necessary to observe, that, whilst despotism and superstition exist, the convulsions, which the regeneration of man occasions, will always bring forward the vices they have engendered, to devour their parents.

Servility, destroying the natural energy of man, stifles the noblest sentiments of the soul. — Thus debased, heroic actions are merely directed by the head, and the heart drops not into them its balm, more precious than the trees of Arabia ever distilled! Ought we then to wonder, that this dry substitute for humanity is often burnt up by the scorching flame of revenge? This has now actually been the case; for there has been seen amongst the french a spurious race of men, a set of cannibals, who have gloried in their crimes; and tearing out the hearts that did not feel for them, have proved, that they themselves had iron bowels. 'But, if the anger of the people be terrible,' exclaims Mirabeau, 'it is

‘ the sang froid of despotism, that is atrocious ; those systematic cruelties, which have made more wretches in a day than the popular insurrections have immolated in a course of years ! * We often fear,’ adds he, ‘ the people, because we have injured them ; and thus are forced to fetter those we oppress.’

The example of the capital was followed by the provinces ; and all the citizens flew to arms, whilst the soldiers grounded their’s, swearing not to stain their hands with the blood of their fellow citizens. Added to the account of the conspiracy to dissolve the states-

* ‘ Let us compare,’ he further adds, ‘ the number of innocents sacrificed by mistake, by the sanguinary maxims of the courts of criminal judicature, and the ministerial vengeance exercised secretly in the dungeons of Vincennes, and in the cells of the Bastille, with the sudden and impetuous vengeance of the multitude, and then decide on which side barbarity appears. At the moment when the hell created by tyranny for the torment of it’s victims opens itself to the public eye ; at the moment when all the citizens have been permitted to descend into those gloomy caves, to poize the chains of their friends, of their defenders ; at the moment when the registers of those iniquitous archives are fallen into all hands ; it is necessary, that the people should be essentially good, or this manifestation of the atrocities of ministers would have rendered them as cruel as themselves !’

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general, and massacre their representatives, a number of idle rumours of present danger tended to make the country people not only eager to guard against they scarcely knew what, but also desirous to enter into the adventures, and share the honours of the parisiens.

In all civil wars, personal vengeance mixing with public, or taking advantage of it, has directed the dagger of the assassin: and in France it ought particularly to have been dreaded; because, when fear induces a man to smother his just resentment, the festering wound is only to be cured by revenge. It is then highly probable, that most of the barbarities in the towns were the effervescence of private anger, or the sport of depraved, uncultivated minds, who found the same pleasure in tormenting men, as mischievous boys in dismembering insects; for public indignation, directed against aristocratical tyranny, was elsewhere, in general, displayed only in burning the country castles, and the archives of nobility. But, in the country, indeed, men rarely commit such crimes, as lift up their reptile heads in the capital, where the rank

atmosphere affords the noxious particles necessary to give virulence to the poison. The vices of villagers are, in fact, rather the rich exuberance of the passions, than the vile dregs of exhausted nature.

CHAPTER II.

THE DUKE OF LIANCOURT CHOSEN PRESIDENT. THE PEOPLE ARM FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE COUNTRY. THE MUNICIPAL OFFICERS APPOINTED UNDER THE OLD GOVERNMENT SUPERSEDED BY COMMITTEES. SOME PEOPLE TREACHEROUSLY DESTROYED BY SPRINGING A MINE AT A CIVIC FEAST. THE GENEVESE RESIDENT TAKEN UP BY THE PATROL. THE FRENCH SUSPICIOUS OF THE DESIGNS OF BRITAIN. NECKER RETURNS. GENERAL AMNESTY RESOLVED BY THE ELECTORS OF PARIS. DEBATE ON A DECLARATION OF RIGHTS. DECLARATION OF RIGHTS SEPARATE FROM THE CONSTITUTION DETERMINED ON. SACRIFICES MADE BY THE NOBLES, CLERGY, &c.

THE duke of Liancourt, whose warning voice had made the king look around him, when danger was at his heels, was now chosen president. At this moment the obstacles, which at first clogged the exertions of the assembly, seemed to have been overcome: still fresh ones starting up threw a damp on their exultation; and the apprehensions of a famine, real or factitious, were not the least alarming, though the most frequent.

New conspiracies were already formed on the borders of France, by the princes, and those who had subsisted by the corruptions of

the old system. But this only proved a stimulus; because the nation, being determined to secure the rights it had so suddenly regained, raised new regiments in every part of the country, and was soon in a situation to repel any attack, which it was possible for all Germany to have made; the only quarter from which the fugitive princes, at that period, could expect assistance. So rapid was the spirit, so general the momentum, that in the course of a week upwards of three millions of men in arms were formed into companies by a common interest resembling an electrical sympathy. Such was the quick succession of events—Such the unanimous sense of the nation; and such the formidable force which instantly opposed itself to the impotent threats of departing despotism. History will record this memorable era, when the disciplined forces of the most puissant tyranny vanished before the force of truth, though still but half unveiled; obliging the haughty sycophants to search for shelter in the recesses of a forest, whither they stole under cover of the night from the presence of an injured people.

The conduct of the *garde bourgeoise*, during the progress of the revolution, without varnishing

nishing over the excesses produced by ebullitions of zeal, is of itself sufficient to prove, that a national militia should every where take place of standing armies, did not experience invariably attest, that the laws were never respected by men, whose business is war, unless they are reduced to mere machines by despotism.

The old municipal officers, mostly suspected, because nominated by the friends of the court, were now obliged to give place to committees elected by the common voice. These taking the administration of public business into their hands, a new order of things began every where to prevail. Still, however, the disturbed imagination of the people was filled with plots, to which some mysterious and fatal incidents gave life.

The municipality of Soissons informed the national assembly, that troops of banditti had cut down the corn before it was ripe, and obliged the villagers to take refuge in the towns. But on further inquiry, it appeared, that this report arose from a simple quarrel of the peasants amongst themselves, which had alarmed some labourers, who flew to the
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neighbouring town, imagining that they had thousands of banditti at their heels.

