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**RECOLLECTIONS**

**OF**

**MIRABEAU.**



# RECOLLECTIONS

OF

## MIRABEAU,

AND OF THE

TWO FIRST LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES

FRANCE.

ETIENNE DUMONT,

OF GENEVA.

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## PREFACE

BY THE

ENGLISH EDITOR.

THERE is no public character whose actions have been more the subject of misrepresentation, and over whom calumny has had greater sway, than the Count de Mirabeau. He is known in this country rather as one of the most profligate promoters of the French revolution, than as the most extraordinary man of his age, in those surpassing endowments of mind in which he far surpassed all the great luminaries of that brilliant period; and it has been reserved for Dumont, a man of high character and unsullied principles, to rescue his name from the blind obloquy by

which it has been so long and so unjustly obscured.

With all his vices, and they were by no means few, Mirabeau had many redeeming qualities. 'The former have been exaggerated with all the virulence of party hatred, while the latter have been concealed with equal malignity. This is unjust.' A man, whatever be his errors, should go to posterity with the benefit of his good as well as the odium of his evil qualities.

In these Recollections, Dumont, the friend of Mirabeau, has concealed nothing, nor has he "set down aught in malice." He has not shrunk from the task of exposing the blemishes of a master-mind, at the same time that he exhibits the splendour of its superior endowments. He has candidly stated Mirabeau's good and bad qualities without disguise, and while it will appear that there is much to despise, it will be found that upon the whole, there is perhaps more to admire. Justice has been rendered to an erring but illustrious man.

With all his vices, Mirabeau was an ardent patriot. The good of his country was mingled even with his dying aspirations, and the love

of France ceased in his heart but with his last breath. His great powers of intellect and transcendant eloquence maintained his popularity through all the fluctuating changes attendant upon one of the greatest political convulsions ever recorded in history ; and by the ascendancy of his energetic mind, he awed Robespierre and the jacobin anarchists into harmless insignificance. Had his life been spared, there is no doubt that the French revolution would have taken another direction, and the horrible excesses of the reign of terror never have blackened the page of French political regeneration. His death was the knell of the French monarchy ;—the glory of a long line of kings was buried in the grave of Mirabeau.

Dumont's Recollections contain the most valuable materials for history. Facts hitherto unknown, the secret causes of many of those great and surprising events which have puzzled the acutest research of the historian, are laid open. However we may regret that the work remains unfinished, we cannot but be thankful for the abundance of information supplied by these Recollections, every page of which is of

momentous interest. Our regret arises from the very perfection of the work even in its unfinished state ; and had Dumont found leisure to fill up the periods connecting its different parts, and to give his promised account of the revolutions of Geneva, subsequent to that of 1789, and in which he was himself an actor, this volume would form the completest compendium of the French revolution ever given to the public.

In reflecting upon the events contained in this book, the philosophic mind cannot but be forcibly struck with the disproportion between causes and effects in political convulsions, when once the edifice of the state has begun to totter upon its foundations. On these occasions, the most insignificant circumstance, like the chance spark which, unperceived, may slowly spread its latent flame and ultimately destroy the noblest edifice, often leads to astounding results, even to the ruin of states and the overthrow of empires. Such was the case in France ;—and such will be the case in all revolutions proceeding from the same causes. It is a lamentable fact that governments founded upon the barbarous remains of feudality—and most governments of

modern ages are in this predicament—naturally divide the state into two classes, whose hostility to each other is instinctive. A few privileged individuals hold the reins of power, and for their own interest and advantage, oppress the great mass of the people. When at length the latter discover and claim their just rights, those rights should be fairly and frankly admitted, otherwise the authority by whom they are withheld must ultimately, even in the absence of tumult and bloodshed, be crushed by the inert preponderance alone of the discontented mass of the population. Had this self-evident principle been admitted by the blind and bigotted aristocracy of France, no convulsions would have taken place, nor would the freedom of the French people have been cemented with blood.

The inveterate and unjust prejudices of the nobles, and more particularly of the members of the royal family—which even five and twenty years of misfortune and exile could not eradicate—led immediately to those first excesses which showed the people their strength and betrayed the weakness of the government. It is singular that neither the fruits of experience, nor the pangs of personal suffering, can rectify



the warpings of the human mind; and in the feelings which, in 1789, induced the Count d'Artois to convert the conciliatory object of the royal session into the immediate cause of the first revolutionary insurrections, may be traced the same spirit of bigotry, which in 1830 led him, as Charles X, to issue the ordinances by which he lost his crown.

Numerous other examples might be adduced which would form a collection of valuable lessons for kings and statesmen. But alas! man profits not by the experience of others—often-times not by his own; and it is not until we have obstinately and wickedly brought on the evil, that we choose, amid the pangs of tardy and useless repentance, to open our eyes to truth!

In offering Dumont's ideas to the public in an English garb, it only remains for the English editor to add that his sole aim has been to give the author's meaning with clearness and precision. If he has failed, it is not from want of zeal and attention.

G. H. C.

# PREFACE

BY THE

GENEVESE EDITOR.

IT is not my intention to write a biographical notice of M. Etienne Dumont. Two illustrious authors, M. de Candolle and M. de Sismondi, have already paid their tribute of admiration to the memory of their departed friend and fellow-countryman. I cannot do better than refer the reader to the *Bibliothèque universelle*,\* and the *Revue encyclopédique*,† in which they have deposited, with all the warmth of friendship, the expression of their regret at

\* *Bibliothèque universelle*, November 1829.

† *Revue encyclopédique*, vol. 44, p. 258.

the loss which our country, science and literature have just sustained.

To render, however, the present work more intelligible, it is necessary that I should trace, in as rapid a sketch as possible, the principal circumstances of the author's life, especially those preceding the period to which the work alludes. When I have explained his connexion with politics and political men, long before 1789, and the rank which he has since held, in the literary world, it will be more easy to understand how he, a stranger to France and to the great acts of the French revolution, should have been able to relate facts hitherto unknown, and have acquired the right of passing judgment upon men and events.

M. Etienne Dumont, of Geneva, spent the early part of his life in his native country, where his talents as a preacher gained him well deserved renown. In 1783, he left Geneva, in consequence of its political troubles, and went to St Petersburg to join some members of his family who had settled there. During a residence of eighteen months in this city, he was equally successful, and obtained the high

consideration due to his merit and noble character.

He left St Petersburg in 1785, and went to London to reside with Lord Shelburne, then a minister of state, who confided to him the general education of his sons. Lord Shelburne, afterwards Marquis of Lansdowne, soon discovered the great talents of M. Dumont, whom he made his friend. It was in the house of this minister that he became acquainted with some of the most illustrious men of the country; and amongst others, with Sheridan, Fox, Lord Holland, Sir Samuel Romilly and Mr Brougham, then a barrister, now Lord High Chancellor of England.

His connexion with these distinguished individuals, founded upon friendship, similarity of opinions and literary occupations, and the pursuit of great objects of public utility, gave them full opportunities of appreciating his high worth. He was generally known to be a man of profound knowledge, correct judgment, irreproachable character, and lively and brilliant wit. Each did him justice during his life, and

they who have survived him continue to honour his memory.

He formed a very particular intimacy with Sir Samuel Romilly, a man equally distinguished by his private virtues and his great talents as a lawyer and a political orator. The friendship which united these two men, increased daily, nor did its activity cease till the death of Sir Samuel Romilly. M. Dumont was inconsolable for this loss, and never mentioned his departed friend without tears.

In 1788, they undertook a journey to Paris together, and it was under Sir Samuel Romilly's auspices that M. Dumont first became acquainted with Mirabeau. During a sojourn of two months in the French capital, he saw the latter every day, and a certain affinity of talents and intellect led to an ultimate connexion between two men so opposed to each other in habits and character. It was on his return from Paris, that Dumont began his acquaintance with the celebrated Bentham, which had so complete an influence over his future opinions and writings, and fixed, as it were, his career as a writer on legislation.

