

AN  
HISTORICAL AND MORAL VIEW  
OF THE  
FRENCH REVOLUTION.

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CHAPTER I.

OPINIONS ON THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE FOURTH OF AUGUST. DISORDERS OCCASIONED BY THOSE TRANSACTIONS. NECKER DEMANDS THE ASSEMBLY'S SANCTION TO A LOAN. A LOAN DECREED. TITHES ABOLISHED. DEBATE ON THE DECLARATION OF RIGHTS. THE FORMATION OF A CONSTITUTION. DEBATE ON THE EXECUTIVE POWER. THE SUSPENSIVE VETO ADOPTED. PRETENDED AND REAL VIEWS OF THE COMBINATION OF DESPOTS AGAINST FRANCE. DEBATE ON THE CONSTITUTION OF A SENATE. MEANS OF PEACEABLY EFFECTING A REFORM SHOULD MAKE A PART OF EVERY CONSTITUTION.

THE numerous offerings made to their country by the deputies, on the 4th of august, excited loud applause; but not without a mixture of sarcastic censure, and murmurs of disapprobation.

Some blamed the decrees, which, said they, have sacrificed the property of several thousand

thousand families to the vain desire of popularity.—Others complained of the neglect of those forms, by which every assembly, that aspires at putting some maturity into it's decrees, ought to direct it's debates ;—they disapproved of an afternoon sitting ;—of the rapid succession of subjects, not allowing time for any to be weighed ;—of the multiplicity of them ;—and of the continual acclamations, which rendered a calm discussion physically impossible.—‘ What ! ’ they continued, ‘ shall the most important business always be treated with the levity, which characterized us before we deserved to be termed a nation ? Eternally the sport of our vivacity, a happy turn decides with us the most serious point ; and gay fallies are ever our substitutes for arguments.—We do madly the wisest things ; and even our reason is always connected by some filament or other to inconsistency.—The national assembly had been a long time reproached for dwelling on trifling objects ; and not attending sufficiently to the promotion of general good.—When suddenly—in a single night, more than twenty important laws are decided by an uproar. So much done, in

‘ such a short time, is so astonishing, that it appears like a dream.’

In reply it was said—‘ Why deliberate, when all are agreed?—Does not a general good always appear self-evident?—Was it not sufficient to declare these patriotic propositions to prove their justness?—The first person, who pointed out a new tribute to the public interest, only gave utterance to what we all before felt—there was no need then of discussion or eloquence, to make that be adopted, which had already been resolved by the greater number of the deputies, and commanded by the awful authority of the nation, in their mandates.—The assembly might have proceeded more methodically; but the result could not have been more advantageous. It seemed as if all the old effects, all the mouldering titles of feudal oppressions were then put up to auction; and the kind of mistrust of the different orders, which provoked reciprocal concessions, was still for the public good.’

The nobles and clergy of the provinces, who had not been carried away by the enthusiasm of the 4th of august, felt themselves particularly aggrieved. Those who were recently

recently noble did not like to mix again on equal terms in towns where they had received the homage paid to princes ; and the people, eager to exercise their liberty, began to hunt down the game, regardless of the mischief they did to the standing corn. The very concessions of the nobility seemed to rouse the vengeance it ought to have allayed ; and the populace vented their rage by burning the castles, which had been, as it were, legally dismantled of their feudal fortifications.

The clergy, in particular, complained, that their deputies had exceeded all bounds in voting away the private property of the body ; for they would not allow, that tithes came within the description of feudal tenures. The want of provision, likewise, tended to make the people clamour about present grievances, without suffering the prospect of future comfort and respectability to have it's due force towards calming their minds. All, therefore, flew to arms, and three millions of men wearing the military garb, showed the natural disposition of the nation ; and their present resolve, no longer to couch supinely under oppression. Many excesses were the consequence of this sudden change ; and it is  
notorious,

notorious, that the people, in some instances, became the instruments of the routed party ; who continued to use every stratagem to render the nation dissatisfied with the revolution.

It is the nature of man, either in a savage state or living in society, to protect his property ; and it is wise in a government to encourage this spirit. For the example now displayed by France is a notable proof of the inexpediency of standing armies, so long as the people have an interest in supporting the political system under which they live. The national assembly, aware of this, invited the militia and the municipalities, to endeavour to quell the disorders which did violence to persons and property ; and they were particularly requested to take the most watchful care, that the convoys of wheat and flour were not stopped by the idle and lawless. For several of the most fatal tumults had originated from this cause.

The decrees of the 4th of august, were then brought forward to be examined and explained ; and some attempts were made to argue away the essence of many of the vaunted sacrifices.—But the discussion was interrupted,  
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to attend to business of a more pressing nature. The present state of the nation was most alarming; and the ministers, not knowing how to act under the new trammels of responsibility, came to represent to the assembly;—that the laws were without force;—the courts of justice without activity;—and they requested them, immediately to point out the coercive measures necessary to give to the executive authority the influence it had lost.—

‘For,’ observed they, ‘whether the irritated sense of the abuses, which the king wishes to reform, and you desire to proscribe for ever, have led the people astray; or, the declaration of an universal regeneration have shaken the various powers upon which the social order reposed—or whatever, in fact, be the cause, gentlemen, the truth is, that public order and tranquillity are disturbed in almost every part of the kingdom.’

Necker, afterwards, having explained the deplorable state of the finances, the extraordinary expences, and the diminution in the produce of the revenue, demanded, in the name of the king, that the assembly would sanction a loan of thirty millions of livres, to fulfil the engagements, and discharge the inevitable

vitable expenditure of the two approaching months; by which time, he presumed, the constitution would be nearly established. Thinking also, that the patriotism of money-lenders was not to be reckoned upon, he proposed to add to the five per cent. he mentioned some allurements of speculation, to quicken the determination of the lenders—and he further inferred, that private interest would then tend to quiet the kingdom, whilst they were advancing in the formation of the constitution, which was to secure it's future tranquillity, and provide a permanent revenue.

This proposal produced the most warm and loud applause.—One member proposed, that the loan should instantly be voted in the presence of the minister, as a mark of their entire satisfaction—another offered six hundred thousand livres as a security, that he would raise the loan in his own province. This effervescence, so contagious, which is after all only physical sensibility, excited by a commotion of the animal spirits, proves, that a considerable length of time is necessary to accustom men to exercise their rights with deliberation; that they may be able to defend themselves from a kind of instinctive  
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confidence in men ; and to make them substitute respect for principles, to a blind faith in persons, even of the most distinguished abilities.—But to elevate a numerous assembly to this calm grandeur ; to that permanent dignity, which represses the emotions of the moment, demands, it is probable, a more advanced state of reason.

Lally Tolendal supported the necessity of adopting the measures proposed for the obtaining a loan to supply the exigencies of government, which were become very urgent ; and he refuted the objection, made by several deputies, who were against the grant, that in their instructions they had been strictly enjoined not to sanction any tax or loan before the constitution was formed. On this side Mirabeau ranged himself ; for with all his great talents and superiority of genius, he could not avoid envying inferior abilities, when they attracted the least popularity. He therefore, with plausible rhetoric, but shallow arguments, opposed the loan ; and with great parade moved, that the deputies should offer their individual credit, instead of departing from the very letter of their instructions. This was one of those instances of pretended disin-



disinterestedness, or false patriotism, calculated to dazzle the people, whilst it involved the nation in fresh embarrassments.

The plan was referred to the consideration of the committee, appointed to make financial reports : and they accordingly acknowledged the necessity of a prompt supply ; but thought, that the loan might now be obtained without the additional advantages, which Necker mentioned as a necessary bait. The discussion was then renewed with great heat, and even personality ; till at last the interest of the loan was fixed at four and an half per cent. ; and to slip through the knot they were afraid to cut, it was to be sanctioned under the wing of the decrees of the 4th of august.

It did not, however, prove productive ; for in the course of three weeks, only two millions, six hundred thousand livres were subscribed. And this delay of business induced the assembly to adopt, with less scruple, another proposal for a fresh loan, instead of the one that did not promise to answer, at a rate less advantageous to the nation : or rather they yielded to the necessity, into which they had plunged themselves ; and left the mode of obtaining it to the executive power, in spite of their former objection. But it was

not an easy task to inspire the bankers and money-holders with sufficient faith in the new government, to induce them to come forward to support it ; besides, the previous discussion had converted caution into timidity ; and the more desperate the state of the finances appeared, the stronger grew the suspicion, that threw insurmountable obstacles in the way of a temporary relief.

Settling the precise terms of the decrees, which were to abolish feudal vassalage, the question respecting the including of tithes was agitated with most earnestness ; and the objections urged against the abolition were not only ingenious, but reasonable \*. The abbé Sieyès spoke with great good sense, asserting, ‘ that the tithes were not a tax ‘ levied on the nation ; but a rent-charge, for ‘ which a proper allowance had been made to ‘ the present possessors of the estates, to not ‘ one of whom they actually belonged. He, ‘ therefore, insisted, that, if the sacrifice were

\* ‘ It is worthy of remark, that the *divine right* of tithes ‘ was never insisted on,’ says a french writer, ‘ even by the ‘ clergy, during this debate. Yet the year before, when ‘ the same question was brought forward in the irish house ‘ of parliament, great stress was laid on this gothic idea of ‘ their origin.’