Paris was also disturbed by an idle rumour of a riot at St. Denis; so seriously affirmed by those, who declared that they had been eye-witnesses of the violence, that troops and cannon were sent, but they could find no traces of the disturbance.

Another, more serious, had exasperated the people against the nobility, and roused the indignation of the national assembly. A nobleman and counsellor of the parliament gave a civic feast in his castle to the inhabitants of his village; from which, on some pretext, he was absent. All was joy and festivity; but in the midst of the dance of gladness, the sudden explosion of a mine spread around affright and death.—Hearing of this treachery, the people, catching up their rustic weapons, firebrands, hastened to the neighbouring castles; some of which they burnt, others they demolished by pulling them down.

The recital of this atrocity produced a great effect in the national assembly; and, says Mirabeau, ‘ though great assemblies are often much
‘ too susceptible of theatrical emotions; and
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‘ this narration was accompanied with circum-
 ‘ stances, of which the invention is seldom
 ‘ presumed; and though it was also attested
 ‘ by a public officer; yet the atrocity of the
 ‘ crime gave it an air of improbability.’ This
 wanton act of barbarity, which the historian
 also would fain believe a monstrous chimera
 of heated brains, was, nevertheless, as well
 substantiated, as such a fact could be; which
 nothing, but the confession of the guilty par-
 ty, can render absolutely certain, because it
 seems equally foolish and barbarous.

These disorders, warmly represented by
 Lally-Tolendal, determined the assembly, on
 the 23d of july; to publish a proclamation,
 inviting all good citizens to the maintenance
 of order; and declaring, that to try and pu-
 nish for all crimes of *leze-nation* was the sole
 prerogative of the national assembly, till, by
 the constitution which it was about to esta-
 blish, a regular tribunal should be instituted, for
 the trial of such offences. After endeavouring
 to excuse the violence, or, more properly
 speaking, to account for it, Mirabeau observ-
 ed to the assembly, ‘ that they ought to be
 ‘ thoroughly convinced, that the continuation
 ‘ of this formidable dictator would expose li-
 ‘ berty

' berty to as much risk as the stratagems of
 ' her enemies. Society,' he continues, ' would
 ' soon be dissolved, if the multitude, accus-
 ' tomed to blood and disorder, placed them-
 ' selves above the magistrates, and braved the
 ' authority of the law. Instead of running to
 ' meet freedom, the people would soon throw
 ' themselves into the abyss of servitude; for
 ' danger too often rallies men round the stand-
 ' ard of absolute power; and in the bosom of
 ' anarchy, a despot even appears a saviour.
 ' For Carthage is not yet destroyed; there re-
 ' mains a mass of instruments to impede our
 ' operations, and to excite divisions in an
 ' assembly, that has only been united by
 ' danger.'

Some trifling incidents, swelled into im-
 portance by supposition, kept alive the inven-
 tive mistrust of the nation, to which some in-
 nocent victims were sacrificed, without allay-
 ing it's brooding propensity to produce, like
 jealousy, the evil it feared. Suspecting every
 body, and a little vain of authority, the pa-
 troles of parisian citizens sometimes officiously
 arrested whomever they thought fit, without
 assigning a sufficient cause; and among the
 rest, they stopped the resident in France from

Geneva. Three letters were found on him; and one of them being addressed to the count d'Artois, rendered suspicious the circumstance of his tearing a fourth.

The letters were sent by the mayor of Paris to the assembly; and the facts laid before them afforded Mirabeau an opportunity, to display his eloquence on a subject, that recalled to his mind abuses, which had formerly touched himself—the violation of private correspondence.—Though this did not appear to be exactly the present question; for they were not intercepted letters, but letters to which chance had annexed some suspicious characters, to point them out for inspection. The despotism of opening indiscriminately all letters, to enable the government to judge of the character and sentiments of each individual, is too obvious to need animadversion—And who, indeed, will not exclaim against the tyranny, be it even parental, that dares to steal into the secrets of the heart; or the impertinent curiosity, that seeks for information only to diversify an idle life? The latter may be termed petty larceny; yet often the peace of whole families is invaded by these cowardly thefts, and quarrels are rendered irreconcilable,

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by giving air to angry expressions, the utterance solely of the passion of the moment. The allowing letters, also, surreptitiously obtained, to appear as evidence, in courts of justice, is a gross violation of the first principle of law; because no letters can lawfully be opened, but as other suspected things are sought for—after information given to a magistrate. But, when seals are broken at the discretion of an individual, and brought forward to criminate a person, it is to the full as unjust, as to make a man plead against himself—And for justice to be awarded in consequence of an act of injustice, is an abuse that demands investigation. But the present was not a case in point. It was not a clandestine ransacking of all letters, to search for the clue of some suspected plot; or like the reading of the correspondence of a babbling conspirator, after the danger was over, whose letters might contain a list of timid accomplices, who would be driven to desperation by publicity. However, the decided turn was given to the question by the bishop of Langres observing, that all ages had applauded the generosity of Pompey, who committed to the flames the letters, which the senators had addressed to Sertorius. The

mania of imitating the romans on this began to appear, producing one of those instances of false magnanimity, that always arise from imitation: yet so trifling, indeed, in it's present consequence, that it would scarcely deserve to be ridiculed, much less censured, had not the same affectation afterwards brought forth more serious and even fatal follies.

The temper also of the parisiens, who mix in the world very early in life, leads them to imagine, that they have acquired the profound knowledge of the springs of human passions, which enables a sagacious man almost to foresee future events, only because they have often detected the weaknesses of the human heart. This made them now suppose, that the court of Great Britain was about to profit by their intestine troubles. The phraseology had long been in both countries, that they were the natural enemies of each other; and the mistrustful french quickly imagined, that the english meant immediately to take vengeance for their interference in favour of the americans, by seizing some of their West-India islands. The duke of Dorset, in his justification of England, only changed the object of mistrust, by giving rise to some vague conjectures

jectures respecting a conspiracy for delivering Brest into the hands of the english ; and, as there was no clue to lead to the discovery of the traitors, several nobles of Brittany, probably innocent, were arrested.