Dumont, penetrated with a lively admiration for the genius of this extraordinary man, and profoundly struck with the truth of his theory and the consequences to which it so naturally led, applied all his talents to make the writings of the English publicist known, and devoted the greater part of his life in rendering available to the world at large, the exhaustless store of knowledge which the ever active genius of Mr Bentham was always increasing.\*

In 1789, M. Dumont suspended his labours in England to proceed to Paris with M. Duroverai, ex-attorney-general of the republic of Geneva. The object of this journey was to obtain, through the return of M. Necker to office, and the events then passing in France, an unrestricted restoration of Genevese liberty, by can-

\* The following works are the result of this labour : 1° *Treatises on legislation*, published in 1822, in 3 vols, 8vo, now in their third edition ; 2° *Theory of punishments and rewards*, 2 vols, 8vo, also in its third edition ; 3° *Tactics of legislative assemblies*, two editions, 1815 and 1822 ; 4° *Judicial evidence*, published in 1823, and a second edition in 1830 ; 5° *Judicial organization and codification*, 1 vol. published in 1828. I do not here mention the numerous editions published in foreign countries.

celling the treaty of guarantee between France and Switzerland, which prevented the republic from enacting new laws without the consent of the parties to this treaty. The necessary steps to which this mission gave rise, brought M. Dumont into connexion with most of the leading men in the constituent assembly, and made him an interested spectator, sometimes a participator in the events of the French revolution.

The importance of the changes about to be operated, and the immense interest which this period inspired, determined M. Dumont to follow closely the course of events. Like all the other generous and elevated minds in Europe, he offered up his vows for the realization of the great hopes to which the first proceedings of the national assembly had given rise, and was desirous of assisting at occurrences which he considered the forerunners of a new political era. His former acquaintance with Mirabeau was renewed immediately after his return to Paris, and it contributed to prolong his residence in France, during which he cooperated in many of the works of that celebrated man; but being afterwards attacked in

pamphlets and other periodicals as one of Mirabeau's writers, he felt much hurt at his name being mentioned publicly, and determined to return to England. The reputation of being a subaltern writer was, as he himself states, by no means flattering, and that of an influential connexion with a man whose character was not untainted, alarmed his delicacy. From that period he sedulously employed his time in preparing Mr Bentham's manuscripts for publication.

In 1814, the restoration of Geneva to independence, induced M. Dumont to return to that city, which, subsequently, he never quitted for any length of time. Until 1829, he devoted his talents to his country, to which he rendered very eminent services. It would be a work of supererogation to recall his claims to the gratitude of his fellow-citizens. All know and acknowledge how much they are indebted to his patriotism and devotion; and to the general mass of readers such details would present but little interest. In the autumn of 1829, he undertook a tour of pleasure to the north of Italy in company with one of his friends, M. Bellamy



Aubert;\* and his family were impatiently expecting his return, when they received the news of his death. They who were intimate with him can alone appreciate the charm which his goodness of heart, his active benevolence, and his great talents threw around him. He loved to encourage youth, and could make himself the companion of all who approached him. Men of all ages and professions were sure to find, in his inexhaustible kindness and remarkable conversation, interest, advice, information and pleasure.

Among the many unpublished works which M. Dumont's friendship, much more than his thirst for renown, confided to my care, I have selected for publication, in preference to any other, the one which appeared to me the best calculated to make him known in a literary

\* I cannot suffer this opportunity to pass without publicly expressing the gratitude entertained by M. Dumont's family towards M. Bellamy Aubert, whose active friendship and affectionate attentions soothed the last moments of his friend. This consolatory circumstance, in so painful an event, can alone in some degree assuage the grief produced by a death so unexpected, which at a distance from his family and country, carried off a man in whose heart the love of both predominated.

capacity different from that upon which he founded his honourable fame. It also appeared to me that a work, like the present, would diminish in value, in proportion to the distance of its publication from the events it records and the persons whom it makes known. This work, besides, contains materials for history which it is but just to submit to the judgment and criticism of those best able to appreciate them, I mean the contemporaries of the great epoch to which they refer. I must likewise state that of M. Dumont's other posthumous works, some are not finished, whilst others, written by parts and at different times, are not in a fit state to appear before the public. A last work of revision is yet necessary for the purpose either of placing the different detached portions in the order pointed out by their author, or of separating the parts that are terminated and publishing them in a miscellaneous form. But all these reasons, derived from the subject itself, were not the only ones which fixed my determination. I was influenced in my choice principally from a desire of showing M. Dumont in a work entirely his own. Hitherto he has been known

in the literary and scientific world only as the propagator of M. Bentham's ideas, and few are able to appreciate the full merit of his labours. M. Dumont had no literary ambition; satisfied with the esteem of the distinguished individuals who knew him, he considered himself sufficiently rewarded by the consciousness of having contributed to the happiness of mankind by the propagation of useful ideas; and he never sought, I will not say to raise his fame at the expense of that which his celebrated friend had so justly earned, but even to claim the share of renown to which he was really entitled. His own thoughts and ideas merged in those of Mr. Bentham, and he gave the whole to the public under the name of that great publicist, without ever troubling his head about the portion of honour and esteem which he should derive from them. • But if such unequal participation suited M. Dumont's modesty, it is no less incumbent upon me to endeavour to place him in the rank which is his due. God forbid, however, that I should desire here to raise a controversy, by claiming for M. Dumont all or the principal part of the merit belonging to the works which

appeared under the name of Mr Bentham. It would be against evidence, and would, moreover, be a violation of the respect I owe to M. Dumont's memory; for the latter did not cease, to the end of his life, expressing his enthusiastic admiration of the English publicist.\* My

\* This is what he wrote a few days before his death: "What I most admire is, the manner in which Mr Bentham has laid down his principle, the development he has given to it, and the rigorous logic of his inductions from it. The first book of the *Treatises on legislation*, is an art of reasoning upon this principle, of distinguishing it from the false notions which usurp its place, of analyzing evil, and of showing the strength of the legislator in the four sanctions, natural, moral, political, and religious. The whole is new, at least with regard to method and arrangement, and they who have attacked the principle generally, have taken good care not to make a special attack upon the detailed exposition of the system. Egotism and materialism! How absurd! Nothing but vile declamation and insipid mummery! Look into the catalogue of pleasures, for the rank which the author assigns to those of benevolence, and see how he finds in them the germ of all social virtues! His admirable *Treatise upon the indirect means of preventing crime*, contains, among others, three chapters sufficient to pulverise all those miserable objections. One is on the cultivation of benevolence, another on the proper use of the motive of honour, and the third on the importance of religion when maintained in a proper direction; that is to say, of that religion which conduces to the benefit of society. I am convinced that Fenelon himself,

design is solely to prove, that if M. Dumont consented to work in the second rank, if he preferred in some sort to abandon his own stock, and cultivate the ideas of another, it was the effect of choice, not necessity; and nothing can answer my purpose better, than the publication of a book written solely by himself, which shows in detail, and by precise facts, the high consideration which he enjoyed from the celebrated men with whom he lived, and proves the depth

would have put his name to every word of this doctrine. Consider the nature and number of Mr Bentham's works; see what a wide range he has taken in legislation; and is it not acknowledged, that no man has more the character of originality, independence, love of public good, disinterestedness, and noble courage in braving the dangers and persecutions which have more than once threatened his old age? *His moral life is as beautiful as his intellectual.* Mr Bentham passes in England, whether with justice or not I am unable to determine, for the chief, I mean the spiritual chief, of the radical party. His name, therefore, is not in good repute with those in power, or those who see greater dangers than advantages in a reform, especially a radical reform. I do not pretend to give an opinion, either for or against, but it must be understood, that he has never enjoyed the favour either of government or of the high aristocracy; and this must guide, even in other countries, those who desire not to commit themselves; for Mr Bentham's ensign leads neither to riches nor to power.

and correctness of his judgment, the elegance of his mind, his feelings of high honour, and gives, besides, a specimen of his own powers of composition. It will also be seen, in this work, how often men of eminence had recourse to his counsels, his information and his pen; whence it may be inferred, that if he afterwards consented to become second to Mr Bentham, it was not from the speculation of an inferior mind, incapable of proceeding alone, and who would consider such an association as a real *bonnefortune*, but rather from that true modesty, which made him, provided the good were done, care little to whom it was attributed.

M. Dumont by no means looked upon these Recollections as a finished work. He spoke of them as a sketch which he intended to go over again and complete. He intended them as notes upon things and persons; as materials for a historical work of a higher order than simple memoirs;—but he alone could have made it complete, and I should consider it a breach of duty on my part, had I endeavoured to supply the deficiencies or omissions which may be remarked in it, or attempted to finish it even

according to the plan he had himself laid down when talking on the subject.

Whatever regret we may feel that the sudden death of the author should have prevented the completion of this work, it will nevertheless remain as one of the most interesting sources of information and research for the history of the period to which it refers.

M. Dumont's intimacy with the principal personages of that epoch, and particularly with Mirabeau, afforded him the knowledge of many facts unknown to most of those who have written upon the same subject; and besides observations on the general events of the revolution, these Recollections contain a number of anecdotes never published, and statements concerning persons and things, more or less important, no doubt, but which are all of great interest.