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‘ necessary, it ought to be made to the public, to relieve the people, and not to enrich the proprietors ; who were, generally speaking, of the most opulent part of the community.’ He advised the assembly to be on their guard, lest avarice, under the mask of zeal, should deceive them, leading the nation to reward rather than indemnify the nobility. The fact was, that the landed interest were only resigning obsolete privileges, which they scarcely dared exercise, to secure a solid advantage. Society has hitherto been constructed in such a vicious manner, that to relieve the poor you must benefit the rich. The present subject was a delicate one ; the abolition of tithes would remove a very heavy vexatious clog, that had long hung on the neck of industry ; yet it were to be wished, that it could have been settled in such a way as not to have secured a great pecuniary advantage to the nobility. For though it was physically impossible, to make this sacrifice to society at large immediately ; because the proprietors, and more particularly the leaseholders of the estates, could not have redeemed the tithes, without distressing themselves to a degree, that would nearly have

stopped the course of husbandry; not to mention agricultural improvements, so necessary in France, and to be looked for as the fruit of liberty:—yet a gradual tax on the original landlord would have prevented the nobility from being the great gainers by their so much extolled disinterestedness, in their fallacious sacrifice of privileges. Because, for all real property they were to be reimbursed; and for the obnoxious feudal tenures, such as personal servitude, with others they were ashamed to enumerate as being due from man to man, the tithes were an ample indemnity; or more properly speaking clear profit, except to those who parted with the plumes which raised them above their fellows with great regret. It was, indeed, very difficult to separate the evil from the good, that would redound to the nation by the doing away of this tax.—The clergy, however, cut the debate short, by resigning their right, offering to trust to the justice of the public for the stipend in return necessary to enable them to support the dignity of their function.

On the 13th, therefore, the whole discussion closed; for the other articles did not admit of much disputation. The president accordingly

cordingly waited on the king, who received his new title with the decrees, to which he afterwards made some objections, though the assembly considered them as virtually sanctioned \*.

A committee of five had been employed to digest a declaration of rights, to precede the constitution. The opinion of those, who thought that this declaration ought to have been kept back, has already been alluded to ; yet the subject seems to require a little further consideration. And, perhaps, it will appear just to separate the character of the philosopher, who dedicates his exertions to promote the welfare, and perfection of mankind, carrying his views beyond any time he chooses to mark ; from that of the politician, whose duty it is to attend to the improvement and interest of the time in which he lives, and not sacrifice any present comfort to a prospect of future perfection or happiness. If this definition be just, the philosopher naturally becomes a passive, the politician an active character. For though the desire of loudly proclaiming the

\* It is observable, that the satisfaction of the people was by no means equal to the discontent manifested by the privileged orders.

grand principles of liberty to extend them quickly, be one of the most powerful a benevolent man, of every description of mind, feels; he no sooner wishes to obey this impulse, than he finds himself placed between two rocks. — Truth commands him to say all; wisdom whispers to him to temporize. — A love of justice would lead him to bound over these cautious restraints of prudence; did not humanity, enlightened by a knowledge of human nature, make him dread to purchase the good of posterity too dearly, by the misery of the present generation.

The debates respecting the adoption of the declaration of rights became very spirited; and much heterogeneous matter was introduced, to lengthen the discussion, and heat the disputants, as the different articles were reviewed. The article respecting religion particularly arrested the attention of the assembly, and produced one of those tumultuous scenes, which have so often disgraced their deliberations. The intolerant sentiments uttered; and even the insertion of some amendments, which could not, without a contradiction in terms, find a place in a declaration of rights; proved, that the assembly

contained a majority, who were still governed by prejudices inimical to the full extent of that liberty, which is the unalienable right of each citizen, when it does not infringe on the equal enjoyment of the same portion by his neighbour \*. The most sensible part of the assembly asserted, that religion ought not to be mentioned, unless to declare, that the free exercise of it was a right in common with the free utterance of all opinions; which came under civil cognizance only when they assumed a form, namely, when they produced effects, that clashed with the laws; and even then it was the criminal action, not the passive opinion, which was proscribed by the penalty of punishment.

In this declaration are found the principles of political and civil liberty, introduced by a very solemn exordium:—Declaring ‘ that, as ‘ ignorance, forgetfulness, and contempt of the ‘ rights of men, are the sole causes of public ‘ grievances, and of the corruption of govern- ‘ ments, the assembly had resolved to re-esta-

\* See the article 10. ‘ No man ought to be molested on ‘ account of his opinions, not even on account of his religi- ‘ ous opinions, provided his avowal of them does not disturb ‘ the public order established by law.’

‘ blish, in a solemn declaration, the natural,  
 ‘ imprescriptible, and sacred rights of man ;  
 ‘ in order that this declaration, constantly  
 ‘ present to all the members of the social  
 ‘ body, may continually remind them of their  
 ‘ rights, and of their duties ; that, having it  
 ‘ in their power every moment to compare  
 ‘ the acts of the legislative and executive  
 ‘ authorities with the purpose of all political  
 ‘ institutions, they may the more respect  
 ‘ them ; and that the remonstrances of the  
 ‘ citizens, founded, in future, on simple and  
 ‘ incontestible principles, may always tend to  
 ‘ support the constitution, and to promote the  
 ‘ happiness of the whole community.’

Some temporary business, towards restoring  
 public tranquillity, and to give force to the  
 laws, insulted by the licentious conduct of  
 men inebriated merely by the expectation of  
 freedom, scented from a-far, being dispatched,  
 the formation of a constitution became  
 the standing labour of the assembly.

The first question naturally fell under this  
 head—what share of power ought the king  
 to be allowed to possess in the legislature ?  
 This was an important consideration for men,  
 who were all politicians in theory ; and many  
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of whom, having suffered under the absolute sway of the king's ministers, still felt the smart of their oppression, and a contempt for the power that authorized their dominion: whilst the blind zealots for the indefeasible rights of kings, though they were ashamed of the phrase, heated the imagination of their party, by the most inflated encomiums on the benefits arising from extensive kingly prerogatives, and vapid remarks on the british constitution, and other forms of government, obviously to display their erudition. The most noisy indecorous debates ensued, and the assembly seemed to meet rather to quarrel than deliberate. A division the most decided consequently took place; which, under different appellations, and professing different principles, has ever since continued to convulse the senate; if the legislative assembly, or the convention, deserve a name so dignified.

In discussing whether the royal sanction should be necessary to the validity of the acts of the legislative body, a variety of extraneous subjects, and others prematurely brought forward, so entangled the main question, as to render it difficult to give a clear and brief  
account

account of the debates; without lending a degree of reasonableness to them, that the manner of arguing, rudely personal, and loudly uncivil, seemed to destroy. For good lungs soon became more necessary in the assembly than sound arguments, to enable a speaker to silence the confusion of tongues; and make known his opinion to men, who were eager only to announce their own. Thus modest men had no chance to be heard, though persuasion dwelt on their lips: and even Mirabeau, with his commanding eloquence, and justness of thought, procured attention as much by the thundering emphasis, which he gave to his periods, as by his striking and forcible association of ideas.

As a nation, the french are certainly the most eloquent people in the world; their lively feelings giving the warmth of passion to every argument they attempt to support. And speaking fluently, vanity leads them continually to endeavour to utter their sentiments, without considering whether they have any thing to recommend them to notice, beside a happy choice of expressions. Only thinking then of speaking, they are the most impatient of hearers, coughing, hemming, and

scraping with their feet, most audibly, to beguile the time. Laying aside also, in the assembly, not only their national politeness, but the common restraints of civility; good manners seldom supply the place of reason, when they are angry. And as the slightest contradiction sets them on fire, three parts out of four of the time, which ought to have been employed in serious investigation, was consumed in idle vehemence. Whilst the applauses and hisses of the galleries increased the tumult; making the vain still more eager to mount the stage. Thus every thing contributing to excite the emotions, which lead men only to court admiration, the good of the people was too often sacrificed to the desire of pleasing them. And so completely was the tide of their affection for the king turned, that they seemed averse to his having any portion of legislative authority in the new constitution.

The duke de Liancourt divided the question respecting the share of power he was to enjoy as a part of the government. 1<sup>st</sup>. *Is the royal sanction indispensably necessary, to give the actual force of law to the decrees of the national assembly?* 2<sup>dly</sup>. *Ought the king to be*

*an integrant portion of the legislature?* In England the phrase *royal assent* has been adopted, as expressive of a positive act; but the french, rather choosing to distinguish the same act of power by a negative, fixed on the latin word *veto*, *I forbid*. And then it became a question, how far this *veto* ought to extend, supposing the prince to be invested with it.—Was it decisively to obstruct the enactment of a law passed by the legislative body? or only to suspend it, till an appeal could be made to the people by a new election?

The assembly in this instance seem to have acted with strange confusion of mind, or a total ignorance of the nature of a mixed government: for either the question was nugatory, or a king useless. Lally-Tolendal, Mounier, and Mirabeau, argued for the absolute *veto*.—‘Two powers,’ says Mirabeau, ‘are necessary to the existence of the body-politic, in the orderly discharge of its functions:—To will—and to act. By the first, society establishes the regulations which ought all to conspire to one end—the good of all:—By the second, these regulations are carried into execution; and public authority is exerted, to make society triumph

‘ over the obstacles, which might arise from  
 ‘ the opposite wills of individuals. In a great  
 ‘ nation, these two powers cannot be exer-  
 ‘ cised by the people : whence comes the  
 ‘ necessity of representatives, to exercise the  
 ‘ faculty of willing, or the legislative power ;  
 ‘ and also of another species of representation,  
 ‘ to exercise the faculty of acting ; or, the  
 ‘ executive power.’

He further insists, that ‘ the possession of  
 ‘ this power is the only way to render a king  
 ‘ useful, and to enable him to act as a check  
 ‘ on the legislative body : the majority of  
 ‘ which might tyrannize in the most despotic  
 ‘ manner, even in the senate, to the very  
 ‘ expulsion of the members, who dared to  
 ‘ thwart the measures they could not ap-  
 ‘ prove. For under a weak prince, a little  
 ‘ time and address alone would be necessary,  
 ‘ to establish legally the dominion of an army  
 ‘ of aristocrats ; who, making the royal autho-  
 ‘ rity only the passive instrument of their  
 ‘ will, might replunge the people into their  
 ‘ old state of debasement.

‘ The prince, therefore, being the perpetual  
 ‘ representative of the people, as the deputies  
 ‘ are

‘ are their representatives elected at certain  
 ‘ periods, is equally their safe-guard.

‘ No person exclaims against the *veto* of the  
 ‘ national assembly; which is, in reality,  
 ‘ only a right the people have confided in  
 ‘ their representatives, to oppose every pro-  
 ‘ position, that would tend to re-establish  
 ‘ ministerial despotism. Why then object to  
 ‘ the *veto* of the prince, which is but another  
 ‘ right, especially confided in him by the peo-  
 ‘ ple, because he and they are equally interested  
 ‘ to prevent the establishment of an aristo-  
 ‘ cracy?’