These were, nevertheless, but slight impediments ; for the invigorating voice of the awakened nation gave energy to the assembly, who now named committees to expedite the present business, preparatory to their grand task of framing a constitution. The authority and respectability of the assembly being acknowledged, they attentively considered the state of the kingdom ; and, mindful of the present distress of the people, issued orders for the free circulation of provision, which had been obstructed by the ancient forms, so opposite to the true principles of political economy.

At this juncture, Necker, still esteemed by the nation, unfortunately returned. Intoxicated by popularity, this minister had not sufficient prudence to decline the honours, which he could not support by that dignity of conduct the present crisis required. In his way to Paris, having heard, that the life of the baron de Benzenval, commandant of the swiss guards,

guards, who had been with Broglio, was in danger, he humanely interposed to stop the hand of violence; and so far he deserves praise. But when, arrived at Paris, he was received, by the lively inhabitants, as the tutelar genius of France, this apotheosis had it's usual effect; and assuming the demi-god, at the *Hôtel-de-Ville*, he was not content to preserve this victim from the public fury, without recommending a general amnesty; a measure which was as inconsiderately adopted, as proposed. For the electors pretending to issue laws for the whole nation, gave great umbrage to the parisiens, who had winked at the stretch of their power, which the pressing exigency of circumstances required, during the moment danger menaced the capital. The wild current thus turned, the men, who in the morning had declared, 'that liberty was safe, since Necker was allowed to watch over her,' now accused him of ambition, and a desire to keep well with the court, by facilitating the return, or escape, of it's minions. Such in fact was the inconstancy of a people, always running after theatrical scenes, that the tocsin was rung to denounce Necker as a courtier in one quarter of the city, at the very time the *Palais*

Royal was illuminated to celebrate his return as a patriot.

The business, however, being referred to the national assembly, with a modifying explanation, they decided it mildly, paying the respect due to the good intentions from which it proceeded, though they did not pretend to sanction the hasty resolve of the electors.

After this tumult had subsided the narrow capacity of the minister did not allow him to take a determined part in the grand work, in which the deputies were engaged. His mind had not sufficient strength to burst the shackles of its old opinions; and, acting with his usual commercial calculations, he seems to have been one cause of the divisions, which began to agitate an assembly, united rather by circumstances than by sentiments. Besides, the sudden emancipation of the people occasioned a delirium of joy, which required to be managed with the greatest delicacy. A vigorous ministry was certainly necessary to check the licentious spirit manifesting itself continually by acts of violence, in so many parts of the kingdom, where tumults and assassinations were the effects of the giddiness of unexpected success. Whilst complaining
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of the old government, every man in his sphere seemed to be eager to try how he himself could govern, and make up for the time he had delegated his authority. Besides, the procrastination of the relief looked for as the immediate consequence of the Revolution, however unavoidable, made the people not only murmur; but, disregarding all reason, attempt to gain more by force than could, for a long time, be granted by justice—even had justice been unbiassed by self-interest.

The nation called for a constitution; and the assembly debated about the declaration of rights inherent to man, and those he gives up when he becomes a citizen; on which they designed to rest it, as an explanatory support.

Several members argued, that the declaration ought to conclude, and not precede the constitution; insisting, that it was dangerous to awaken a *somnambulist* on the brink of a precipice; or to take a man to the top of a mountain, to show him a vast country that belonged to him, but of which he could not immediately claim the possession. ‘It is a veil,’ said they, ‘that it would be imprudent to raise suddenly.—It is a secret, that it is
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‘ necessary

‘ necessary to conceal, till the effect of a good
 ‘ constitution puts them into a situation to hear
 ‘ it with safety *.’

But Barnave terminated the sitting, though the question was still in debate, by observing, ‘ that the declaration of rights was in two
 ‘ respects practically useful ;—first, as it fixed
 ‘ the spirit of the legislation, in order that it
 ‘ might not vary in future ;—and, secondly, as
 ‘ it would direct the representatives of the na-
 ‘ tion in the formation of laws, in all the de-
 ‘ tails of legislation, the completion of which
 ‘ could only be the work of time. As to the
 ‘ apprehension expressed of the people abusing
 ‘ these rights, when they acquire a knowledge
 ‘ of them, it is,’ said he, ‘ futile,—and we need
 ‘ only turn over the page of history, to lose
 ‘ these vain fears ; for we shall constantly
 ‘ find the people tranquil in the same pro-
 ‘ portion as they are enlightened.’

Poizing thus the pillars of equal liberty, the discussion was the next day interrupted by the report made by the committee appointed for the purpose of digesting the information sent to the assembly, of the melan-
 choly

* These members seem to have formed a just estimate of the french character.

choly intelligence which they daily received from the provinces.—‘ The taxes, the rents
 ‘ were no longer paid, the revenue was ex-
 ‘ hausted, the laws were without force ; and
 ‘ the social ties almost broken.’ To remedy
 so many evils, the committee proposed to the
 assembly to publish, as soon as possible, a
 solemn declaration to testify their deep sense
 of the misery of the provinces, and their
 disapprobation of the non-payment of taxes
 and rents ; and to declare, that, till the assem-
 bly had time to consider the decrees necessary
 to be passed to regulate these objects, there
 did not exist any cause to justify similar re-
 fusals. This proposition occasioned a warm
 debate.

Some of the deputies represented, that the
 feudal laws were too iniquitous,—the taxes
 too unequally assessed—the wretchedness too
 general, to hope for any happy effect from
 such a declaration—it would soon fall into
 oblivion, as had done the proclamation for
 peace :—it would aggravate the misery of the
 state, by manifesting the impotence of the
 national assembly :—it would irritate even the
 people, who had need of comfort ; and of
 whom they could not, without a kind of
 derision,

derision, in their present circumstances, require the payment of taxes, of which they knew well that each of them felt the injustice.