What appears to me more particularly to add to the merit of this work, and distinguish it from every production of the same kind, is that M. Dumont, a stranger to France, would never consent, from a sentiment of propriety which does him much credit—very rare at that period—to take an active part in the events

which passed before his eyes, nor exercise any public functions. He has, therefore, nothing to conceal, nor any motive for altering facts in order to present his own conduct in a more favourable light. His love of freedom and his great talents made him the confidant of great projects, and a contributor to important works, but never in any other capacity than as the friend or adviser of the real authors. The instant this association of intellect and talents attracted the public attention, and he perceived that the hopes he had founded on the patriotism of those with whom he was connected, faded before a sad reality, he hastened to abandon the place he occupied, and withdrew.

I have only another word to say; it is respecting the opinions formed by M. Dumont upon the proceedings of the constituent assembly. Perhaps his judgments may be deemed severe; but if the period, when he wrote his *Recollections*, be taken into consideration, that is to say 1799, when not many years had elapsed since the disorders into which anarchy had plunged France—and it be recollected that when he went to Paris, he had already resided several



years in England, it may seem less surprising that he should sometimes express strong disapprobation. Looking at the proceedings of the national assembly, over which a thoughtless and enthusiastic heat too often presided, he naturally assumed as his point of comparison, the prudent slowness and regular form of the English parliament. This contrast must have struck him painfully, and he might have been the more induced to blame what he saw, because the labours of the constituent assembly did not produce the results anticipated by every friend of freedom. He would judge differently now, when subsequent events have placed this great epoch in its proper light. The action of time, which effaces or softens prejudices, and the succession of events which can alone enable us to look from an eminence, permit us now to form a correct judgment of the mission of the national assembly. It was called upon, at the very outset, to announce to Europe the destruction of the ancient social order, and prepare for the establishment of a new one in France. They who then so strongly blamed it for having founded nothing, were not in a position fairly

to appreciate its works. Their wishes, founded, it is true, upon praise-worthy motives, made them unjust; they demanded of the assembly more than it could perform; and assigned it another task than that which Providence had fixed. A generous impatience to see a realization of the great destinies of man, made them anticipate the periods prescribed by the order of progress, and they bitterly vituperated the constituent assembly for not equalling the vast hopes which they had conceived. This assembly, however, which contained most of the great and generous minds then distinguished in France, accomplished with grandeur, boldness, and impartiality, the noblest and most extensive task ever confided to any body of men.

At the present time, when we can better appreciate the difficulties and dangers it had to encounter, and the immensity of the services it rendered to the cause of humanity, by destroying the obstacles which stopped the progress of civilization, we exact less, and are more grateful;—in short, we are become just.

I might have softened expressions of severe criticism, and struck out certain passages which

may displease some, but it would have been a betrayal of confidence. This work was a deposit placed in my hands, and I restore it to the public such as it was intrusted to me, unaltered and untouched.

J. L. DUVAL,

Member of the Representative Council of Geneva.

## RECOLLECTIONS

OF

# MIRABEAU

### CHAPTER I.

I HAVE just read the "Annals of the French Revolution," by Bertrand de Molleville. This work has recalled to my recollection a variety of facts whose secret causes are known to me; it has also reminded me of my connexion with many of the leading characters of that period. A lapse of ten years has effaced a number of circumstances from my memory, and were I to wait much longer, I should retain only a very vague idea of the many remarkable events which occurred under my own observation. My friends have repeatedly urged me to commit to paper the details with which I have been in the habit of

entertaining them in private conversation. I have hitherto refused, from an invincible repugnance to speak of myself. Having been rather a spectator than an actor in these events, I can conscientiously declare, that in the little participation I had in them, my intentions were always pure, however defective may have been my judgment. But not having attached consequence to any thing I ever said or did, I have kept no journal, and have thus suffered many interesting matters to escape me. I did not, at the time, perceive their importance, and it is only by looking back at them through a lapse of years, that I am able to appreciate their value. In the work of Bertrand de Molleville, I have read many details which had already escaped my memory, and I feel the necessity of putting my own fugitive recollections into a permanent form.

I cannot better employ my leisure hours at Bath than by devoting them to this task, which, if it prove tedious, as I fear it will, I have only to suspend, and throw into the fire what I have written.

My journey to Paris was occasioned by the revolution at Geneva in 1789. I went thither with Duroverai, ex-attorney-general of Geneva, in consequence of M. Necker's return to office, and the events then passing in France. We had two objects in view: one to render Geneva wholly free, by annulling the treaty which prevented her from making

laws without the approbation of the powers which had become guarantees of that treaty; the other, to complete that which the Genevese revolution had only commenced; for this revolution having been effected with great precipitation, the popular party had obtained only a portion of the rights of which they had been deprived in 1782. The councils had yielded some of their usurped powers, but had managed to retain several. The Genevese residents in London were by no means satisfied with this arrangement, and the clause which they reprobated the most, was the one which provided that the exiles, though recalled, should not resume their offices and honours. Meetings had been held on this subject; and, as I had not been banished, but was only a voluntary exile, it was considered that I could plead the cause of the exiles with much more propriety than themselves. My notions of liberty had been strengthened by my residence in England, and by the liberal spirit of the writings published, at that period, in France. I was one of the most active at our Genevese meetings; and I undertook to write a pamphlet containing all the observations we had made upon the new Genevese code. My work was well received; and it was proposed to address it to our fellow citizens. Duroverai, who had just arrived from Ireland, persuaded me that the work would prove more effective if published at Paris; and that it was necessary

to prevent a ratification of the treaty by the powers, otherwise the imperfect state of things then existing, might be rendered permanent and conclusive.

The affairs of Geneva are totally foreign to the present work. But it was necessary that I should make known my object in going to Paris, and show that, by a concatenation of events, all connected with that object, I found myself mixed up with the French revolution. Before I enter upon my subject, I must premise that my principal recollections relate to Mirabeau, and I am therefore bound to begin by stating the origin of my connexion with him.

In 1788, I spent the months of August and September, at Paris, with my friend Mr Romilly, of London. Romilly is descended from a French family, who took refuge in England after the revocation of the edict of Nantes; an event of which he never spoke without blessing the memory of Louis XIV, to whom he thus owed the obligation of being an Englishman. He had embraced the profession of the law, and practised at the Chancery bar, where success is attended with much less *eclat* than in the Court of King's Bench.

During Mirabeau's visit to London in 1784, he had become very intimate with Romilly. He was then engaged in his work on the order of Cincinnatus, and had in his portfolio plans and sketches of several other works, upon which he took good care to consult every

person capable of affording him information. He was then poor, and obliged to live by his writings. He wrote his Considerations on the Escaut, from a letter by M. Chauvet, which gave him the first idea of the work. Having become acquainted with a geographer, whose name I forget, he also meditated writing a universal geography. Had any one offered him the elements of Chinese grammar, he would, no doubt, have attempted a treatise on the Chinese language. He studied a subject whilst he was writing upon it, and he only required an assistant who furnished matter. He could contrive to get notes and additions from twenty different hands ; and had he been offered a good price, I am confident he would have undertaken to write even an encyclopædia.

His activity was prodigious. If he worked little himself, he made others work very hard. He had the art of finding out men of talent, and of successfully flattering those who could be of use to him. He worked upon them with insinuations of friendship, and ideas of public benefit.\* His interesting and animated conversation was like a hone which he used to sharpen his tools. Nothing was lost to him. He

\* When, at a later period, Mirabeau wanted my services, he spoke to me in praise of my friends, and talked about Geneva. This was a species of *Ranz des Vaches*—it softened and subjugated me. *Note by Dumont.*



collected with care, anecdotes, conversations, and thoughts—appropriated, to his own benefit, the fruits of the reading and study of his friends—knew how to use the information thus acquired, so as to appear always to have possessed it—and when he had begun a work in earnest, it was seen to make a rapid and daily progress.

In London he fell in with D . . . ., who was writing a history of the Revolutions of Geneva, the first volume of which he had already published. D . . . . wished to be an author without its being known, and seemed to blame himself for writing this work. He pressed Mirabeau to take his manuscripts and compose a History of Geneva. In less than a week, Mirabeau showed him an extract he had made from the volume already published. It was done in a masterly style; was energetic, rapid and interesting. I know not what made D . . . . change his mind, but, on a sudden, he withdrew his manuscripts from Mirabeau. The consequence was a coolness, and something worse, between them. These two men could never have worked in conjunction. Mirabeau, however, declared that he only wanted the second place, and would willingly yield to D . . . . the honour of the undertaking; but the truth is, he thought that his reputation would absorb that of his companion, and that D . . . . would be considered, at most, but as a mason who had brought the stones

and mortar for the edifice, of which Mirabeau was the architect.