He proceeds to prove, ‘ that, whilst the  
 ‘ legislative body is respectable, the *veto* of  
 ‘ the king cannot do harm, though it is a  
 ‘ salutary check on their deliberations; and  
 ‘ granting, that the influence of the crown  
 ‘ has a tendency to increase, a permanent  
 ‘ assembly would be a sufficient counterpoise  
 ‘ for the royal negative. Let us,’ he con-  
 ‘ cludes, ‘ have an annual national assembly,  
 ‘ let ministers be made responsible; and the  
 ‘ royal sanction, without any specified restric-  
 ‘ tions, but, in fact, perfectly limited, will be  
 ‘ the palladium of national liberty, and the  
 most

‘ most precious exercise of the liberty of the  
‘ people.’

Having suffered by the abuse of absolute power, many of the deputies, afraid to entrust their constitutional monarchs with any, opposed the *veto* ; lest it should paralyse the operations of the national assembly, and bring back the old despotism of the cabinet. The discussion likewise extending beyond its walls, was as superficially and as warmly treated by those, who thought only of the old government, when they talked of framing a new one. And as the people were now led by hot-headed men, who found it the shortest way to popularity, to deliver exaggerated eulogiums on liberty, they began to look for a degree of freedom in their government, incompatible with the present state of their manners ; and of which they had no perfect idea. It is not then surprising, that it should become a mark of patriotism, to oppose the *veto* ; though Mirabeau never gave a stronger proof of his, than in supporting it ; convinced that it was the interest of the people he was espousing, whilst he risked their favour,

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The will of the public was, in reality, so decided, that they would scarcely allow the *veto* to be mentioned ; and the assembly, to steer a middle course, adopted the *suspensive veto* ; after considering some other important elements of the constitution, which seemed to them to be intimately connected with the royal prerogative.

Certainly a few of the most judicious deputies must have perceived the impolicy of the *suspensive veto* ; and they could only have agreed to fall into the measure, under an idea that the minds of the people not being completely ripe for a total change of government—from absolute despotism to complete republicanism, it was politically necessary still to maintain the shadow of monarchy. ‘ To assign,’ says one of the deputies, ‘ a term to the *veto*, is at last to force the king to execute a law of which he disapproves : and making him thus a blind and passive instrument, a secret war is fomented between him and the national assembly. It is, in short, to refuse him the *veto* ; though those who refuse it have not the courage openly to say, that France has no longer any need of a king.’

But,



But, from the commencement of the revolution, the misery of France has originated from the folly or art of men, who have spurred the people on too fast; tearing up prejudices by the root, which they should have permitted to die gradually away. Had they, for example, allowed the king to have enjoyed the share in the government promised by the *absolute veto*, they would have let him gently down from the altitude of unlimited sway, without making him feel the ground he lost in the descent. And this semblance of his former authority would have gratified him; or rather, breaking his fall, have induced him to submit patiently to other restraints, less humiliating to him, though more beneficial to the people. For it is evident from experience, and might have been foreseen, that the determination on this question was one grand source of the continual bickerings of the assembly with the court and ministry; who took care to make the king see, that he was set up as an idol, merely to receive the mock respect of the legislative body, till they were quite sure of the people.

Could it, indeed, have been ascertained, that Louis, or rather the queen, would have

tarnely born with such a diminution of power, this measure might have been deemed prudent ; because it was then morally certain, that the monarchy would have expired naturally with the dissolution of the king. But, when the pride and restless spirit of the queen were well known ; and that it was probable, from the whole tenour of her former life, she would contrive to have the ministry composed of the most dissolute and headstrong men ; it must appear the height of folly only to have left the king the power of perplexing their proceedings, after they had piqued his pride. And when, to give, as it were, efficiency to the conspiracies, which would naturally be formed by the courtiers, to recover the authority lost from them, we find they afterwards voted such an enormous sum to defray the civil list, as was sufficient to move like puppets hundreds of the corrupt french ; it must be confessed, that their absurdity and want of discernment appear not less reprehensible, than the subsequent conduct of the court flagitious.

The constitutional committee had given it as their opinion, that the contested *veto* did not concern the national assembly then existing ; which, being a constituting body, it was  
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their duty to see that the constitution was accepted, not functioned. This report carries with it an air of imbecility, which renders it almost incredible: for, if the assembly were determined to oblige the king to accept their decrees, they had better have told him so with becoming dignity, and made provision for his retiring from a post in which he was useless. Instead of this, he was in a manner shuffled off the throne; and treated with cruelty as well as contempt. It would have been at least ingenuous, and might be deemed magnanimous, had they allowed him to retire with a third of the stipend, which they afterwards voted him, when he continued to appear like a theatrical king, only to excite the pity of the vulgar, and to serve as a pretext for the despots of Europe to urge in justification of their interference. The liberating an imprisoned monarch was a plausible motive, though the real one was obviously to stop the progress of principles, which, once permitted to extend themselves, would ultimately sap the foundation of their tyranny, and overturn all the courts in Europe. Pretending then only to have in view the restoration of order in France, and to free an injured king, they

aimed at crushing the infant brood of liberty.

Similar sentiments must have occurred to every thinking person, who ever seriously reflected on the conduct of the germanic courts, which has actually destroyed the tranquillity of Europe for centuries past. War is the natural consequence of their wretched systems of government.—They are supported by military legions ; and without wars they could not have veteran soldiers. Their aggrandisement then, and half-lived pleasures, cast in a mould of ceremony, spring out of the miseries, and are fostered by the blood of human beings ; whom they have sacrificed with as much *sans froid*, sending them in herds to slaughter, as the hard-hearted savage romans viewed the horrid spectacle of their prize-fighters ; from the bare idea of which the mind turns, disgusted with the whole empire, and particularly with the government that dared to boast of it's heroism and respect for justice, when not only tolerating, but encouraging such enormities.

To the sympathizing princes of the continent, therefore, the king should have been given up : or, if it were necessary to humour

the prejudice of the nation, and still suffer frenchmen to have a most christian king, or *grand monarque*, to amuse them by devouring capons or partridges before them; it would have been but just, both in reason and policy, to have allowed him such a portion of liberty and power, as would have formed a consistent government. This would have prevented those clamours, which were sure to draw together an host of enemies, to impede the settlement of rational laws; flowing from a constitution, that would peaceably have undermined despotism, had it been allowed gradually to change the manners of the people. Though had this power been granted, it might have been productive perhaps of great inconveniences; as it is not likely, that a court accustomed to exercise unbridled sway would contentedly have co-operated with the legislature, when possessing only reasonable prerogatives.

Some apprehensions of this kind may have occurred to the assembly: though it rather appears, that they were either influenced by a ridiculous pride, not being willing to take the british constitution, so far as it respected the prerogative, for their model; or intimidated by the people, who, during the long debate, had

outrageously expressed their will, and even handed about a list of proscriptions, in which the *vetoists* were denounced as traitors worthy of death. Be this as it may, they determined on a half-way measure, that irritated the court without appeasing the people. Having previously decreed, that the national assembly should be permanent, that is always existing, instead of being dissolved at the close of every session, they resolved, that the *veto* of the king should suspend the enactment of a law only during two legislatures. ‘The wisdom of this ‘law,’ says Rabaud, ‘was universally acknowledged :’ though the folly of it rather merited universal reprobation.

From the manner indeed, in which the assembly was constituted, it was to be dreaded, that it’s members would not long sustain the dignity, with which they commenced the career of their business : because the party, that opposed with such bitterness the junction of the three orders, still opposing with rancorous heat, and wily stratagems, every measure proposed by the really patriotic members, were indirectly seconded by the insincere and wavering ; who, having no motive to govern their conduct, but the most detestable selfish-

selfishness, the offspring of vanity or avarice, always took the side best calculated to gratify the crude wishes of the multitude. And this unyoked multitude, now suddenly initiated into the science of civil and natural rights, all become consummate politicians, began to control the decisions of a divided assembly, rendered timid by intestine broils.

There were besides many circumstances, which tended to make any attempt to counteract this influence very difficult. At the meeting of the states-general, the whole court-party, with the greater proportion of both the nobility and clergy, were in opposition to the third estate: and though the number of the latter was equal to that of the other two orders, they had also to contend with the inveterate prejudices of ages. The court had thought only of devising means to crush them; and had the soldiery acted with the blind zeal common to men of this profession, it would of itself have been sufficient to have completely disconcerted their views. This conduct of the cabinet, and the discovery of the atrocious conspiracy, which had been formed against the people and their idolized representatives, provoking the resentment and

vengeance of the nation, palsied all authority, and rendered the laws that had emanated from it contemptible. To oppose this torrent of opinions, like an impetuous current, that after heavy rains, defying all resistance, bears away on it's raging bosom every obstacle, required the most enlightened prudence and determined resolution.

So much wisdom and firmness seldom fall to the lot of any country : and it could scarcely have been expected from the depraved and volatile french ; who proudly, or ignorantly, determining to follow no political track, seem to have fixed on a system proper only for a people in the highest stage of civilization :—a system of itself calculated to disorganize the government, and throw embarrassments into all it's operations. This was an error so gross, as to demand the severest animadversions. For this political plan, ever considered as utopian by all men who had not traced the progress of reason, or calculated the degree of perfectibility the human faculties are capable of attaining, was, it might be presumed, the most improper for the degenerate society of France. The exertions of the very admirers of the revolution were, likewise, far from being



ing permanent ; and they could hardly have been expected to possess sufficient virtue to support a government, the duration of which they at least feared would be short. The men termed experienced believed it physically impossible ; and no arguments were cogent enough to convince them of the contrary : so that, they leaving the task to mock patriots and enthusiasts, a fresh odium has been thrown on principles, which, notwithstanding are gaining ground. Things must be left to their natural course ; and the accelerating progress of truth promises to demonstrate, what no arguments have hitherto been able to prove,

The foundation of liberty was laid in the declaration of rights ; the first three articles of which contain the great principles of natural, political, and civil liberty.—First, that men are born, and always continue, free, and equal in respect to their rights :—civil distinctions, therefore, can be founded only on public utility. Secondly, the end of all political associations is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man : which rights are—liberty, property, security, and resistance of oppression. Thirdly, the nation is the  
source

source of all sovereignty: no body of men, no individual, can then be entitled to any authority, which is not derived from it. The first article, establishing the equality of man, strikes at the root of all useless distinctions:—the second, securing his rights against oppression, maintains his dignity:—and the third, acknowledging the sovereignty of the nation, confirms the authority of the people.—These are the essential points of a good government: and it is only necessary, when these points are ascertained by a nation, and solemnly ratified in the hearts of its citizens, to take care, in the formation of a political system, to provide against the abuse of the executive part; whilst equal caution should be observed, not to destroy its efficiency, as on that depend its justice, vigour, and promptitude. The other articles are explanatory of the nature and intent of these rights, and ought to have had more attention paid to them, when the structure was raised, to which they served as a basis.