Others did not fail to insist on the danger of letting the disorder increase; on the sacredness of property; and on the immense *deficit* with which the nation was menaced; adding, that the national assembly would become contemptible, if it did not take the most vigorous measures.—They further dilated on the necessity of re-establishing the authority of the courts of justice;—and other arguments of the same tendency, which would have been more conclusive, more useful, if the supporters of the declaration had brought forward the shadow of a mode to assure its execution. The debate from being warm became bitter, till it was at length resolved, that a declaration should be issued for the security of property, and that the remaining proposals of the committee should be discussed the next evening, the 4th of august.

But, before they separated, the assembly was informed, that Broglio had ordered all the arms, deposited at the town-house of Thionville, to be carried away.—This step
appeared

appeared to them the height of imprudence, at a moment when the community was obliged to arm itself to watch over the public safety.

The following morning it was decided by a great majority, that there should be a declaration of rights separate from the constitution. The sitting of the evening was impatiently expected, and the opposers of a new proclamation flattered themselves, that they should secure the general suffrage, by making it appear, that patriotism demanded great sacrifices; and that instead of the vain formality of an exhortation, soon despised by the people, it, was necessary to carry real offerings to the altar of peace.—This was the purport of a speech made by one of the nobles, the viscount de Noailles; who showed, in a very forcible manner, ‘ that the king-
 ‘ dom, at this moment, fluctuated between
 ‘ the alternative of the destruction of society,
 ‘ or of a government which would be admired
 ‘ and imitated by all Europe. How is this
 ‘ government to be obtained?’ said he, ‘ how
 ‘ are the relaxed ties of society to be strength-
 ‘ ened? By calming the people,’ he continues,
 ‘ by letting them see, that we are really em-

‘ employed for their good ; and that we resist
 ‘ them only where it is manifestly conducive
 ‘ to their interest, that they should be resisted.
 ‘ —To attain then this tranquillity, so neces-
 ‘ sary, I propose :

‘ 1st. That it be declared, before the pro-
 ‘ clamation digested by the committee, that
 ‘ the representatives of the nation have de-
 ‘ cided to levy the impost, henceforward, in
 ‘ proportion to the income of each indivi-
 ‘ dual.

‘ 2dly. That all the public charges shall, in
 ‘ future, be equally supported by the whole
 ‘ community.

‘ 3dly, That all the feudal claims shall be
 ‘ redeemable, on a fair valuation.

‘ 4thly, That all the manorial claims, the
 ‘ *mains-mortes*, and other personal services,
 ‘ shall be done away, without any ransom.

‘ 5thly. That the manorial rents in poultry,
 ‘ and other kinds of provision, shall be re-
 ‘ deemable by the proprietor or contractor, at
 ‘ a just valuation.’

The duke d’Aiguillon seconded this mo-
 tion, which had been warmly applauded ; or
 rather made another tending to the same end.
 For dreading the suppression of his pension,

when the *Livre Rouge* should be reviewed, he suddenly, from being a minion of the old court, became a loud patriot. And further to evince his zeal in the cause of liberty, he declared, ‘ that the insurrection found it’s excuse in the vexations to which the people were subject. The lords of manors,’ he observes, ‘ seldom commit the excesses of which their vassals complain ; but their agents are often devoid of humanity, and the wretched husbandmen, subject to the barbarous feudal laws still in force, groan under the restriction to which they become the victims. At this happy era, when united for the public good, and disengaged from all personal interest, we are going to labour for the regeneration of the state, it seems to me, gentlemen, that it is necessary, before establishing this constitution, so desired by the nation, to prove to all the citizens, that our intention is to establish, as soon as possible, that equality of rights which alone can assure their liberty.’

It too frequently happens, that men run from one extreme to another, and that despair adopts the most violent measures. The french people had long been groaning under the lash
of

of a thousand oppressions ; they were the hewers of wood, and drawers of water, for the chosen few. It was, therefore, to be apprehended, after they had once thrown off the yoke, which had imprinted on their character the hateful scars of servitude, that they would expect the most unbridled freedom, detesting all wholesome restraints, as reins they were not now bound to obey. From observing, perhaps, that this was the disposition of the times, the political empirics have continually inflamed the foibles of the multitude, by flattering them. Thus the nobility, whose order would probably lose most by the revolution, made the most popular motions, to gain favour with the people ; tickling the spirit they could not tame. Thus also we have seen the desperate leaders of factions selecting ingeniously the terms *sans-culottes*, *citoyen*, and *egalité*, in order to cajole the minds of the vulgar ; and hence it has happened, that, in proportion as this cajolery was more highly seasoned, the power of ruling has descended to the most desperate and impudent of the smatterers in politics ; whilst public anarchy, and private discord, have been productive of the dreadful catastrophes, and wanton outrages,

which

which have given such home thrusts to the dignity of freedom.

The feudal claims that insult humanity, and show how near man is to the brute creation when laws are first made, were afterwards attempted to be enumerated; but a general cry of indignation and horror prevented the deputy from finishing the frightful picture of human debasement and brutality. The vestiges of these direful oppressions, however, were still held dear by these very men, who, not having the compass of morality to direct their politics, were humane rather through weakness of nerves than soundness of understanding.

Be this as it may, the motion of the viscount de Noailles excited a sudden enthusiasm, mixed with anger. The members of the privileged orders, like children, seemed to say, by their actions, if you force me to give up this toy, it is fair that you should resign your sugar-plumb.—One gave a blow in the face; and the retort courteous was a back-handed stroke. For a member, that the duke d'Aiguillon should not be generous at the expence of others, proposed the *immediate* suppression of all places and emoluments

granted so profusely by the court, as the heaviest burthen of the people---because obliged to support with their necessaries the luxuries of the great; who, detained as a kind of guards at court, were not only prevented from enlivening the provinces by their presence, but distressed them by drawing away their produce. Distinguishing, however, between the pensions obtained by intrigue, and those that were the reward of actual services, ---he moved, that the former should be suppressed, and the latter reduced.

A motion was then made, that not only feudal rights, but all the jurisdiction of the lords of manors, established on the same arbitrary ground, should be abolished.

The president now, according to rule, perceiving that no one attempted to speak against the motion, was proceeding to put it to the vote---but he paused, reproaching himself for attempting to put an end to such an interesting discussion before such among the clergy, as wished to speak, had had an opportunity of declaring their sentiments.