• When we arrived at Paris in 1788, the character of the Count de Mirabeau was in the lowest possible state of degradation. He had been employed at Berlin by M. de Calonne, was connected with all the enemies of Necker, against whom he had several times exercised his pen, and was considered as a dangerous enemy and a slippery friend. His lawsuits with his family—his elopements—his imprisonments and his morals, could not be overlooked, even in a city so lax as Paris; and his name was pronounced with detestation at the houses of some of our most intimate friends. Romilly, almost ashamed of his former friendship for Mirabeau, determined not to renew acquaintance with him. But Mirabeau was not a man of etiquette; and having learnt our address from Target, at whose house we had dined, he determined to call upon us. The noise of a carriage at the door drove Romilly to his room, desiring me, should it be a visitor on a call of ceremony, to say that he was out. Mirabeau was announced, and I did not send word to Romilly, because I thought he wished to avoid seeing the count; and as his room was only separated by a thin partition from the one we were in, I concluded that he would be able to distinguish the voice of our visitor, and make his appearance if he pleased. Mirabeau began the conversation by talking of our

mutual friends in London. He then spoke of Geneva, for he well knew that to a Genevese there was no greater pleasure than talking of his country. He said many flattering things of a city which, by producing so many distinguished men, had contributed to the general mass, so large a share of genius and learning; and he concluded by affirming, that he should never be happy until he could liberate that city from the fetters imposed upon it by the revolution of 1782. Two hours seemed but a moment; and Mirabeau was, in my estimation, the most interesting object in Paris. The visit ended by my promising to dine with him the same day, and he was to return and fetch me in his carriage.

“With whom have you been talking so long?” said Romilly, on leaving his room, to which this long visit had confined him.—“Did you not recognise his voice?” inquired I.—“No.”—“Yet you well know the individual, and I even think you must have heard a panegyric on yourself, which would have made a superb funeral oration.”—“What! was it Mirabeau?”—“It was; and may I be a fool all my life, if I allow the prejudices of our friends to prevent me from enjoying his company. I belong neither to Calonne’s party, nor to Necker’s; but to his whose conversation animates and delights me. As a commencement, I am going to dine with him to-day.” Mirabeau soon returned, took us both with him, and

in a very short time overcame our prejudices. We visited him often ; and taking advantage of the fine weather, made many excursions into the country. We dined with him in the Bois de Boulogne, at St Cloud, and at Vincennes ; at which latter place he showed us the dungeon in which he had been confined three years.

I never knew a man who, when he chose, could make himself so agreeable as Mirabeau. He was a delightful companion in every sense of the word ; obliging, attentive, full of spirits, and possessed of great powers of mind and imagination. It was impossible to maintain reserve with him ; you were forced into familiarity, obliged to forego etiquette and the ordinary forms of society, and call him simply by his name. Although fond of his title of count, and, at the bottom of his heart, attaching great importance to noble birth, he had too much good sense not to know when he could avail himself of it with propriety ; he therefore made a merit of its voluntary abdication. The forms of good breeding, which have been so properly compared to the cotton and other soft materials placed between china vases, to prevent their being broken by collision, keeps men at a certain distance from each other, and prevents, as it were, the contact of hearts. Mirabeau rejected them. His first care was to remove such obstacles, and intimate intercourse with him was attended with a sort

of agreeable asperity, a pleasant crudity of expression, more apparent than real ; for under the disguise of roughness, sometimes even of rudeness, was to be found all the reality of politeness and flattery. After the stiff and ceremonious conversations of formal good breeding, there was a fascinating novelty in his, never rendered insipid by forms in common use. His residence at Berlin had supplied him with a stock of curious anecdotes ; for his scandalous letters were not then published. He was, at this period, publishing his book on the Prussian monarchy. This production consisted of a work by Major Mauvillon, and extracts from different memoirs procured at great expense. No one could, for a moment, suppose that, during a residence of only eight months at Berlin, Mirabeau could himself have written eight volumes, in which he had introduced every possible information relative to the government of Prussia. But he had the merit of employing the talents of an officer scarcely known to the government he served, and the Prussian ministers must have been much surprised at finding that a man who had made so short a sojourn in their country, could singly undertake so arduous a task, and succeed in supplying them with more materials than could be found in the united offices of their several departments. This work is an illustration, by facts, of Adam Smith's principles of political economy ; and it clearly proves that Prussia has

always been a sufferer, whenever she has departed from those principles.

This was the period of the famous quarrel between M. de Calonne and M. Necker, about the *deficit*. The former had good reasons for endeavouring, by a direct charge, to throw upon other shoulders the weight of his own responsibility. He had accused M. Necker of having imposed upon the nation by a statement, that on leaving office, instead of a deficiency, there was an overplus of ten millions of livres. M. de Calonne's article, teeming with arithmetical calculations and specious arguments, had produced a certain effect upon the public mind. M. Necker, who had just resumed office, had announced his reply as forthcoming. Mirabeau was preparing to refute the latter, even before it had appeared and he could possibly know its contents. M. Necker's enemies were in the habit of meeting at the house of Panchaud, the banker, a man of talent, and well versed in finance, but who, after a disgraceful bankruptcy, was lost in character more than he was ruined in fortune. On the publication of M. Necker's work, the committee met daily, and Mirabeau always attended to collect observations, and inveigh against the minister. He anticipated the most triumphant success; and talked confidently of exposing the charlatan, *ripping him open*, and laying him at Colonne's feet, convicted of falsehood and incapacity. But this fierce ardour was

soon exhausted by its own violence; and he said no more on the subject himself, nor was he pleased when any other person mentioned it in his presence. I often asked him why this refutation was delayed; by what novelty of kindly feelings he spared the great charlatan, who was enjoying an unmerited reputation; and why Panchaud's committee deferred this great act of justice? Mirabeau, to get rid of these attacks, which, after his foolish boasting, he could not well parry, at length informed me that M. Necker's aid was necessary for the formation of the states-general, that his popularity was useful, and that the question of the *deficit* was absorbed by the more important one of the double representation of the *tiers-etat*.

From this fact I infer that M. Necker's answer had proved victorious, and that his enemies could not succeed in injuring his character.

We went with Mercier, the author of the "Tableau de Paris," and Mallet-Dupan, to see these horrid dens, the Salpetriere and Bicetre. I never saw any thing more hideous; and these two establishments at the gates of the metropolis strongly display the careless frivolity of the French. The hospital contained the germ of every loathsome disease; the prison was the school of every crime. Romilly, much moved, wrote, in a letter to a friend, an energetic description of these two receptacles of wretchedness. I men-

tioned this description to Mirabeau, who was anxious to see it. After reading it, to translate and publish it was the work of a single day; and he completed a small volume by adding a translation of an anonymous paper on the administration of the criminal law of England. The work was announced as translated from the English, by the Count de Mirabeau; but the public, accustomed to disguises of this nature, imputed to him the authorship of both. The success of this book was great, and its profits covered his expenses for a month. Mirabeau enjoyed a high reputation as a writer. His work on the Bank of St Charles, his "Denunciation of Stock-jobbing," his "Considerations on the Order of Cincinnatus," and his "Lettres de Cachet," were his titles to fame. But if all who had contributed to these works had each claimed his share, nothing would have remained as Mirabeau's own, but a certain art of arrangement, some bold expressions and biting epigrams, and numerous bursts of manly eloquence, certainly not the growth of the French academy. He obtained from Claviere and Panchaud the materials for his writings on finance. Claviere supplied him with the subject matter of his Letter to the King of Prussia. De Bourges was the author of his address to the Batavians, and I have often been present at the disputes between them, to which this circumstance gave rise. Mirabeau did not deny the debt, but de Bourges,



seeing the success of the work, was enraged at having been sacrificed to the fame of another. Mirabeau stood so high with the public, that the partners of his labours could not succeed in destroying a reputation which they had themselves established for him. I have often compared Mirabeau to a general making conquests through his lieutenants, whom he afterwards subjects to the very authority they have founded for him. Mirabeau had certainly a right to consider himself the parent of all these productions, because he presided at their birth, and without his indefatigable activity they would never have seen the light.