Whilst defining the authority of the king, or rather determining, that he should have no authority, unless the option of disturbing the legislation deserve that name, they de-  
bated

bated the question of two chambers with equal inconsideration, and all the puerile self-sufficiency of ignorance. The opposers of two chambers, without allowing, that there was any political wisdom in appointing one house of representatives to reconsider the resolves of the other, ridiculed the idea of a balance of power, and instanced the abuses of the english government to give force to their objections. At the same time fearing, that the nobles of the court would contend for an hereditary senate, similar to the british house of peers ; or, at least, for a seat during life, paramount to the representatives who they determined should be elected every two years ; they sought to bring the business to a speedy issue. The very division of the nobility served to hasten it, and strengthened the arguments of the popular members ; who finding that they could rely on the concurrence of the parish priests, whose wishes in favour of the unity of the assembly were quickly betrayed by the opinions of their leading orators, demanded the decision of a question, that had been agitated in the most tumultuous manner.

Mirabeau wished to prove, that the decision of the question respecting the permanency of  
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the assembly had prejudged that of the two chambers ; and the plan of a senate, proposed by the constitutional committee, only excited fresh apprehensions, that the ancient hydra would again rear it's head. They represented this senate as the cradle of a new aristocracy ; as a dangerous counterpoize to popular violence, because it would still foster the prejudices, which produced inequalities amongst men, and give continual play to the overbearing passions, that had hitherto degraded mankind. And to show previously their entire disinterestedness, as well as fear of allowing the exercise of power to become familiar, much less necessary to any members of the community, they unanimously voted, that for each legislature, the name given to the meeting of the representatives, a total change of the deputies should take place.

The very nobility, in fact, were far from being united in support of two chambers. The order was a numerous one : and to establish an equality of privileges, it was necessary, that they should all concur to elect the upper chamber, as the representatives of the whole body ; whilst the nobles of the court, and of the ancient houses, secretly indulged the hope  
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of establishing a peerage ; which would not only raise them above the commons, but keep at a proper distance the upstart nobility, with whom they had heretofore impatiently jostled. There was even another cause of jealousy : for it was presumed, that the forty-seven nobles, who first joined the assembly, would now be rewarded. In short, the idle fears and more contemptible vanity of the different parties now operated so much in favour of an indivisible senate, that the question was decided by a great majority, to the intire satisfaction of the public, who were almost as eager for one chamber, as averse to the *veto*.

The deputies, who opposed the upper chamber to promote the good of society, did it from a belief, that it would be the asylum of a new aristocracy ; and from a total ignorance, or obscurity of ideas, respecting it's utility. Whilst the oppressions of the feudal system being still present to the minds of the people, they considered a division of the legislative body as inconsistent with the freedom and equality they were taught to expect as the prime blessings of a new constitution. The very mention of *two chambers* carried them back to the old dispute, respecting the  
negative

negative of the different orders ; and seemed to subvert the revolution. Such fears, degenerating into weakness, can only be accounted for by recollecting the many cruel thraldoms, from which they had so recently escaped. Besides, the remembrance of their former servitude, and the resentment excited by the late struggle to prove they were men, created in their enthusiastic imaginations such a multitude of horrors, and fantastic images of new dangers, as did not allow them to exercise the full powers of their reason. So that to convince them of the propriety of a new institution, and heat the supporters of it, nothing more was necessary, than to show, that it was the very reverse of those maintained by the partizans of the old government.

The wisdom of giving to the executive part of a government an absolute *veto* might very justly have been questioned ; as it seems to be giving a power to one man to counteract the will of a whole people—an absurdity too gross to merit refutation. Still, whilst crowns are a necessary bauble to please the multitude, it is also necessary, that their dignity should be supported, in order to prevent an overweening aristocracy from concentrating  
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all authority in themselves. This seems to have been expedient, likewise, as long as the manners of barbarians remained : as savages are naturally pleased with glass and beads, in proportion as they afford a striking contrast to the rude materials of their own fabrication.

In the progressive influence of knowledge on manners, both dress and governments appear to be acquiring simplicity ; it may therefore be inferred, that, as the people attain dignity of character, their amusements will flow from a more rational source than the pageantry of kings, or the view of the fopperies exhibited at courts. If these have been supported hitherto by childish ignorance, they seem to be losing their influence, as the understanding of the world approaches to manhood : for, as they grow wiser, the people will look for the solid advantages of society ; and watching with sufficient vigilance their own interest, the *veto* of the executive branch of the government would become perfectly useless ; though in the hands of an unprincipled, bold chief magistrate, it might prove a dangerous instrument. In forming a representative plan of government it appears necessary then to take care only, that it be so constructed, as to prevent  
hasty

hasty decisions ; or the carrying into laws dangerous, impolitic measures, which have been urged by popular declaimers, who are too apt to gain an ascendancy in a numerous assembly. Until the principles of governments become simplified, and a knowledge of them be disseminated, it is to be feared, that popular assemblies will often be influenced by the fascinating charms of eloquence : and as it is possible for a man to be eloquent without being either wise or virtuous, it is but a common precaution of prudence in the framers of a constitution, to provide some check to the evil.

Besides, it is very probable, in the same state of reason, that a faction may arise, which will control the assembly ; and, acting contrary to the dictates of wisdom, throw the state into the most dangerous convulsions of anarchy : consequently, it ought to form a primary object with a constituting assembly, to prevent, by some salutary contrivance, the mischief flowing from such sources. The obvious preventative is a second chamber, or senate, which would not, it is most likely, be under the influence of the same faction ; and it is at least certain, that it's decisions would  
not



not be directed by the same orators. The advantage would be more certain if business were not conducted in the two chambers in a similar manner. Thus by making the most numerous assembly the most active, the other would have more time to weigh the probable consequence of any act or decree, which would prevent those inconveniences; or, at least, many of them, the consequence of haste or faction.

This system in an old government is susceptible of improvement. The minds of young men generally having more fire, activity, and invention, it would be politically wise to restrict the age of the senators to thirty-five, or forty years; at which period of life they most likely would have gone through a certain routine of business; and become more sage, and steady, they would be better calculated to decide respecting the policy, or wisdom of the acts of the chamber of representatives.

It is true France was in such a state at the time of the revolution, that a like improvement could not have been instantly carried into execution, because the aristocratical influence was justly to be dreaded. The constituting assembly then should have remained indivisi-

ble ; and as the members became in some measure acquainted with legislative business, they would have prepared senators for the upper chamber. All the future legislatures being divided into two chambers, a house of representatives, and a senate, the members of the national assembly might have been permitted to be elected for the senate, though they should not have attained the age prescribed ; for the restriction needed not to have taken place until the government found it's level, and even then, the members of the preceding house of representatives might have been allowed to be returned for the senate.

It has been a common remark of moralists, that we are the least acquainted with our own characters. This has been literally the case with the french : for certainly no people stand in such great need of a check ; and, totally destitute of experience in political science, it must have been clear to all men of sound understanding, that some such plan alone would have enabled them to avoid many fatal errors.

The first efforts of the national assembly were truly magnanimous ; but the character of the men was too light, to maintain the  
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same heroism, when not warmed by passion—too giddy, to support with grave dignity the splendour of sudden glory. Their vanity was also unbounded; and their false estimate of disinterestedness of conduct, whilst they betrayed puerility of sentiment, was not among the least of the misfortunes, which have befallen that unhappy country. Their hearts had been too long sophisticated, to suggest the best mode of communicating freedom to millions; and their heads were still less calculated to lay down a practicable plan of government, adapted to the state of knowledge of the age. So much so, that they seem to have selected from books only the regulations proper for a period of perfect civilization.

The revolutions of states ought to be gradual; for during violent or material changes it is not so much the wisdom of measures, as the popularity they acquire by being adapted to the foibles of the great body of the community, which gives them success.—Men are most easily led away by the ingenious arguments, that dwell on the equality of man, and these are always employed by the different leaders of popular governments.

— Whilst the most ingenious theorists, or desperate partizans of the people, take advantage of this infirmity of our nature, the consequences must sometimes prove destructive to society, if they do not end in the most dreadful anarchy. For when the members of a state are not directed by practical knowledge, every one produces a plan of polity, till the confusion becomes general, and the nation plunges into wretchedness, pursuing the schemes of those philosophers of genius who, advancing before their age, have sketched the model of a perfect system of government. Thus it happened in France, that Hume's idea of a perfect commonwealth, the adoption of which would be eligible only when civilization has arrived at a much greater degree of perfection, and knowledge is more generally diffused than at the present period, was nevertheless chosen as the model of their new government, with a few exceptions, by the constituent assembly: which choice doubtless proceeded from the members not having had an opportunity to acquire a knowledge of practical liberty. Some of the members, it is true, alluded to the improvements made  
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by the americans on the plan of the english constitution ; but the great majority, despising experience, were for forming, at once, a system much more perfect. And this self-sufficiency has produced those dreadful outrages, and attacks, made by the anarchists of that country, on personal liberty, property, and whatever else society holds sacred.

These melancholy considerations seem to me to afford irrefragable arguments, to prove that it is necessary for all governments, which have for their object the happiness of the people, to make the power of altering peaceably a fundamental principle of their constitution.