This artful compliment roused the bishop of Nancy to declare, ‘ that, the continual and ‘ sympathizing witnesses of the misery of the
people,

‘ people, the clergy undoubtedly sighed after
 ‘ an opportunity to contribute to their relief ;
 ‘ and that the motion anticipated their desire :
 ‘ yet, to show their entire approbation of it,
 ‘ he must be permitted to propose in addition,
 ‘ that the price of the ransom of ecclesiastical
 ‘ feudalities should not be converted to the
 ‘ profit of the actual incumbent ; but thrown
 ‘ into a fund for the relief of the poorer part
 ‘ of the body.’

The bishop of Chartres, after approving of the sacrifices already made, demanded, that the suppression of the game laws should be joined to them. This worthy prelate painted the injustice of those laws, not less absurd than oppressive, which force the farmer to be the tranquil spectator of the ravages of his harvest ; condemning him to endure cruel punishments, if he follow the first impulse of nature, which would lead him to kill the animals that injure him. A number of the nobility concurred in these sentiments ; for who would be out-done in heroism ? and demanded the renunciations of these unnatural privileges.

The president de Saint-Fargeau now rose, to demand an explanation relative to the taxes
 of

of which the clergy and nobility offered to divide the weight. ‘We have given,’ said he, ‘hopes to the people; but we ought to give them something more substantial; we have decreed, that, provisionally, the taxes should continue to be paid as they have been hitherto; that is to say, we have reserved to the clergy and the nobility the benefit of their exemptions, till they are expressly revoked. —Why do we delay to pronounce this revocation, so strictly imposed in almost all our instructions?—I propose, therefore, that not only for the last six months, but from the very commencement of the year, all privileged persons, without exception, support their proportional part of the public impost.’

As the discussion of the propositions of the viscount de Noailles advanced, the necessity of effacing all the traces of servitude became more and more obvious; and all the members seemed eager to point out to their colleagues the new sacrifices, that ought to be made to the good of their country. One demanded the suppression of the exclusive right to warrens;—another that of fisheries; a third

third the sale of offices, and that justice should be administered gratuitously.

The parish priest of Soupes, in the name of his brethren, joined the oblations of the poor to the hecatombs, of which the most part cost nothing to those who proposed them; ' he declared, that, animated by a desire to ' contribute to the relief of the people, they ' would relinquish, from the present time, all ' their casual (or surplice) fees.' This offer, made with great simplicity of heart, affected the assembly; nor could a very different proposal, made by the duke du Châtelet, respecting the buying up of the tithes, efface it entirely.

The transition to gaiety, when a member asked permission to offer also his sparrow, was very natural in a people, who always mix a degree of sarcastic pleasantry, the good-humoured face of which first appears, with the most serious things. However, after the laughter ceased,—he continued to make his demand more seriously, by observing, that an object, trifling in appearance, was a real grievance to the husbandmen; he moved, therefore, for the total demolition of all the *dove-cotes* throughout the kingdom.

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The respectable duke de la Rochefoucault, after having applauded all these propositions, remarked, that the king had given the example of freeing the serfs in his demesnes ; and that the moment was come, to extend this benefit to all the kingdom. This benevolent citizen did not stop here ; but added a wish, that, before the close of the sessions, the assembly would take into consideration the fate of the unhappy victims of covetousness, retained in slavery under another hemisphere.

A member now made a motion, that excited testimonials of the most sincere satisfaction from the assembly ; it was to augment the stipends of the parish priests, the most respectable part of the clergy.

Several dignitaries of the church, possessing two or more benefices, unwilling to be left behind in generosity, followed with a declaration, that, conformable to the canons, they were resolved to limit themselves to a single one.

The deputies of the provinces enjoying peculiar privileges receiving a hint, that the appellation of french citizens, all partaking the same rights, was the most glorious they could bear, immediately came forward to

renounce

renounce them. A number of propositions, more or less important, brought up the rear. The suppression of the first fruits; the rights of wardenship; and the abrogation of those barbarous vows, which fetter unfortunate beings for life.—In short, full and entire liberty for the non-catholics.—Admission of all the citizens into all offices, ecclesiastical, civil, and military.—Abolition of the plurality of ecclesiastical pensions.—And then, not forgetting their national character, it was proposed, that a medal should be struck in commemoration of this night *; and a decree also passed, conferring gratuitously on the king the august title, in favour of a style that scarcely befits the dignity of history, to say *nick-name*, OF RESTORER OF FRENCH LIBERTY. A deputation was accordingly appointed to carry this new mark of homage to the king, and to request his presence at a solemn *Te Deum*, to be celebrated throughout the kingdom.—And behold night closed on the renowned 4th of august!

It is not possible, says a journalist of the day, to give a distinct description of the

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scenes

* Some french wags have laid a great stress on these decrees passing after dinner,

scenes which were continually shifting during this sitting.—The vivacity of the sentiments, the quick transition from a generous emotion to an epigrammatical sensation, the disorder which made sensibility predominate over legislative dignity—the reciprocal mistrust, and the combat of generosity—all diversified by the amiable and seducing enthusiasm, so characteristic of the nation, made this an epocha in the history of the revolution, on which the contemplative mind, accustomed to consider the varied character of man, will ponder.

Another observation, also, naturally occurs; for it is just to remark, as a proof of the crudeness of the political notions, not to mention principles, of these legislators, that all talked of *sacrifices*, and boasted of generosity, when they were only doing common justice, and making the obvious practical comment on the declaration of rights, which they had passed in the morning.—If such were the rights of man—they were more or less than men; who with-held them; and the resignation, rather a resumption of their reason than a sacrifice of their property, was called for, the moment they acknowledged the sovereignty

reignty of the people by becoming their representatives.

It is very possible, that the next morning the different parties could scarcely believe, that they had more than the imperfect recollection of a dream in their heads. So quick, indeed, had been the determinations of the meeting, which encroached on the midnight hour, that they had not the sober cast of thought to give them dignity. They seem in reality to have been mostly the effect of passion, of ambition, or a vain desire of vengeance; for those who were led only by enthusiasm, and the vanity of the moment, esteemed their conduct as highly extravagant, when they had time to cool. But the commons, who had the deepest views, knew to what they had urged them, and would not let them recede.