Claviere, as much annoyed as any man could be at having served as a pedestal to Mirabeau's fame, had formed a connection with Brissot de Warville, with whom he wrote in conjunction. Mirabeau called Brissot a literary jockey, and spoke of him with contempt, but entertained a high opinion of Claviere, with whom he was desirous of a renewal of intimacy. There had been no direct rupture between them, but much bitter feeling. Claviere called Mirabeau a jackdaw, that ought to be stripped of his borrowed plumes; but this jackdaw, even when deprived of his borrowed plumes, was still armed with a powerful spur, and could soar above all the rest of the literary tribe.

Mirabeau introduced us to Dupont de Nemours and Champfort. Dupont, author of the "Citizen's

Ephemerides," and the zealous friend of Turgot, had the reputation of an honest man and a clever economist; but he rendered himself a little ridiculous by the affectation of importance with which he complained of having to correspond with four kings. We found him one morning occupied in writing a work on *leather*, in which he showed that the government had never been consistent in its regulations on this matter. "This work," said he, "will be more entertaining than a novel;" and, as a specimen, he read to us seven or eight heavy and tedious chapters; but he rewarded us for this *ennui* by giving us many anecdotes of the assembly of notables, of which he had been secretary. He mentioned, among other things, a very successful *bon-mot*. Tithes were the subject of discussion. "Tithes," said the Archbishop of Aix, in a whining tone, "that *voluntary offering* of the devout faithful . . ."—"Tithes," interrupted the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, in his quiet and modest way, which rendered the *trait* more *piquant*, "that voluntary offering of the devout faithful, concerning which there are now forty thousand lawsuits in the kingdom."

Champfort and Mirabeau kept up a reciprocal exchange of absurd compliments. The former affected independence of character even to singularity. Although intimate with several distinguished persons at court, particularly with M. de Vaudreuil, he always

made a point of railing, in their presence, against every thing connected with high office and elevated rank. He aimed at passing for a misanthropist; but his dislike of human-kind arose from pride alone, and was manifested only in epigrams. Whilst others endeavoured, with a battering-ram,\* to overthrow the Colossus, he attempted to cripple him with shafts of satire. Knowing him afterwards more intimately, I saw a great deal of him; and, in his passion for revolution, I could discern nothing but a species of wounded vanity, susceptible of no enjoyment save the one resulting from the overthrow of that superiority of talent which had given him umbrage. He hated the institution of marriage, because he was himself illegitimate; and he declaimed against persons of rank and influence, lest he should be suspected of enjoying court patronage. By his own account, he was a severe moralist, and yet he sought his pleasures in the very coarsest and most degrading kind of voluptuousness. Mirabeau said that a statue ought to be raised to him by the physicians, because he had discovered, in the stews of the Palais Royal, the germ of a disease thought to be extinct—a kind of leprosy or elephantiasis.

We had other acquaintances in Paris besides Mirabeau, among whom we dared not boast above our breath of our intimacy with the latter. These were the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, M. de Malesherbes,

M. de Lafayette, Mr Jefferson, the American minister, Mallet du Pan, the Abbe Morellet, and many other personages less known. French conversation at this period was much less trivial than it used to be. The approaching convocation of the states-general, the importance of passing political events, interesting questions on freedom, and the near approach of a crisis which would affect the future destinies of the nation, were all novel topics at Paris, where they excited a diversity of opinions, and raised a fermentation which, though yet but feebly developed, imparted a strong stimulus to conversation. Every mind plunged into uncertain futurity and speculated in accordance with his fears or his wishes. In the higher classes, not a single individual remained indifferent to what was passing, and even the mass of the people commenced an agitation of which they scarcely knew the object.

The two months we spent at Paris were so well filled, the company we saw so varied, the whole of our time so profitably employed, the objects we beheld so interesting, and the scene so constantly changing; that in this short period I lived more than during whole years of my subsequent life. I was chiefly indebted to my fellow traveller for the reception I met with. I was under his auspices, and as his society was much courted, I did not encounter neglect. I was proud of his merit, and when I per-

ceived that he was understood and appreciated, my heart warmed with the exultation of friendship at the consideration he enjoyed without perceiving it. I cannot at present conceive how, in so short a time, we managed to get through all we performed. Romilly, always so quiet and measured in his motions, is yet a man of unceasing activity. He does not lose even minutes. He devotes himself in earnest to whatever he is doing; and, like the hand of a clock, never stops, although his motions are so equal as to be scarcely perceptible.

I can fancy I see him now before me, overwhelmed with business in the most laborious of professions; nevertheless he finds leisure to read every important book that appears, recurs often to his classics, sees much company, and yet never appears pressed for time. Economy of time is a virtue I never possessed, and my days often pass away without leaving any trace. Romilly communicated his activity to me, and taught me an art which unfortunately I shall never be able to make available.\*

On our departure, Mirabeau accompanied us as far as Chantilly, where we spent a delightful day, making projects to meet again; and we agreed to keep up a regular correspondence, which, however,

\* Sir Samuel Romilly died in London in 1818.—*Note by the Genevese Editor.*

we did not even begin. Mirabeau was full of his plan concerning the states-general. He foresaw the difficulties he should have to encounter in his election; but he already aimed at becoming one of the representatives of the *tiers-etat*, from a notion that he should thereby raise himself to greater eminence, and that his rank would add fresh *eclat* to his popular principles. I will here give another instance of his activity—of his avarice, I may say, in collecting the smallest literary materials. He gave me a methodical list of the subjects we had discussed together in conversation, and upon which we had differed. It was headed thus: “List of subjects which Dumont engages, upon the faith of friendship, to treat conscientiously, and send to Mirabeau very shortly after his return to London. Divers anecdotes *on his residence in Russia*; biographical sketches of several celebrated Genevese; opinions on national education,” &c. There were eighteen items in all, and his recollection of them was a proof of his attention and faithful memory. He was desirous of forming a collection of such materials, that he might use them at his leisure. Mirabeau could adopt every style of conduct and conversation, and though not himself a moral man, he had a very decided taste for the society of those whose rigidity of principle and severity of morals contrasted with the laxity of his own. His mode of inspiring confidence was to confess candidly

the faults and follies of his youth, express regret at his former errors, and declare that he would endeavour to expiate them by a sedulous and useful application of his talents in future to the cause of humanity and liberty, without allowing any personal advantage to turn him from his purpose. He had preserved, even in the midst of his excesses, a certain dignity and elevation of mind, combined with energy of character, which distinguished him from those effeminate and worn out rakes, those walking shadows, with which Paris swarmed ; and one was tempted to admit, as an excuse for his faults, the particular circumstances of his education, and to think that his virtues belonged to himself, and that his vices were forced upon him. I never knew a man more jealous of the esteem of those whom he himself esteemed, or one who could be acted upon more easily, if excited by a sentiment of high honour ; but there was nothing uniform and permanent in his character. His mind proceeded by leaps and starts, and obeyed too many impetuous masters. When burning with pride or jealousy, his passions were terrible ; he was no longer master of himself, and committed the most dangerous imprudences.

Having thus explained the origin of my intimacy with Mirabeau, I return to the journey I undertook with M. Duroverai, in 1789, for the purpose of trying if, with M. Necker's return to office, we could not better the condition of the Genevese exiles.

## CHAPTER II.

A SOMEWHAT ludicrous circumstance occurred during our journey. I have but an imperfect recollection of it. All was in a bustle for the election of the deputies; and the primary assemblies of the *bailliages*, composed of shopkeepers and peasants, knew not how to proceed with an election. We were breakfasting at Montreuil-sur-Mer, if I recollect right, and while chatting with our host, the latter acquainted us with the trouble and embarrassment attendant upon their meetings. Two or three days had been lost in disputes and confusion, and they had never even heard of such things as a president, a secretary, or voting tickets. By way of a joke, we determined to become the legislators of Montreuil, and having called for pen, ink and paper, began to draw up short regulations indicating the proper mode of conducting these elections. Never did work proceed more gaily than ours. In an hour it was complete, though interrupted every moment



by peals of laughter. We then read and explained it to our host, who, delighted at the idea of acquiring consequence, entreated that we would give it to him, assuring us that he would make good use of it. We would willingly have delayed our journey for a day to assist at this assembly and behold the incipient dawn of democracy in France, but we could not spare the time. Soon after our arrival at Paris, we were not a little surprised at reading in the public prints, that the assembly at Montreuil had finished its election the first of any, and great praises were bestowed upon the order which had been established there.

This circumstance is not so unimportant as it might at first appear. It displays either the carelessness or the incapacity of a government which could order so unusual a thing as a popular election, without drawing up a regular form of proceeding, so as to prevent disputes and confusion.