Still, if the attempt to carry prematurely into execution the sublime theory, which has occupied some of the best heads to form, have afforded an opportunity to superficial politicians, to condemn it as absurd and chimerical, because it has not been attended with immediate success, the advocates for the extension of truth and reason ought not to despair. For when we contemplate the slow improvement, that has been made in the science of government ; and, that even the system of the british constitution was considered, by some of the most enlightened ancients, as the sub-

limest theory the human mind was able to conceive, though not reducible to practice, they should not relax in their endeavours to bring to maturity a polity more simple—which promises more equal freedom, and general happiness to mankind.

## CHAPTER II.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE VETO. THE WOMEN OFFER UP THEIR ORNAMENTS TO THE PUBLIC. DEBATE WHETHER THE SPANISH BRANCH OF THE BOURBONS COULD REIGN IN FRANCE. CONDUCT OF THE KING RESPECTING THE DECREES OF THE FOURTH OF AUGUST. VANITY OF THE FRENCH. DEBATES ON QUARTERING A THOUSAND REGULARS AT VERSAILLES. INDIVIDUALS OFFER THEIR JEWELS AND PLATE TO MAKE UP THE DEFICIENCY OF THE LOAN. THE KING SENDS HIS RICH SERVICE OF PLATE TO THE MINT, NÉCKER'S PROPOSAL FOR EVERY CITIZEN TO GIVE UP A FOURTH OF HIS INCOME. SPEECH OF MIRABEAU ON IT. HIS ADDRESS TO THE NATION.

AFTER the national assembly had determined, that the legislative body should consist of one house, to be renewed every two years, they appear to have had some suspicion of the impolicy of the decree; but not allowing themselves time to comprehend the use of a senate taken from the body of the people, they attempted to silence the fears, some moderate men entertained, of the bad consequences which might arise from the decisions of an impetuous assembly without a check, by assuring them, that the delay, the *veto*

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would

would occasion, was a sufficient counterpoise. They represented the king's *veto* as the negative archetype of the national will; adding, that it would be the duty of the sovereign to examine with vigilance the justice or wisdom of their decrees; and by the exertion of his power prevent the hasty establishment of any laws inimical to the public good. So easy is it for men to frame arguments, to cover the homely features of their own folly—so dangerous is it to follow a refined theory, however feasible it may appear, when the happiness of an empire depends on it's success; and so inconsiderately did the national assembly act in this great business, that they did not wait even to determine the precise meaning of the word *sanction*.

If the king then represented the negative will of the nation, which the assembly pretended to say he did; and if he possessed the supreme wisdom and moderation necessary to guaranty that will, which supposing he did not, it was a folly too gross to require any comment; in the name of common sense—why was his *veto suspensive*?

The truth is obvious,—the assembly had not sufficient courage to take a decided part,



—They knew, that the king and court could not be depended upon ; yet they had not the magnanimity to give them up altogether. They justly dreaded the depravity and influence of the nobles ; but they had not the sagacity to model the government in such a manner, as would have defeated their future conspiracies, and rendered their power nugatory ; though they had the example of the Thirteen States of America before them, from which they had drawn what little practical knowledge of liberty they possessed.—But, no ; the regeneration of France must lead to the regeneration of the whole globe. The political system of frenchmen must serve as a model for all the free states in the universe !—*Vive la liberté* was the only cry—and *la bagatelle* entered into every debate—whilst the whole nation, wild with joy, was hailing the commencement of the golden age.

The women too, not to be outdone by the roman dames, came forward, during this discussion, to sacrifice their ornaments for the good of their country. And this fresh example of public spirit was also given by the third estate ; for they were the wives and daughters of artizans, who first renounced  
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their female pride—or rather made one kind of vanity take place of another. However, the offering was made with theatrical grace; and the lively applauses of the assembly were reiterated with great gallantry.

Another interruption had likewise occurred, of a more serious nature.—For after they had decreed, with an unanimous voice—That *the person of the king is sacred and inviolable*, that *the throne is indivisible*; that *the crown is hereditary, in the males of the reigning family, according to the order of primogeniture, to the perpetual exclusion of females*, a deputy proposed, that, before going any further, they should decide  
 ‘ whether the branch reigning in Spain could  
 ‘ reign in France, though it had renounced  
 ‘ the crown of the latter kingdom by the most  
 ‘ authentic treaties.’

Several of the most respectable members represented, that this was a delicate business, with which it was impolitic to meddle at present, and as unnecessary as imprudent. Mirabeau was of this opinion; but when he found, that much time was likely to be consumed in idle debates, and contemptible vehemence, he endeavoured to cut the matter short by moving a new question—namely, ‘ that  
 ‘ no

‘ no one could reign in France, who was not  
‘ born in the kingdom.’

But nothing could prevent the agitation of the same subject for three days ; prolonged either by the fears of one party, or the desire of another to embroil the assembly, and retard the formation of a constitution. Mirabeau made several severe, but just remarks, on the character of Louis XIV, whose ambition had produced the dispute ; and reprobated with dignity, their manner of treating a people, as if they were the property of a chief. Should any difficulty arise, in future, he maintained, that the nation would then be competent to judge of it ; and had an equal right to determine the succession, as to choose a new system of government.

The assembly, though generally so inattentive to the suggestions of sound policy, despising moderation, became now beyond measure scrupulous. Some deputies represented the danger of alienating to the english the commerce of Spain, by disgusting it's court ; and others anticipated the intestine troubles, which a doubt respecting the unchangeable descent of the crown might produce. At last they resolved to add to the declaration, respecting the monarchy, that  
they

they did not mean to make the decree, *by any means prejudice the effect of renunciations.*

Whilst they were settling these things in the assembly, the refractory nobles and clergy were intriguing to prevent the king from giving his assent to the promulgation of the decrees of the 4th of august. The royal *sanction* had been demanded before the import of the word was scanned; and the court taking advantage of this ambiguity, made the king pretend he misunderstood the demand; and imagined that they merely asked for his opinion, and not to know his will. Instead then of a simple monosyllable, he replied by a *memoire*. He approved, in general, of the spirit of these determinations; but entered into an investigation, more or less copious, of every article. He weighed the advantages and inconveniences; and pointed out precautions and modifications, which appeared to him necessary to realize the former and prevent the latter. He objected particularly to the abolition of some rents; which, though substitutes for personal service, were now actual property; he suggested some difficulty that might attend the abolition of tithes; and hinted, that the german princes, who had  
possessions

possessions in Alsace, secured to them by treaty, might resent the infringement. In answer to the last objection, a member observed, that the inhabitants of this province, who had long been sinking under the weight of these privileges, daily augmented by the connivance of ministers, had inserted an article in their instructions expressly demanding the abolition of this destructive system ; which reduced them to despair, and forced them continually to emigrate. Several of the deputies wished to have the king's reply referred to the examination of a committee ; yet, a great majority insisting, that the decrees of the 4th of august were not new laws, to be carried into force by the executive power, but abuses which it was absolutely necessary to clear away before the formation of the constitution, demanded their immediate promulgation. Accordingly they resolved, that the president should wait on the king and request him immediately to order the promulgation of the decrees ; assuring him at the same time, that the national assembly, when considering each article separately, would pay the most scrupulous attention to the observations communicated by his majesty.

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This imperative petition had the desired effect, and the king acceded, the 20th of september, to their will, sanctioning decrees he did not approve.

This was the first glaring instance of the constituting assembly acting contrary to it's pretensions; and the king, long in the habit of dissembling, always yielding to the pressure of remonstrances, no matter from what quarter they came, with criminal insincerity acknowledging himself a cipher, laid the foundation of his own insignificance, by ordering the promulgation of decrees, which he believed were incompatible with justice, and might involve the french monarchy in disagreeable disputes with foreign princes, when peace was particularly necessary to calm it's internal convulsions.

If a chief magistrate be of any consequence to a state, his wisdom ought to appear in the dignity and firmness of his actions.—But, if he be considered as the fountain of justice and honour, and do not possess the abilities and magnanimity of a common man, in what a wretched light must he be viewed by the eyes of discernment and common sense?—And, if the framers of a constitution create a

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power

power that must continually act at variance with itself, they not only undermine the pillars of their own fabric, but they insert the scion of a disease the most destructive to truth and morals.

After complying with this compulsory request, Louis, who, finding that he was left without any share of power, seems to have thought very little of his *suspensive veto*, determined to play a part that would give an air of sincerity to his present conduct, whilst his object was secretly to favour the efforts of the counter-revolutionists; and if possible effect his own escape.—But, in the mean time, he endeavoured to make such use of it as might prevent the total derangement of the old system, without unveiling his secret views, and intentions. It is difficult to determine which was the most reprehensible, the folly of the assembly, or the duplicity of the king. If Louis were without character, and controlled by a court without virtue, it amounted to a demonstration, that every insidious mean would be employed by the courtiers to reinstate the old government; and recover, if possible, their former splendour and voluptuous ease. For, though they were dispersed, it was notorious

terious to all France, nay, to all Europe, that a constant correspondence was kept up between the different parties, and their projects concerted by one of the most intriguing of disappointed men \*. It was obvious, therefore, to Mirabeau, that the king ought to be gained over to the side of the people ; and made to consider himself as their benefactor, in order to detach him from the cabal. But in this respect he was unfortunately over-ruled. This mixture of magnanimity, and timidity, of wisdom and headstrong folly, displayed by the assembly, appears, at the first view, to involve such a contradiction, that every person unacquainted with the french character would be ready to call in question the truth of those undeniable facts, which crowd on the heels of each other during the progress of the great events, that formed the revolution. A superficial glance over the circumstances, will not enable us to account for an inconsistency, which borders on improbability.—We must, on the contrary, ever keep in our thoughts, that, whilst they were directed in their political plans, by a wild, half comprehended theory, their

\* Calonne.



sentiments were still governed by the old chivalrous sense of honour, which diffusing a degree of romantic heroism into all their actions, a false magnanimity would not permit them to question the veracity of a man, on whom they believed they were conferring favours ; and for whom they certainly made great allowance, if they did not forgive him for countenancing plots, which tended to undermine their favourite system.