It is true, the abolition of these privileges and powers had been strictly enjoined, in the instructions given to the deputies by their constituents; but, it is doubtful, whether they would have been attended to, had not the most sagacious foreseen, that the neglect might occasion a civil war. Knowing, that their property would not be cautiously re-

spected, they began by attacking that of their presumptuous adversaries; and actually surprised the assembly into the unanimous renunciation of all revenues arising from feudal dues, and even into the abolition of tithes. The nobility, also, who saw, that they should gain more by the suppression of tithes, than they should lose by the sacrifice of the obnoxious manorial fees, came into the same system. The steps likewise taken to increase the salaries of the indigent clergy, the most numerous part of the body in the assembly, secured their influence. And by destroying the monopoly of municipal and judicial employments, the support of the cities was obtained.—Thus the national assembly, without a struggle, found itself omnipotent. Their only enemies were individuals, seemingly of importance, it is true, as they had been accustomed to lead the great corporate bodies; but what was their empire, when all their former subjects were withdrawn from their control? of these enemies, the church dignitaries were of the most consequence; but, after the confiscation of ecclesiastical property, it would have been impossible for the court, even supposing a counter-revolution, to provide

vide for them ; as they would have been a dead weight on the royalists.

Unfortunately, almost every thing human, however beautiful or splendid the superstructure, has, hitherto, been built on the vile foundation of selfishness ; virtue has been the watch-word, patriotism the trumpet, and glory the banner of enterprize ; but pay and plunder have been the real motives. I do not mean to assert, that there were not any real patriots in the assembly.—I know there were many. By real patriots, I mean men who have studied politics, and whose ideas and opinions on the subject are reduced to principles ; men who make that science so much their principal object, as to be willing to give up time, personal safety, and whatever society comprehends in the phrase, *personal interest*, to secure the adoption of their plans of reform, and the diffusion of knowledge.

But most of the leaders of the national assembly were guided by the vulgar import of the word, a vain desire of applause, or deep schemes of emolument. The Lameths, for instance, who had been the obsequious slaves of the queen, were among the hottest

advocates for popular power; and throughout the assembly there were traces of a similar spirit.

During the first struggle, the national assembly and the people were divided into republicans and royalists; but we shall find, from the moment all danger of disturbance appeared to be over, the higher class were receding from the patriots, and recruiting from the royalists, to form for themselves, under the appellation of the *impartiaux*, the elements of a growing aristocracy.

CHAPTER III.

REFLECTIONS ON THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. SECESSION OF SEVERAL PSEUDO-PATRIOTS. SOCIETY RIPE FOR IMPROVEMENT THROUGHOUT EUROPE. WAR NATURAL TO MEN IN A SAVAGE STATE. REMARKS ON THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF SOCIETY. THE ARTS—PROPERTY—INEQUALITY OF CONDITIONS—WAR. PICTURE OF MANNERS IN MODERN FRANCE.

THE despotism of the former government of France having formed the most voluptuous, artificial characters, in the higher orders of society, makes it less extraordinary to find the leading patriots men without principles or political knowledge, excepting what they had casually gleaned from books, only read to while away an idle hour not employed in pleasure. So superficial indeed was their acquaintance with any subject that demanded thought—and so great the degeneracy of their manners, it was natural for every man of reflection to infer, that a considerable length of time must elapse before the new order of things, which they were about to create, could attain stability. But this was

not a discouraging consideration, when it was obvious, that important advantages had already been gained by the people; and by the improvement of morals, which would necessarily follow, it was to be presumed, that the evils, the old system produced, would vanish before gradual amendments; whilst, by a practical knowledge of political and civil liberty, the great objects of the revolution would be ascertained; namely, just laws, and equal liberty.

The depravity of the higher class, and the ignorance of the lower respecting practical political science, rendered them equally incapable of thinking for themselves; so that the measures which flattered the foibles, or gratified the weakness of either, were sure to have great influence in producing a schism in the public mind; which gave an opportunity to the enemies of the revolution to impede its course. And the number of the lower class having its due weight, when they became free, the most daring innovators became the greatest favourites with the public, to whose will every prudential consideration was obliged to yield.

Much had been gained on the 4th of august by the nation: the old forms of

feudal vassalage were completely overturned—and France then stood at the point the most advantageous in which a government was ever constructed.—She stood fair as the dawn of her liberty, having shaken off the prejudices of ages; and reason was tracing out the road, which leads to virtue, glory, and happiness—Still ambitious selfishness, melancholy drawback! governed too great a proportion of the assembly; and the nobles and clergy who had been averse to the junction of the orders now intriguing, every debate became a bitter or violent contest, in which the popular advocates continued to gain an ascendancy.

This disposition to intrigue, and want of sincerity, so generally remarked in the French character, laid the foundation of universal distrust; and the coalesced parties, who had not been actuated by a love of liberty, or regard for the prosperity of the kingdom, but dexterously fell in with the spirit of the day, were not aware, that a watchful, suspicious multitude, would be as likely to mistrust them in their turn, as the court, which had thriven on the ruin of their happiness. This was a blindness so gross, that it appears not a little wonderful, after considering the different characters,

characters, who succeeded each other in the ministry, or directed the helm of the state, that men should not acquire sufficient judgment to adopt the integrity of conduct, with which alone people in their senses, awake to their interest and rights, will ever be satisfied.

For a vain glorious ambition, mixing with the abortions of giddy patriotism, acts as the most fatal poison to political disquisitions, during seasons of public ferment. The solid views of deep thinkers are adapted to the spirit of the times, and the state of reason of their compeers. And if they find, that the current of opinion, in overturning inveterate prejudices, and the decayed walls of laws, that no longer suit the manners, threatens the destruction of principles the most sacred; they ought firmly to wait at their post, until, the fervour abating, they could, by diverting the stream, gradually restrain it within proper bounds.—But such patriotism is of slow growth; requiring both a luxuriant public soil, and to be fostered by virtuous emulation. Yet this emulation will never flourish in a country where intriguing finesse, supplying the place of exalted merit, is the surest ladder to distinc-

distinction. It was by debasing artifices, under the old government, that men obtained favour and consequence ; and whilst such men, men who were educated and ossified by the ancient *regimen*, act on the political stage of France, mankind will be continually distressed and amused by their tragic and comic exhibitions.