On our arrival at Paris, we waited on M. Necker, and in an interview with that minister, perceived that the question of the Genevese guarantee would not be so easily settled as we had anticipated. The king would neither consent to annul the edict of 1782, nor risk a refusal of his assent to an arrangement voluntarily entered into by both parties. As the negotiation threatened to be long, I spent a few weeks at Claviere's country-house at Surene, where

I employed myself in re-writing my "Address to the citizens of Geneva." I was aided in this task by Claviere, Duroverai, and Reybaz, the latter being my Aristarchus for the style ; for this was my apprenticeship in the art of composition, at least upon political topics. The work was finished, and sent to Geneva two or three months after. I say nothing of the sensation it produced, for if I derive any pleasure from continuing these memoirs, I shall have a long chapter to write on the subsequent revolutions of Geneva, and the individual part I took in them.

Claviere's house at Surene was the rendezvous of many of the most distinguished personages of the French revolution. Mirabeau and Brissot were two of the most remarkable. I was aware of every thing that was passing at Paris ; I often went there for a day or two, in order not to neglect the acquaintances I had formed during my former residence in that city. I visited the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, M. de Lafayette, and M. de Malesherbes. I had since become very intimate with the Bishop of Chartres, at whose house I often met the Abbe Sieyes. I visited also M. Delessert, Mallet-Dupan, Dr de La Roche, M. Bidderman and M. Reybaz. But during the months of March and April, I was almost always at Surene, occupied with my work, and caring little about the approaching meeting of the states-general.

I remember attending, at Brissot's and Claviere's, several meetings which they called committees, in which it was proposed to draw up declarations of right, and to lay down principles for conducting the proceedings of the states-general. I was only a spectator, and I never quitted one of these meetings without a feeling of mortal disgust at the chattering of these talkers. But the scene about to be unfolded was so important, that I was always to be found wherever there was any thing to be seen. I heard no interesting speeches, it is true ; but the feeling on the subject of liberty was unanimous. Cordiality, warmth and energy pervaded every heart, and in the midst of a nation endeavouring to shake off the trammels of feudal oppression, and which had abandoned its characteristic frivolity for a nobler pursuit, I felt inspired with the most enthusiastic ardour, and yielded to the most flattering anticipations. The French, against whom I had imbibed a prejudice of contempt, arising from my republican education, and which had been strengthened in England, now seemed to me quite a different people. I began to look upon them as free men, and participated in all the opinions of the most zealous partisans of the *tiers-etat*. I did not give much consideration to the questions which divided the French nation, but suffered myself to be borne away by my habitual opinions in favour of liberty. I never contemplated more than an imitation of the

English form of government, which I considered the most perfect model of political institutions. But if I had not adequately studied the subject, neither had I the presumption to deliver an opinion upon it. I never spoke at any of these meetings, when they exceeded the ordinary number of a friendly party. No one could be less desirous than I of making a display before a numerous auditory. I considered such a thing improper for a stranger, and my natural timidity strengthened my resolve not to make the attempt. Duroverai, although more accustomed to public assemblies, and gifted, moreover, with a power of eloquence which would have raised him to the highest rank in these committees, maintained a similar reserve, and had not even the modest ambition to undertake a part which he might have played with the most distinguished success. I will now state how we were at length dragged into the stream.\*

\* In one of these meetings at Brissot's, the subject under discussion was the several points to be inserted in the regulation for Paris. Amid a great number of propositions, we were greatly surprised at hearing Palissot move for a special article on the *right of representation*. We Genevise fancied that he meant the right of making representations or rather remonstrances to government. But he soon undeceived us by stating that this essential right, one of the most precious attributes of liberty, was now in the very act of being violated by government, in the most open manner, for M. Chenier's tragedy of Charles IX. was not allowed

The only impression which these speeches and proceedings have left upon my mind is one of a chaos of confused notions. There was no fixed point of public opinion, except against the court, and what was then termed the aristocracy. Necker was the divinity of the day; and Sieyes, then little known to the people, had, in his writings, supplied with points of argument such as were fond of discussing public questions. Rabaud de Saint-Etienne and Target had acquired a reputation at least equal to that of Sieyes. They who anticipated a civil war, looked upon Lafayette as ambitious of becoming the Washington of France. These were the leading characters of the day.

The Duke de la Rochefoucauld, distinguished by his simplicity, the excellence of his moral character, his independence of the court and his liberal principles, assembled at his house the principal members of the nobility who had pronounced themselves in favour of the people, the double representation of the *tiers*, the vote by numbers, the abolition of privileges, &c. Condorcet, Dupont, Lafayette, and the Duke de Liancourt, were the most distinguished at

to be performed. Being thus made acquainted with the nature of the right of representation, we could not help smiling at our blunder, when some one approaching me, whispered in my ear, "You perceive that, among the French, every thing ends with the theatre."—*Note by Dumont.*

these meetings. The prevailing idea was that of giving a constitution to France. The princes and nobles, who would fain preserve and fortify the old constitution, formed, properly speaking, the aristocratic party, against whom a general outcry was raised. But although the clamour was great, many individuals were almost indifferent, because they were unable to appreciate the consequences of what was passing. The body of the nation, even at Paris, saw nothing more in the assembling of the states-general, than a means of diminishing the taxes; and the creditors of the state, so often deprived of their dividends by a violation of public faith, considered the states-general as nothing more than a rampart against a government bankruptcy. The *deficit* had filled them with consternation; they deemed themselves on the brink of ruin, and were anxious to establish the public revenue upon a sure foundation. Besides this, each order of the states-general had its parties; the order of the nobility was divided into an aristocratic and a democratic faction; so was that of the clergy, and so was the *tiers-etat*. It is impossible to describe the confusion of ideas, the licentiousness of imagination, the burlesque notions of popular rights, the hopes, apprehensions and passions of these parties. The Count de Lauraguais said that it was like a world, *the day after its creation*, when nations, rendered hostile by interest, were trying to settle their differences

and regulate their respective rights as if nothing had previously existed, and in making arrangements for the future, there was no past to be taken into consideration.

I was present at Paris at the meetings of the sections for the appointment of electors. Although there were orders to admit into these assemblies none but the inhabitants of the section in which they were respectively held, they were not enforced; for in France there was no feeling of jealousy in this respect. After the first few had entered, every decently dressed individual presenting himself at the door was allowed to pass. In many sections there was some difficulty in obtaining the attendance of a sufficient number of persons. The citizens of Paris, surprised at the novelty of the thing, and rather alarmed at centinels being placed at the doors of the assemblies, remained at home out of danger, and determined to continue to do so until the first few days were passed. I was at the section of the *Filles-Saint-Thomas*, a central district inhabited by the most opulent classes. For many days not more than two hundred individuals were present. The difficulty of giving the first impetus to the machine was extreme. The noise and confusion were beyond any thing I can describe. Each individual was standing, and all spoke at the same time, nor could the president succeed in obtaining silence for two minutes together. Many other difficulties arose on the man-

ner of taking the votes and counting them. I had a store of curious anecdotes relative to this infancy of popular institutions, but by degrees they have been effaced from my memory. They were instances of the eagerness of conceited men to put themselves forward in the hope of being elected.

Here were likewise to be seen the first attempts at party intrigue. A list of candidates was rejected, and the elections were to be made amongst all persons present. The consequence of this was, that the votes were at first so much divided, that no absolute majority was obtained for any one candidate proposed, and it became necessary to repeat the poll several times.

The assembly of electors were as slow and tumultuous in their proceedings as the district assemblies. The states-general met at Versailles several days before the deputies were elected for Paris. It is a remarkable fact that the Abbe Sieyes was the last deputy elected, and the only ecclesiastic appointed to represent the *tiers-etat*. Thus the man who had given the impulsion to the states-general and possessed the greatest influence in their formation, owed his being a member of that assembly to a mere chance.

The elections at Paris were the last in the kingdom. The delay arose, I apprehend, from a discussion as to the mode of making them. Some pretended that it should be done by the three orders in



conjunction—others, by the orders separately. During this discussion, Duval d'Espresmenil, who had always been considered as a partisan of the *tiers-etat*, declared himself in favour of privileges; and on this occasion the count de Lauraguais said to him jeeringly, “Eh! M. Duval, as I do not prevent you from being noble, pray suffer me to be a *bourgeois* of Paris!”

I was not at Versailles at the opening of the states, but went thither a few days afterwards. The three orders were in open quarrel about the verification of their powers. The *tiers-etat* wanted this verification to be made in common; the two other orders insisted upon its being done separately. Though the question appeared to be of no importance, much in reality depended upon it. The *tiers-etat* wanted the two other orders to unite with them and form but one assembly; in which case, the commons, from their numerical strength, would always maintain a preponderance. They adhered to this opinion with the greatest tenacity; resisted every attempt to bring them into action, and contrived to cast upon the nobility and clergy an imputation of obstinacy, which rendered the latter orders still more unpopular with the multitude.