It is, perhaps, the characteristic of vanity, to become enamoured with ideas, in proportion as they were remote from it's conception, until brought to the mind by causes so natural, as to induce it to believe, that they are the happy and spontaneous flow of it's own prolific brain. Their splendour then eclipsing his judgment, the man is hurried on by enthusiasm and self-sufficiency, like a ship at sea, without ballast or helm, by every breath of wind : and, to carry the comparison still further, should a tempest chance to rise in the state, he is swallowed up in the whirlpools of confusion, into the very midst of which his conceit has plunged him ; as the vessel, that was not prepared to stem the

violence of a hurricane, is buried in the raging surge.

The occasions of remarking, that frenchmen are the vainest men living, often occur, and here it must be insisted on ; for no sooner had they taken possession of certain philosophical truths, persuading themselves, that the world was indebted to them for the discovery, than they seem to have overlooked every other consideration, but their adoption. Much evil has been the consequence ; yet France is certainly highly indebted to the national assembly for establishing many constitutional principles of liberty, which must greatly accelerate the improvement of the public mind, and ultimately produce the perfect government, that they vainly endeavoured to construct immediately with such fatal precipitation.

The consideration of several other articles of the constitution was continually interrupted, and not more by the variety of business, which came under the cognizance of the assembly, than by the want of a proper arrangement of them. Much time was lost in disputing about the choice of subjects of deliberation ; and the order in which they  
ought

ought to proceed. The business of the day was perpetually obliged to give place to episodic scenes; and men, who came prepared to discuss one question, being obliged to turn to another, lost in some measure the benefit of reflection, and the energy, so different from the enthusiasm of the moment, with which a man supports a well digested opinion.

Two or three slight debates had arisen on the subject of quartering a thousand men, of the regular troops, at Versailles. The commandant of the guards had requested permission of the municipality; pointing out the necessity for the security of the town, the national assembly, and the person of the king. The necessity did not appear so obvious to the public, and, in fact, the demand seemed calculated to provoke the tumults, against which they were so officiously guarding. Mirabeau also observed, ‘ that the  
 ‘ executive power had undoubtedly a right to  
 ‘ augment the military force, in any particular  
 ‘ place, when private information, or urgent  
 ‘ circumstances, appeared to require it; and  
 ‘ that the municipality had, likewise, a right  
 ‘ to demand the troops they judged necessary;

‘ yet he could not help thinking it singular,  
 ‘ that the ministers should have entrusted the  
 ‘ municipality with a secret, which they did  
 ‘ not communicate to the assembly, who  
 ‘ might be supposed at least as anxious to take  
 ‘ every precaution for the safety of the town  
 ‘ and the king’s person.’ To these pertinent  
 remarks no attention was paid; and a letter  
 from the mayor of Paris, informing the  
 assembly, that a great number of the districts  
 of the metropolis had remonstrated against the  
 introduction of regular troops into Versailles,  
 to awe the national guards, was equally  
 neglected; whilst a letter to the president, in  
 the name of the king, informing him, that  
 he had taken the different measures necessary  
 to prevent any disturbances in the place where  
 the national assembly were sitting, was thrown  
 aside without any comment.

The loan still failing, several individuals  
 made magnificent presents; sacrificing their  
 jewels and plate, to relieve the wants of their  
 country. And the king sent his rich service  
 to the mint, in spite of the remonstrances of  
 the assembly.—The disinterestedness of this  
 action, it is absurd to talk of benevolence,  
 may fairly be doubted; because, had he  
 escaped,

escaped, and the escape was then in contemplation, it would have been confiscated; whilst the voluntary offer was a popular step, which might serve for a little time to cover this design, and turn the attention of the public from the subject of the reinforcement of the guards to the patriotism of the king.

These donations, which scarcely afforded a temporary supply, rather amused than relieved the nation; though they suggested a new plan to the minister. Necker, therefore, incapable of forming any great design for the good of the nation, yet calculating on the general enthusiasm, which pervaded all descriptions and ranks of people, laid before the assembly the ruinous state of the finances, proposing at the same time, as the only mode of remedying the evil, to require of the citizens a contribution of one-fourth of their income. The assembly was startled by this proposal, but Mirabeau, believing that the people would now grant whatever their representatives required, prevailed on the assembly, by a lively representation of the perilous state of the kingdom, to adopt the only plan of salvation which had yet been suggested—insisting, that this was the only expedient to

avoid an infamous national bankruptcy. 'Two centuries of depredations and pillage,' he exclaimed, 'have hollowed out an immense gulph, in which the kingdom will soon be swallowed. It is necessary to fill up this frightful abyfs. Agreed!—Choose out the rich, that the sacrifice may fall on the fewer citizens; but, determine quickly! There are two thousand notables, who have sufficient property to restore order to your finances, and peace and prosperity to the kingdom. Strike; immolate without pity these victims!—precipitate them into the abyfs—it is going to close on them—ye draw back, with horror—ye men! pusillanimous and inconsistent!—and see ye not in decreeing a bankruptcy, or, which is still more contemptible, rendering it inevitable, ye are sullied by an act a thousand times more criminal?'

But it is impossible to do justice to this burst of eloquence, in a translation; besides, the most energetic appeals to the passions always lose half their dignity, or, perhaps, appear to want the support of reason, when they are coolly perused.—Nothing produces conviction like passion—it seems the ray from  
heaven,

heaven, that enlightens as it warms.—Yet the effect once over, something like a fear of having been betrayed into folly clings to the mind it has most strongly influenced; and an obscure sense of shame lowers the spirits that were wound up too high.

From the whole tenour of this speech it is clear, that Mirabeau was in earnest; and that he had fired his imagination, by considering this plan as an act of heroism, that would ennoble the revolution, and reflect lasting honour on the national assembly. In this extemporary flow of eloquence, probably the most simple and noble of modern times, mixed none of the rhetoric which frequently entered into his studied compositions; for his periods were often artfully formed;—but it was the art of a man of genius. He proposed to the assembly to address their constituents on this occasion; and he was accordingly requested to prepare an address for their consideration.

His address to the nation is, indeed, a master-piece; yet, being written to persuade, and not spoken to carry a point immediately, and overwhelm opposition, there is more reasoning in it; and more artful, though less

forcible, appeals to the passions. And, though this expedient appears to be the most wild that folly could have blundered upon, the arguments ought to be preserved with which it was glossed over.

To expect a man to give the fourth of what he lived on ; and that in the course of fifteen months, leaving it to him to make the estimate, was expecting that from virtue, which could only have been produced by enthusiasm. All the ancient acts of heroism were excited by the spur of present danger ; and of this kind of virtue the french were equally capable ; yet, though the plan afforded them an opportunity to give a splendid proof of their patriotism, it by no means answered ; because, it being the effect rather of temper than of principle, selfishness had time to find a plausible pretext to elude it ; and vanity is seldom willing to hide it's good works in the common measure.

As the removing the national assembly to Paris forms an epocha in the history of the revolution, it seems proper to close this chapter with Mirabeau's address.

‘ The deputies of the national assembly  
 ‘ suspend a while their labours to lay before  
 ‘ their



‘ their constituents the wants of the state, and  
 ‘ to call upon their patriotism to second the  
 ‘ measures, which a country in danger de-  
 ‘ mands.

‘ It were betraying you to dissemble. Two  
 ‘ ways are open—the nation may stride for-  
 ‘ ward to the most glorious pre-eminence, or  
 ‘ fall head-long into a gulph of misfortune.

‘ A great revolution, the very plan of  
 ‘ which some months ago would have ap-  
 ‘ peared chimerical, has taken place amongst  
 ‘ us. Accelerated by unforeseen circumstances,  
 ‘ the momentum has suddenly overthrown  
 ‘ our ancient institutions. Without allowing  
 ‘ us time to prop what must be preserved, or  
 ‘ to replace what ought to be destroyed, it  
 ‘ has at once surrounded us with ruins.

‘ Our efforts to support the government are  
 ‘ fruitless, a fatal numbness cramps all it’s  
 ‘ powers. The public revenue is no more ;  
 ‘ and credit cannot gain strength at a moment,  
 ‘ when our fears equal our hopes.—This spring  
 ‘ of social power unbent, has weakened the  
 ‘ whole machine ; men and things, resolu-  
 ‘ tion, courage, and even virtue itself, have  
 ‘ lost their tension. If your concurrence do  
 ‘ not speedily restore life and motion to the  
 body-

‘ body-politic, the grandest revolutions, pe-  
 ‘ rising with the hopes it generated, will  
 ‘ mingle again in the chaos, whence noble  
 ‘ exertions have drawn it ; and they, who  
 ‘ shall still preserve an unconquerable love of  
 ‘ liberty, will refuse to unworthy citizens  
 ‘ the disgraceful consolation of resuming their  
 ‘ fetters.

‘ Since your deputies have buried all their  
 ‘ rivalry, all their contending interests, in a  
 ‘ just and necessary union, the national assem-  
 ‘ bly has laboured to establish equal laws for  
 ‘ the common safety. It has repaired great  
 ‘ errors, and broken the links of countless  
 ‘ thraldoms, which degraded human nature :  
 ‘ it has kindled the flame of joy and hope in  
 ‘ the bosoms of the people, the creditors of  
 ‘ earth and nature, whose dignity has been  
 ‘ so long tarnished, whose hearts have been  
 ‘ so long discouraged ; it has restored the  
 ‘ long-obscur’d equality of frenchmen, estab-  
 ‘ lished their common right to serve the state,  
 ‘ to enjoy it’s protection, to merit it’s re-  
 ‘ wards : in short, conformably to your in-  
 ‘ structions, it is gradually erecting, on the  
 ‘ immutable basis of the imprescriptible rights  
 ‘ of man, a constitution mild as nature, last-  
 ‘ ing

' ing as justice, and the imperfections of which,  
 ' the consequence of the inexperience of it's  
 ' authors, will easily be repaired. We have  
 ' had to contend with the inveterate prejudices  
 ' of ages, whilst harassed by the thousand un-  
 ' certainties which accompany great changes.  
 ' Our successors will have the beaten track of  
 ' experience before them ; we have had only  
 ' the compass of theory to guide us through  
 ' the pathless desert. They may labour peace-  
 ' ably ; though we have had to bear up against  
 ' storms. They will know their rights, and  
 ' the limits of their power : we have had to  
 ' recover the one, and to fix the other. They  
 ' will consolidate our work—they will surpass  
 ' us—What a recompence ! Who shall dare,  
 ' mean while, to assign limits to the grandeur  
 ' of France ? Who is not elevated by hope ?  
 ' Who does not felicitate himself on being a  
 ' citizen of it's empire ?