Art applied to art, and stratagem against stratagem, may produce, for a time, alternate defeats ; but ultimately the most cunning will triumph.

Vanity had made every frenchman a theorist, though political aphorisms were never ascertained under the reign of tyranny or caprice. The sagacious part of the nation, it is true, clearly perceived, that the period was arrived, when a revolution was inevitable ; but selfishness being incompatible with noble, comprehensive, or laudable views, it is not wonderful, keeping in sight the national foible, that at the meeting of the states-general every deputy had his particular plan to suggest. Few of the leaders embraced the same ; and acting, without coalescing, the most violent measures were sure to be the most applauded. We shall find also, that some of the most strenuous advocates for reforming abuses,

abuses, and establishing a constitution, when their favourite systems were exploded, peevishly retired in disgust: and by afterwards venting it, have hurried into action a race of monsters, the most flagitious that ever alarmed the world by the murder of innocents, and the mockery of justice; and whilst the profanation of her temple, besprinkled with blood, has branded with an indelible stigma the sanguinary brutes, the deserters cannot escape without a share of the odium.

Contemplating the progress of the revolution, a melancholy reflection is produced by observing, that almost every precipitate event has been the consequence of a tenacity and littleness of mind in the political actors, whilst they were affecting a roman magnanimity of conduct—to which they appear to have been as great strangers, as they were destitute of legitimate patriotism, and political science.

We have first seen Calonne, in order to secure his popularity and place, proposing an equalization of taxes; and, when he found that his consequence and power were lost, abandoning his country in disgust, and employing the most unwarrantable means to involve his fellow citizens in all the horrors of a civil war.

war. We shall find, likewise, several other declaimers, for their subsequent conduct obliges me to consider them in no better light, when their plans were disregarded, if not acting the same shameful part, yet leaving their posts; their patriotism expiring with their popularity.—And it will be only necessary to keep in mind the conduct of all the leading men, who have been active in the revolution, to perceive, that the disasters of the nation have arisen from the same miserable source of vanity, and the wretched struggles of selfishness; when the crisis required, that all enlightened patriots should have united and formed a band, to have consolidated the great work; the commencement of which they had accelerated. In proportion as these desertions have taken place, the best abilities which the country contained have disappeared. And thus it has happened, that ignorance and audacity have triumphed, merely because there were not found those brilliant talents, which, pursuing the straight forward line of political economy, arrest, as it were, the suffrage of every well disposed citizen.—Such talents existed in France: and had they combined, and directed their views by a pure love of their
 their

their country, to one point; all the disasters, which in overwhelming the empire have destroyed the repose of Europe, would not have occurred to disgrace the cause of freedom.

Every great reform requires systematic management; and however lightly weak daring heads may treat the gravity of such a remark, the pacific progress of every revolution will depend, in a very material degree, on the moderation and reciprocity of concessions made by the acting parties. It is true, that in a nation chiefly celebrated for wit so much prudence could scarcely be expected—yet that is not a sufficient reason for condemning all the principles, that produced the revolution: for liberty cannot be considered as belonging exclusively to any particular climate, or temper of mind, as a physical effect. It was peculiarly urgent, indeed, to form such a coalition, to counteract the dangerous consequences of old prejudices. The stubborn habits of men, whom personal interest kept firm to their ground, it was morally certain would interrupt the tranquil march of the revolution: it would have been prudent then for men, who agreed in the main objects, to have overlooked trifling differences of opinion,

till they were secured: and of this several members seem to have been aware.*

Had the conduct of men been sincere, and had they really pursued that fraternity, about which they so continually declaimed; they might, in consolidating the rights of french citizens, have established every political advantage, which the then state of reason was capable of adopting for the immediate benefit

* Lally-Tolendal, in particular; for giving his opinion on the subject of two chambers, he said:—‘ It is not doubtful
 ‘ at present, and for this first assembly, that a single
 ‘ chamber is preferable, and perhaps necessary—There are
 ‘ so many difficulties to be surmounted, so many prejudices
 ‘ to be conquered, so many sacrifices to be made, such old
 ‘ habits to root out, so great a power to control; in a word
 ‘ so much to destroy, and almost all to create anew. ‘This
 ‘ moment, gentlemen, which we are so happy as to have seen,
 ‘ of which it is impossible a description can be given—when
 ‘ private characters, orders of men, and provinces, are vying
 ‘ with each other, who will make the greatest sacrifices to the
 ‘ public good—when all press together at the tribune, to
 ‘ renounce voluntarily, not only odious privileges, but even
 ‘ those just rights, which appear to you an obstacle to the
 ‘ fraternity and equality of all the citizens. This moment,
 ‘ gentlemen, this noble and rich enthusiasm which hurries
 ‘ you along, this new order of things which you have begun
 ‘ —all this—most assuredly, could never have been produced
 ‘ but from the union of all persons, of all opinions, and of
 ‘ all hearts.’—

of society. But resentment bursting forth, which had long lain concealed (the effect of servitude and contumely), joined with the vanity of excelling all other nations in the science of government, to produce an insolent audacity of conduct, which, aiming at overturning every thing, discouraged the wavering, and frightened the timid. Designing knaves then conceived the plan of rising to eminence by the accumulating foibles of the multitude, who, loosened from all restraint, were easily caught by the insidious arts of the most contemptible anarchists.

The object of those monsters, who were meditating the violation of the sacred ties of honour and humanity, was early perceived by the more penetrating; but instead of opposing themselves to their designs, they for the most part became initiated into their clubs; whilst others, more haughty, though perhaps less under the direction of principles,—if there were any among them,—emigrated, leaving their country verging towards the whirlpool of civil discord, and all its concomitant wretchedness.