It was a great blunder of the government to leave this question unsettled. If the king had ordered the union of all three, he would have had the *tiers-etat*

for him ; and had he ordered the separation, he would have been supported by the nobility and clergy. The states-general would certainly not have begun their proceedings by an act of disobedience towards the king, then considered as the provisional legislator. But in coming to no decision on the subject, he opened the lists to the combattants, and the royal authority was destined to become the prey of the victors.

I had opportunities of seeing how much this delay generated and excited party feelings. The *tiers-etat* continued their proceedings, and at length went so far as to constitute themselves a national assembly, after having sent a peremptory summons to the nobility and clergy, to which those orders declined paying any attention. All the seeds of disorder were sown during this interval, and this is a period to which the historian of the revolution ought to pay particular attention.

When I entered the hall in which the States sate, there was neither object of discussion nor order. The deputies were not at first known to each other ; but every day made them better acquainted. During their proceedings, they took their places any where, chose the oldest among them to preside at their sittings, and spent their whole time in discussing trifling incidents, listening to news ; and, the provin-

cial deputies, in making themselves acquainted with Versailles.

The hall was constantly full of visitors who went every where, and even took possession of the benches of the deputies, without any jealousy on the part of the latter, or claims of privilege. It is true that, not being yet constituted, they considered themselves rather as members of a club than of a body politic.

## CHAPTER III.

I soon found the person I was looking for. It was Mirabeau. In the course of a long conversation with him, I discovered that he was already annoyed with every body, and in open hostility with the majority of the deputation from Provence. I was informed, soon afterwards, that several humiliating circumstances had occurred to vex him.

When the list of deputies of the several *bailliages* was read, many well known names were received with applause. Mounier, Chapelier, Rabaud de Sainte-Etienne, and several others had been distinguished by these flattering marks of approbation; but, when Mirabeau's name was read, there was a murmur of a different kind, and hooting instead of applause. Insult and contempt showed how low he stood in the estimation of his colleagues, and it was even openly proposed to get his election cancelled, when the verification of powers took place. He had employed manœuvres at Aix, and at Marseilles,

which were to be brought forward against the legality of his return ; and he himself felt so convinced that his election at Marseilles could never be maintained, that he gave the preference to Aix, although he would have been much more flattered at representing one of the largest and most important cities in the kingdom. He had tried to speak on two or three occasions, but a general murmur always reduced him to silence. It was in this situation of spite and ill-humour, that he published the two first numbers of an anonymous journal entitled, the "States-General," a sort of lampoon upon the assembly. He compared the deputies to tumultuous school-boys, giving way to indecent and servile mirth. He severely attacked M. Necker, the nation's idol. In short, this journal was a collection of epigrams. The government ordered its suppression ; but Mirabeau, more excited than discouraged by this prohibition, announced in his own name, his "Letters to his constituents." No one durst dispute the right of a representative of the people to give an account of the public sittings of the assembly.

With my friendship for Mirabeau, and the high opinion I entertained of his talents, it made my heart bleed to see him in such disgrace, especially as it inflamed his self-love, and made him, perhaps, do as much harm as he might have done good. I listened patiently to all his complaints and railings against the

assembly. In speaking of its members, he was prodigal in his expressions of contempt, and he already anticipated that all would be lost by their silly vanity, and jealousy of every individual who evinced superior abilities. He thought, or rather affected to think, that he was repulsed by a sort of ostracism against talents; but he would show them, he said, that he could be even with them. In the midst of these bursts of passion, and these rodomontades of vengeance, I easily perceived that he was much affected, and even distinguished the tears of vexation in his eyes. I seized the earliest opportunity of applying a balm to the wounds of his self-love. I told him plainly and candidly, that his *debut* had offended every one; that nothing was more dangerous than for a deputy who, like him, might aspire to the first rank in the assembly, to write a journal; that to censure the body to which he belonged, was not the way to become a favourite with its members; that if, like me, he had lived in a republic, and seen the concealed springs of party intrigue, he would not so readily yield to discouragement; that he should quietly suffer all the half-talents and half-reputations to pass before him; that they would destroy themselves, and, in the end, each individual would be placed according to his specific gravity; that he was on the greatest theatre in the world; that he could not attain to eminence except through the assembly;

that the slight mortification he had undergone, would be more than compensated by a single successful day; and that if he were desirous of obtaining a permanent ascendancy, he must follow a new system. This long conversation, which took place in the garden of Trianon, had an excellent effect. Mirabeau, feelingly alive to the voice of friendship, softened by degrees, and at length admitted that he was wrong. Soon after, he showed me a letter to his constituents, which he was about to publish. We read it together; it was less bitter than former ones, but was still too much so. We spent a couple of hours in remodelling it, and entirely changing its tone. He even consented, though with repugnance, to praise certain deputies, and represent the assembly in a respectable light. We then agreed that he should not attempt to speak until some extraordinary occasion should offer.

Mirabeau had but a slight acquaintance with Duroverai, but was well aware of his talents. He knew that Duroverai had acquired great experience in conducting the political affairs of Geneva, had a profound knowledge of jurisprudence, had drawn up the Genevese code of laws, and possessed, in the highest degree, the art of discussion and the routine of popular assemblies. All this rendered an intimacy with him very desirable; and Mirabeau, who afterwards considered him as his Mentor, never took a step of any consequence without consulting him. At Ver-

sailles, we lodged at the hotel Charost. Claviere, who frequently came from Paris to see the assembly, had become reconciled to Mirabeau, and came often to our hotel, where we assembled now and then a few friends of our own way of thinking, and, in particular, our countryman M. Reybaz, between whom and Mirabeau we endeavoured to promote an intimacy. But it was some time before they became familiar. Reybaz, by his coldness of manner, repulsed the most flattering advances; but he at length yielded, and became one of Mirabeau's most active co-operators. This did not occur till several months after, when Mirabeau had already acquired great ascendancy in the assembly. In this little committee, I have seen very important measures put in train, and I may speak of them with the more freedom, because I looked on rather than participated in them. I had never meddled with political matters, and felt no inclination to do so. I had, moreover, too high an opinion of the talents of Duroverai and Claviere, not to adopt, generally, their way of thinking. I was of great use in preventing collision between them, and in calming them when their prejudices, which I did not share, were opposed to each other. Duroverai, with many amiable qualities, had unpleasant asperities of temper, and often treated Mirabeau like a truant school-boy. Claviere, who looked forward to be minister of finance, was in haste to act, and did



not willingly lend himself to Duroverai's plan of uniting Mirabeau and Necker, and governing, by such coalition, the whole assembly.

Duroverai was acquainted with M. Mallouet, who was intimate with M. Necker, and had rendered some services to the representatives of Geneva. We often dined at his house; and on one occasion convinced him of the necessity of bringing about a conference between Mirabeau and M. Necker. Many objections were raised: "Can Mirabeau be trusted?"—"Would he concert measures with the minister?"—"Would not M. Necker commit himself?" Duroverai answered every objection, and M. de Montmorin was consulted. The conference took place, and Mirabeau, who had never before seen M. Necker, spoke of him, on his return, as a good kind of man, unjustly accused of possessing talent and depth of thought. This interview was not wholly unfruitful; and the promise of an embassy to Constantinople, on the dissolution of the assembly, was held out to Mirabeau. The engagement was to be kept secret; and I do not think that Mirabeau, who was the least discreet of men, communicated it to more than some seven or eight persons. However, the king's intentions, and those of M. Necker, were considered so consonant with public feeling, that a man who pledged himself to second them, did not contract an engagement contrary to the good of the nation. But

the turn that affairs subsequently took, and Mirabeau's great ascendancy, soon raised him above an embassy, and placed him in a situation to dictate rather than have conditions imposed upon him. At this period, however, when the permanency of the states was not contemplated, much less the destruction of the monarchy, the idea of an embassy pleased him much. He wanted to have me appointed secretary, and was already meditating the plan of an Ottoman encyclopædia.