' Such, however, is the crisis of the fi-  
 ' nances, that the state is threatened with dis-  
 ' solution before this grand order of things can  
 ' find it's centre. The cessation of the reve-  
 ' nue has banished specie. A thousand cir-  
 ' cumstances hasten it's exportation. The  
 ' sources of credit are exhausted ; and the  
 ' wheels

' wheels of government are almost at a stand.  
 ' If patriotism then step not forward to the  
 ' succour of government, our armies, our  
 ' fleets, our subsistence, our arts, our trade,  
 ' our agriculture, our national debt, our coun-  
 ' try itself, will be hurried towards that cata-  
 ' trophe, when she will receive laws only from  
 ' disorder and anarchy—Liberty would have  
 ' glanced on our sight, only to disappear for  
 ' ever, only to leave behind the bitter con-  
 ' sciousness, that we did not merit the posses-  
 ' sion. And to our shame, in the eyes of the  
 ' universe, the evil could be attributed solely  
 ' to ourselves. With a soil so fertile, industry  
 ' so productive, a commerce so flourishing,  
 ' and such means of prosperity—what is this  
 ' embarrassment of our finances? Our wants  
 ' amount not to the expence of a summer's  
 ' campaign—and our liberty, is it not worth  
 ' more than those senseless struggles, when  
 ' even victory has proved ruinous?

' The present difficulty overcome, far from  
 ' burdening the people, it will be easy to  
 ' meliorate their condition. Reductions, which  
 ' need not annihilate luxury; reforms, which  
 ' will reduce none to indigence; a commutation  
 ' of the oppressive taxes, an equal assessment  
 ' of

‘ of the impost, together with the equilibrium  
 ‘ which must be restored between our revenue  
 ‘ and our expenditure ; an order that must be  
 ‘ rendered permanent by our vigilant superin-  
 ‘ tendency.—These are the scattered objects of  
 ‘ your consolatory perspective.—They are  
 ‘ not the unsubstantial coinage of fancy ; but  
 ‘ real, palpable forms—hopes capable of  
 ‘ proof, things subordinate to calculation.

‘ But our actual wants—the paralysis of our  
 ‘ public strength, the hundred and sixty extra  
 ‘ millions necessary for this year, and the  
 ‘ next—What can be done ? The prime mi-  
 ‘ nister has proposed as the great lever of the  
 ‘ effort, which is to decide the kingdom’s fate,  
 ‘ a contribution proportional to the income of  
 ‘ each citizen.

‘ Between the necessity of providing in-  
 ‘ stantly for the exigencies of the public, and  
 ‘ the impossibility of investigating so speedily  
 ‘ the plan before us ; fearing to enter into a  
 ‘ labyrinth of calculations, and seeing nothing  
 ‘ contrary to our duty in the minister’s propo-  
 ‘ sal, we have obeyed the dictates of our con-  
 ‘ sciences, presuming they would be yours.  
 ‘ The attachment of the nation to the author  
 ‘ of the plan, appeared to us a pledge of it’s  
 ‘ success ;

‘ success ; and we confided in his long experience, rather than trust to the guidance of our speculative opinions.

‘ To the conscience of every citizen is left the valuation of his income : thus the effect of the measure depends on your own patriotism. When the nation is bursting from the nothingness of servitude to the creation of liberty—when policy is about to concur with nature in unfolding the inconceivable grandeur of her future destiny—shall vile passions oppose her greatness ? interest stay her flight ? and the salvation of the state weigh less than a personal contribution ?

‘ No ; such madness is not in nature ; the passions even do not listen to such treacherous reckonings. If the revolution, which has given us a country, cannot rouse some frenchmen out of the torpor of indifference, at least the tranquillity of the kingdom, the only pledge of their individual security, will influence them. No ; it is not in the whirl of universal overthrow, in the degradation of tutelary authority, when a crowd of indigent citizens, shut out from the work-shops, will be clamouring for impotent pity ; when the soldiery disbanded will be forming itself into  
‘ hungry

' hungry gangs of armed plunderers, when  
 ' property will be violated with impunity, and  
 ' the very existence of individuals menaced—  
 ' terrour and grief waiting at the door of every  
 ' family—it is not amidst such complicated  
 ' wretchedness, that these cruel and sel-  
 ' fish men will enjoy in peace the hoards  
 ' which they denied their country. The only  
 ' distinction that awaits them, in the general  
 ' wreck, will be the universal opprobrium  
 ' they deserve, or the useless remorse that will  
 ' corrode the inmost recesses of their hearts.

' Ah ! how many recent proofs have we  
 ' of the public spiritedness, which renders all  
 ' success so easy ! With what rapidity was  
 ' formed the national militia, those legions of  
 ' citizens armed for the defence of the coun-  
 ' try, the preservation of tranquillity, and the  
 ' maintenance of the laws ! A generous emu-  
 ' lation has beamed on all sides. Villages,  
 ' towns, provinces, have considered their pri-  
 ' vileges as odious distinctions, and solicited  
 ' the honour of depriving themselves of pe-  
 ' culiar advantages, to enrich their country.  
 ' You know it : time was not allowed to draw  
 ' up the mutual concessions, dictated by a  
 ' purely patriotic sentiment, into decrees ; so  
 ' impatient

' impatient was every class of citizens to re-  
 ' store to the great family whatever endowed  
 ' some of it's members to the prejudice of  
 ' others.

' Above all, since the embarrassment of our  
 ' finances, the patriotic contributions have in-  
 ' creased. From the throne, the majesty of  
 ' which a beneficent prince exalts by his vir-  
 ' tues, has emanated the most striking exam-  
 ' ple.—O thou, so justly the dearly beloved  
 ' of thy people—king—citizen—man of worth !  
 ' it was thine to cast a glance over the mag-  
 ' nificence that surrounded thee, and to con-  
 ' vert it into national resources. The objects  
 ' of luxury which thou hast sacrificed, have  
 ' added new lustre to thy dignity ; and whilst  
 ' the love of the french for thy sacred person  
 ' makes them murmur at the privation, their  
 ' sensibility applauds thy magnanimity ; and  
 ' their generosity will repay thy beneficence  
 ' by the return it covets, by an imitation of  
 ' thy virtues, by pursuing thy course in the  
 ' career of public utility.

' How much wealth, congealed by ostenta-  
 ' tion into useless heaps, shall melt into  
 ' flowing streams of prosperity ! How much  
 ' the prudent economy of individuals might  
 ' contribute



' contribute to the restoration of the kingdom !  
 ' How many treasures, which the piety of our  
 ' forefathers accumulated on the altars of our  
 ' temples, will forsake their obscure cells with-  
 ' out changing their sacred destination ! “ This  
 ' I set apart, in times of prosperity ;” says re-  
 ' ligion ; “ it is fitting that I dispense it in the  
 “ day of adversity. It was not for myself—  
 “ a borrowed lustre adds nothing to my great-  
 “ ness—it was for you, and the state, that I  
 “ levied this honourable tribute on the virtues  
 “ of your forefathers.”

' Who can avoid being affected by such  
 ' examples ? What a moment to display our  
 ' resources, to invoke the aid of every corner  
 ' of the empire !—O prevent the shame, with  
 ' which the violation of our engagements,  
 ' our most sacred engagements, would stain  
 ' the birth of freedom ! Prevent those dread-  
 ' ful shocks, which, in overturning the most  
 ' solid institutions, and shattering the most  
 ' established fortunes, would leave France co-  
 ' vered with the sad ruins of a shameful hur-  
 ' ricane. How mistaken are those, who at a  
 ' certain distance from the capital contemplate  
 ' not the links, which connect public faith with  
 ' national prosperity, and with the social con-

' tract ! They who pronounce the infamous  
 ' term bankruptcy, are they not rather a herd  
 ' of ferocious beasts, than a society of men  
 ' just and free ? Where is the frenchman who  
 ' will dare to look his fellow citizens in the  
 ' face, when his conscience shall upbraid him  
 ' with having contributed to empoison the  
 ' existence of millions of his fellow creatures ?  
 ' Are we the nation to whose honour it's ene-  
 ' mies bear witness, who are about to sully the  
 ' proud distinction by a BANKRUPTCY ?—  
 ' Shall we give them cause to say, we have  
 ' only recovered our liberty and strength to  
 ' commit, without shuddering, crimes which  
 ' paled even the cheek of despotism ?

' Would it be any excuse to protest, that  
 ' this execrable mischief was not premedi-  
 ' tated ? Ah ! no : the cries of the victims,  
 ' whom we shall scatter over Europe, will  
 ' drown our voice. Act then !—Be your  
 ' measures swift, strong, sure. Dispel the  
 ' cloud, that lowers over our heads, the gloom  
 ' of which sheds terrour into the hearts of the  
 ' creditors of France.—If it burst, the devas-  
 ' tation of our national resources will be more  
 ' tremendous than the terrible plague, which  
 ' has lately ravaged our provinces.