It is necessary for us to attend closely to these considerations, in order to be enabled to
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form a just opinion of the various revolutions which have succeeded each other :—because, from a superficial view of things of this nature, we frequently attribute to the passions, or innate turpitude of man, what was merely the effect of moral depravity. Hence it has happened, that so many of the admirers of the revolution, in its infancy, now talk of extravagant innovations, tending to overturn all the barriers of justice,—to trample on the feelings of humanity, and to destroy every thing splendid and beautiful,—the production of ages, industry, taste, and learning.

But this revolution did not interest Frenchmen alone; for its influence extending throughout the continent, all the passions and prejudices of Europe were instantly set afloat. That most favoured part of the globe had risen to an astonishing pre-eminence, though every where its inhabitants have had to contend with distinctions the most unnatural, and prejudices the most veteran. But, having overcome those formidable obstacles to the happiness of her citizens, society seems to have arrived at that point of civilization, when it becomes necessary for governments to meliorate its condition, or a dissolution of
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their power and authority will be the consequence of a wilful disregard of the intimations of the times. This is a truth, which the people have perceived; but which the parasites of courts, and the advocates for despotism have not been willing to believe. And besides, their support, it might be said existence, being attached to the continuation of those savage abuses, they have fought with unusual intrepidity in their defence. Thus wars have been the business of courts, in which they have artfully interested the passions of the people.

Men in a savage state, without intellectual amusements, or even fields or vineyards to employ them, depending for subsistence on the casual supply of the chase, seem continually to have made war, one with another, or nation with nation; and the booty taken from their enemies formed the principal object of contest, because war was not, like industry, a kind of abridgement of their liberty. But the social feelings of man, after having been exercised by a perilous life, flow over in long stories, when he reaches garrulous old age. Whilst his listening progeny wondering at his feats, their hearts are fired with the ambition
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of equaling their fire. His soul also warmed by sympathy, feeling for the distresses of his fellow creatures, and particularly for the helpless state of decrepit age; he begins to contemplate, as desirable, associations of men, to prevent the inconveniencies arising from loneliness and solitude. Hence little communities living together in the bonds of friendship, securing to them the accumulated powers of man, mark the origin of society: and tribes growing into nations, spreading themselves over the globe, form different languages, which producing different interests, and misunderstandings, excite distrust.

The invention of the arts now affords him employment; and it is in proportion to their extension that he becomes domestic, and attached to his home. For whilst they were in their infancy his restless temper, and savage manners, still kept alive his passion for war and plunder; and we shall find, if we look back to the first improvement of man, that as his ferocity wore away, the right of property grew sacred. The prowess or abilities of the leaders of barbarians gave them likewise an ascendancy in their respective dynasties; which gaining strength in proportion to the ignorance of the

age, produced the distinctions of men, from which the great inequality of conditions has originated; and they have been preserved long since the necessity has ceased to exist.

During the reign of ignorance, the disagreements of states could be settled only by combats; and the art of dexterously murdering seems to have decided differences, where reason should have been the arbitrator. The custom then of settling disputes at the point of the bayonet, in modern Europe, has been justified by the example of barbarians; and whilst fools continually argue from the practice of inhuman savages, that wars are necessary evils, courts have found them convenient to perpetuate their power: thus slaughter has furnished a plausible pretext for speculation.

Fortunately, in spite of the various impediments that have thwarted the advancement of knowledge, the blessings of society have been sufficiently experienced to convince us, that the only solid good to be expected from a government must result from the security of our persons and property. And domestic felicity has given a mild lustre to human happiness superiour to the false glory of sanguinary

devastation, or magnificent robberies. Our fields and vineyards have thus gradually become the principal objects of our care—and it is from this general sentiment governing the opinion of the civilized part of the world, that we are enabled to contemplate, with some degree of certainty, the approaching age of peace.

All that could be done by a body of manners, without a soul of morals, to improve mankind, had been tried in France—The result was polished slavery; and such an inordinate love of pleasure, as led the majority to search only for enjoyment, till the tone of nature was destroyed. Yet some few really learned the true art of living; giving that degree of elegance to domestic intercourse, which, prohibiting gross familiarity, alone can render permanent the family affections, whence all the social virtues spring.

It is a mistake to suppose that there was no such thing as domestic happiness in France, or even in Paris. For many french families, on the contrary, exhibited an affectionate urbanity of behaviour to each other, seldom to be met with where a certain easy gaiety does not soften the difference of age and condi-

tion. The husband and wife, if not lovers, were the civilest friends and the tenderest parents in the world—the only parents, perhaps, who really treated their children like friends; and the most affable masters and mistresses. Mothers were also to be found, who, after suckling their children, paid a degree of attention to their education, not thought compatible with the levity of character attributed to them; whilst they acquired a portion of taste and knowledge rarely to be found in the women of other countries. Their hospitable boards were constantly open to relations and acquaintance, who, without the formality of an invitation, enjoyed there cheerfulness free from restraint; whilst more select circles closed the evening, by discussing literary subjects. In the summer, when they retired to their mansion houses, they spread gladness around, and partook of the amusements of the peasantry, whom they visited with paternal solicitude. These were, it is true, the rational few, not numerous in any country—and where is led a more useful or rational life?

In the provinces, likewise, more simplicity of manners prevailing, their morals were more
pure:

pure: though family pride, as in England, made the most noble house the royal family of each village, who visited the grand court only to import it's follies. Besides, in France, the women have not those factitious, supercilious manners, common to the english; and acting more freely, they have more decision of character, and even more generosity. Rousseau has taught them also a scrupulous attention to personal cleanliness, not generally to be seen elsewhere: their coquetry is not only more agreeable, but more natural: and not left a prey to unsatisfied sensations, they were less romantic indeed than the english; yet many of them possessed delicacy of sentiment.

It is, perhaps, in a state of comparative idleness—pursuing employments not absolutely necessary to support life, that the finest polish is given to the mind, and those personal graces, which are instantly felt, but cannot be described: and it is natural to hope, that the labour of acquiring the substantial virtues, necessary to maintain freedom, will not render the french less pleasing, when they become more respectable.