‘ How will our courage in the exercise of  
 ‘ the functions, you have confided to us, be  
 ‘ renewed ! With what vigour shall we la-  
 ‘ bour in forming the constitution, when se-  
 ‘ cured from interruption ! We have sworn to  
 ‘ save our country—judge of our anguish,  
 ‘ whilst it trembles on the verge of destruc-  
 ‘ tion. A momentary sacrifice is sufficient ;  
 ‘ a sacrifice offered to the public good, and  
 ‘ not to the encroachments of covetousness.  
 ‘ And is this easy expiation of the faults and  
 ‘ blunders of a period, stigmatized by politi-  
 ‘ cal servitude, above our strength ? Think  
 ‘ of the price which has been paid for  
 ‘ liberty by other nations, who have shown  
 ‘ themselves worthy of it :—for this, rivers of  
 ‘ blood have streamed—long years of woe,  
 ‘ and horrid civil wars, have every where  
 ‘ preceded the glorious birth !—Of us no-  
 ‘ thing is required, but a pecuniary sacrifice—  
 ‘ and even this vulgar offering is not an im-  
 ‘ poverishing gift :—it will return into our  
 ‘ bosom, to enrich our cities, our fields ;  
 ‘ augmenting our national glory and prof-  
 ‘ perity.’

## CHAPTER III.

REFLECTIONS ON THE NEW MODE OF RAISING SUPPLIES. NO JUST SYSTEM OF TAXATION YET ESTABLISHED. PAPER MONEY. NECESSITY OF GRADUAL REFORM.

THE task certainly was very difficult, at this crisis, for a minister to give satisfaction to the people, and yet supply the wants of the state; for it was not very likely that the public, who had been exclaiming against the incessant demands of the old government, would have been pleased with new burdens, or patiently endured them. Still it is always the height of folly in a financier, to attempt to supply the exigencies of government by any but specific and certain means: for such vague measures will ever produce a *deficit*, the consequences of which are most pernicious to public credit and private comfort.

A man, who has a precise sum to live upon, generally takes into his estimate of expences a certain part of his income as due to the government, for the protection and social advantages it secures him. This proportion of his income being commonly the same from  
period

period to period, he lays it by for that particular purpose, and contentedly enjoys the remainder. But, should a weak minister, or a capricious government, call on him for an additional sum, because the taxes have proved unproductive, either through the inability of some of the members of the state, or that they were laid on articles of consumption, and the consumption has not been equal to the calculation ; it not only deranges his schemes of domestic economy, but may be the cause of the most serious inconvenience.

A man who has a limited income, and a large family, is not only obliged to be very industrious to support them, but he is likewise necessitated to make all his arrangements with the greatest circumspection and exactness ; because a trifling loss, by involving him in debt, might lead to his ruin, including that of his family. The rich man, indeed, seldom thinks of these most cruel misfortunes ; for a few pounds, more or less, are of no real importance to him. Yet the poor man, nay even the man of moderate fortune, is liable to have his whole scheme of life broken by a circumstance of this kind,

and all his future days embittered by a perpetual struggle with pecuniary vexations.

Governments, which ought to protect, and not oppress mankind, cannot be too regular in their demands; for the manner of levying taxes is of the highest importance to political economy, and the happiness of individuals. No government has yet established a just system of taxation \*: for in every country the expences of government have fallen unequally on the citizens; and, perhaps, it is

\* In Holland almost all the taxes are collected in the shape of excise.

In France, formerly, the taxes were generally internal; but, since the mode established of making a revenue of 300,000,000*l.* by the land and house tax part of the 580,000,000*l.* estimated to be the peace establishment, it appears, that this was too great a proportion to be obtained in that way. Hence the revenue of France has lately failed in a great degree.

In America the taxes of the federal government have been lately established solely on the customs, that is to say, on goods imported. These operate two ways; encouraging home manufactures, and discouraging the manufactures of other countries.

Great Britain has levied her revenue on customs both inwards and outwards; on excise, principally internal; on stamps, which operate both internally and externally; and on fixed objects, as well as internal consumption, (as salt).

not

not possible to render them perfectly equal, but by laying all the taxes on land, the mother of every production.

In this posture of affairs, the enthusiasm of the french in the cause of liberty might have been turned to the advantage of a new and permanent system of finance. An able, bold minister, who possessed the confidence of the nation, might have recommended with success the taking of the national property under the direct management of the assembly ; and then endeavouring to raise a loan on that property, he would have given respectability to the new government, by immediately procuring the supplies indispensably necessary not only to keep it, but to put it in motion.

In times of civil commotion, or during a general convulsion, men who have money, and they are commonly most timid and cautious, are very apt to take care of it, even at the expence of their interest ; and, therefore, it was to be presumed, that the monied men of France would not have been very ready to subscribe to the different loans proposed by the minister, unless the security had been obvious, or the speculative advantages exorbitant. But if Necker, whom the prudent

usurer adored as his tutelar god, had said to  
 the nation ‘ there is a property worth  
 ‘ 4,700,000,000 *l.* independent of the pro-  
 ‘ perty of the emigrants, take it into your  
 ‘ immediate possession ; and, whilst the sales  
 ‘ are going on, give it as a guarantee for the  
 ‘ loan you want. This just and dignified  
 ‘ measure will not only relieve your present  
 ‘ necessities, but it will be sufficient to enable  
 ‘ you to fulfil great part of your former engage-  
 ‘ ments.’ There would have been then no  
 need of the eloquence of Mirabeau ; reason  
 would have done the business ; and men, at-  
 tending to their own interest, would have pro-  
 moted the public good, without having their  
 heads turned giddy by romantic flights of he-  
 roism.

The immediate and incessant wants of a  
 state must always be supplied ; prudence there-  
 fore, requires, that the directors of the fi-  
 nances should rather provide by anticipation  
 for it's wants than suffer a *deficit*. The go-  
 vernment being once in arrears, additional  
 taxes become indispensable to bring forward  
 the balance, or the nation must have recourse  
 to paper notes ; an expedient, as experience  
 has shown, always to be dreaded, because



by increasing the debt it only extends the evil. And this increasing debt, like a ball of snow, gathering as it rolls, soon attains a wonderful magnitude. Every state, which has unavoidably accumulated it's debt, ought, provided those at the helm wish to preserve the government, and extend the security and comforts of it's citizens, to take every just measure to render the interest secure, and to fund the principal; for as it augments, like the petrifying mass, it stands in the way of all improvement, spreading the chilling miseries of poverty around—till the evil baffling all expedients, a mighty crash produces a new order of things, overwhelming, with the ruins of the old, thousands of innocent victims.

The precious metals have been considered as the best of all possible signs of value, to facilitate the exchange of commodities, to supply our reciprocal wants : and they will ever be necessary to our comfort, whilst by the common consent of mankind they are the standards of exchange. Gold and silver have a specific value, because it is not easy to accumulate them beyond a certain quantity. Paper, on the contrary, is a dangerous expedient, except under a well established government : and  
even

even then the business ought to be conducted with great moderation and sagacity.—Perhaps it would be wise, that it's extent should be consistent with the commerce of the country, and the quantity of species actually in it—But it is the spirit of commerce to stretch credit too far. The notes, also, which are issued by a state before it's government is well established, will certainly be depreciated; and in proportion as they grow precarious, the gold and silver, which was formerly in circulation will vanish, and every article of trade, and all the comforts of life, will bear a higher price.

These are considerations, which ought to have occurred to the french minister, and have led him to take decided measures. The interest of the national debt was 255,395,141*l.* by a report for the year 1792.—Necker, by his account dated the 1st of may, 1789, states the income at 475,294,000*l.*, and the expences at 531,533,000*l.*: consequently there was a deficiency of 56,239,000*l.*; and it was not probable, it could not even be expected, that during the convulsions of a revolution, the taxes would be regularly paid: the debt, then,

then, and the demands of the state, must increase.

The credit of every government greatly depends on the regulation of it's finances ; and the most certain way to have given stability to the new system, would have been by making such arrangements as would have insured promptitude of payment. No minister ever had it so much in his power to have taken measures glorious for France, beneficial to Europe, happy for the people of the day, and advantageous to posterity. No epocha, since the inflated system of paper (the full blown bladders of public credit, which may be destroyed by the prick of a pin) was invented, ever appeared so favourable as that juncture in France, to have overturned it completely : and by overlooking these circumstances, the nation has probably lost most of the advantages, which her finances might have gained by the révolution.

Such mistakes, whilst they involve in them a thousand difficulties, prove the necessity of gradual reform ; lest the light, suddenly breaking-in on a benighted people, should overpower the understanding it ought to direct. The line in which Necker had been accustomed

customed to move, by restraining what little energy his mind was capable of exerting, precluded the possibility of his seeing the faint lines marked on an expansive scale, which afforded the data for calculations ; and the nation, confiding to him the direction of a business for which he had not sufficient talents, seems to have contemplated in imagination a prospect, which has not yet been realized ; and whilst expectation hovered on it's margin, the dazzling scenery was obscured by clouds the most threatening and tremendous.

These are evils that from the beginning of time have attended precipitate and great changes. The improvements in philosophy and morals have been extremely tardy. All sudden revolutions have been as suddenly overturned, and things thrown back below their former state. The improvements in the science of politics have been still more slow in their advancement than those of philosophy and morals ; but the revolution in France has been progressive. It was a revolution in the minds of men ; and only demanded a new system of government to be adapted to that change. This was not generally perceived ; and the politicians of the day ran wildly from

one

one extreme to the other, without recollecting, that even Moses sojourning forty years in the wilderness could but conduct the jews to the borders of the promised land, after the first generation had perished in their prejudices ; the most inveterate sins of men.

This is not a discouraging consideration. Our ancestors have laboured for us ; and we, in our turn, must labour for posterity. It is by tracing the mistakes, and profiting from the discoveries of one generation, that the next is able to take a more elevated stand. The first inventor of any instrument has scarcely ever been able to bring it to a tolerable degree of perfection ; and the discoveries of every man of genius, the optics of Newton excepted, have been improved, if not extended, by their followers.—Can it then be expected, that the science of politics and finance, the most important, and most difficult of all human improvements ; a science which involves the passions, tempers, and manners of men and nations, estimates their wants, maladies, comforts, happiness, and misery, and computes the sum of good or evil flowing from social institutions ; will not require the same gradations, and advance by steps equally slow

to that state of perfection necessary to secure the sacred rights of every human creature?

The vanity and weakness of men have continually tended to retard this progress of things: still it is going forward; and though the fatal presumption of the headstrong french, and the more destructive ambition of their foreign enemies, have given it a check, we may contemplate with complacent serenity the approximation of the glorious era, when the appellations of fool and tyrant will be synonymous.