I ought, before I related this circumstance, to have mentioned Mirabeau's first triumph at the assembly of the *tiers-etat*. I was the more affected by it, because it concerned Duroverai; and never was the most dreadful state of anxiety succeeded by more intense joy, than on this occasion. Duroverai was seated in the hall of the assembly, with some deputies of his acquaintance. He had occasion to pass to Mirabeau a note written with a pencil. M . . . ., who was already one of the most formidable declaimers of the assembly, saw this, and asked the member next him, who that stranger was, that was passing notes and interfering with their proceedings. The answer he received was a stimulus to his zeal. He rose, and in a voice of thunder, stated, that a foreigner, banished from his native country, and residing in England, from whose government he received a pension, was seated among them, assisting at their debates, and

transmitting notes and observations to the deputies of their assembly. The agitation on every side of the hall, which succeeded this denunciation, would have appeared to me less sinister, had it been the forerunner of an earthquake. Confused cries were heard of, "Who is he?"—"Where is he?"—"Let him be pointed out!" Fifty members spoke at once; but Mirabeau's powerful voice soon obtained silence. He declared that he would himself point out the foreigner, and denounce him to the assembly. "This exile," said he, "in the pay of England, is M. Duroverai, of Geneva; and know, that this respectable man, whom you have so wantonly insulted, is a martyr to liberty; that, as attorney-general of the republic of Geneva, he incurred the indignation of our visirs, by his zealous defence of his fellow citizens; that a *lettre de cachet*, issued by M. de Vergennes, deprived him of the office he had but too honourably filled; and when his native city was brought under the yoke of the aristocracy, he obtained the honours of exile. Know further, that the crime of this enlightened and virtuous citizen, consisted in having prepared a code of laws, in which he had abolished odious privileges."\*

\* This is the speech as Mirabeau uttered it:—"I think with the gentleman who spoke last, that no individual, not a deputy, whether he be a foreigner or a native, ought to be seated among us. But the sacred ties of friendship, the still more holy claims

The impression produced by this speech, of which the above is only an abstract, was electrical. It was succeeded by a universal burst of applause. Nothing that resembled this force and dignity of elo-

of humanity, and the respect I have for this assembly of patriots, and friends of peace, render it an imperious duty on my part, to separate from the simple question of order, the odious accusation which he has had the assurance to couple with it. He has dared to assert, that among the numerous strangers who are assisting at our proceedings, there is an exile ;—one who has taken refuge in England, and is in the pay of the king of Great Britain. Now this stranger, this exile, this refugee, is M. Duroverai, of Geneva, one of the most respectable citizens in the world. Never had freedom a more enlightened, a more laborious, or a more disinterested advocate! From his youth he was appointed by his countrymen to assist in the framing of a code of laws, intended to place the constitution of his country on a permanent basis. Nothing was more beautiful, nothing more philosophically political, than the law in favour of the natives. He was one of its framers. This law, so little known, yet so deserving of general attention, establishes the following principle: “That all republics have perished, nay more, deserved to perish, for having oppressed the people, and not having known that they who govern, can preserve their own liberty only by respecting that of their brethren.” Elected attorney-general of Geneva, by the unanimous voice of his fellow citizens, M. Duroverai incurred, from that moment, the hatred of the aristocrats. They swore his ruin; and certain that this intrepid magistrate would never cease to employ the authority of his office in defence of the independence of his country, they succeeded in obtaining his

cution had ever been heard before in the tumultuous assembly of the *tiers-etat*. Mirabeau was deeply moved by this first success. Duroverai was immediately surrounded by deputies, who, by their kind attentions, endeavoured to atone for the insult they had offered him. Thus, an accusation which had, at first, filled me with consternation, terminated so dismissal, through the interference of a despotic minister. But even in the midst of party hatred, and the intrigues of base factions, M. Duroverai's character was respected even by calumny itself, whose foul breath never sullied a single action of his life. Included in the proscription which the aristocrats obtained from the destroyers of Genevese independence, he retired to England, and will, doubtless, never abdicate the honours of exile, until freedom shall once more resume her sway at Geneva. A large number of the most respectable citizens of Great Britain took up the cause of the proscribed republican, procured him the most flattering reception in their country, and induced their government to grant him a pension. This was a species of civic crown, awarded by that modern people, whom the tutelary genius of the human race seems especially to have appointed to guard and officiate at the altars of freedom . . . ! Behold then the stranger, the exile, the refugee, who has been denounced to you ! Formerly the persecuted man sought refuge at the altar, where he found an inviolable asylum, and escaped from the rage of the wicked. The hall in which we are now assembled, is the temple which, in the name of Frenchmen, you are raising to liberty ; and will you suffer it to be polluted by an outrage committed upon a martyr of liberty ?"—*Note by Dumont.*

much the more to my satisfaction, that the knowledge of this scene at Geneva could not fail to promote the recall of her exiled citizens. Of course this act of courage, this transport of justice and friendship was not lost upon us, and our connection was strengthened by the ties of gratitude. If Mirabeau had always served the public cause with the same ardour as he did that of his friend—if he had shown a zeal equally noble, in putting a stop to the calumnies uttered from the tribune, he would have become the saviour of his country.

I have but an imperfect recollection of the early proceedings of the assembly, during the dispute of the orders; but I cannot forget the occasion on which a man, who afterwards acquired a fatal celebrity, first brought himself into notice. The clergy were endeavouring, by a subterfuge, to obtain a meeting of the orders; and for this purpose deputed the Archbishop of Aix to the *tiers-etat*. This prelate expatiated very pathetically upon the distresses of the people, and the poverty of the country parishes. He produced a piece of black bread, which a dog would have rejected, but which the poor were obliged to eat or starve. He besought the *tiers-etat* to depute some members to confer with those deputed by the nobility and clergy, upon the means of bettering the condition of the indigent classes. The *tiers-etat* perceived the snare, but dared not openly reject

the proposal, as it would render them unpopular with the lower classes ; when a deputy rose, and after professing sentiments in favour of the poor still stronger than those of the prelate, adroitly threw doubts upon the sincerity of the intentions avowed by the clergy.

“Go,” said he to the archbishop, “and tell your colleagues, that if they are so impatient to assist the suffering poor, they had better come hither and join the friends of the people. Tell them no longer to embarrass our proceedings with affected delays ;—tell them no longer to endeavour, by unworthy means, to make us swerve from the resolutions we have taken ; but as ministers of religion—as worthy imitators of their masters—let them forego that luxury which surrounds them, and that splendour which puts indigence to the blush ;—let them resume the modesty of their origin—discharge the proud lackeys by whom they are attended—sell their superb equipages, and convert all their superfluous wealth into food for the indigent.”

This speech, which coincided so well with the passions of the time, did not elicit loud applause, which would have been a bravado and out of place, but was succeeded by a murmur much more flattering : “Who is he ?” was the general question ; but he was unknown ; and it was not until some time had elapsed, that a name was circulated which, three years later,

made France tremble. The speaker was Robespierre. Reybaz, who was seated next to me, observed, "This young man has not yet practised; he is too wordy, and does not know when to stop, but he has a store of eloquence and bitterness which will not leave him in the crowd."

I had become acquainted with several deputies, and I often dined with the Bishop of Chartres, to whom I had been introduced by Brissot and Claviere. I used to meet, at the house of this prelate, his grand vicar, the Abbe Sieyes, but did not form any intimacy with him. He was a very absent man, did not encourage familiarity, and was by no means of an open disposition. He gave his opinion, but without discussion; and if any one raised an objection, he made no reply. His works had earned him a high reputation. He was considered the oracle of the *tiers-etat*, and the most formidable enemy of privileges. He was easily moved to anger, and seemed to entertain the most profound contempt for the present order of society. I thought this friend of liberty must of course like the English, and I sounded him on this subject; but with surprise I discovered that he deemed the English constitution a mere piece of quackery, got up to impose upon the multitude. He seemed to listen to me as if I were uttering absurdities, while I detailed the divers modifications of this system, and the disguised though real checks



upon the three estates composing the legislature. All influence possessed by the crown was, in his eyes, venality, and opposition a mere trick. The only thing which he admired in England was trial by jury; but he badly understood its principles, which is the case with every Frenchman, and had formed very erroneous notions on the subject. In a word, he considered the English as tyros in framing constitutions, and that he could give a much better one than theirs to France.\*

I inquired of the Bishop of Chartres and M. Lassey concerning Sieyes's habits, studies, and the manner in which he had acquired his knowledge; for it was easy to perceive that he was self-educated.

\* I must not forget one of the most characteristic traits with which my memory supplies me, relative to the Abbe Sieyes. One day, after having breakfasted at M. de Talleyrand's, we walked together for a considerable time in the garden of the Tuilleries. The Abbe Sieyes was more disposed to talk and more communicative than usual. In a moment of familiarity and effusion of heart, after having spoken of his studies, his works, and his manuscripts, he uttered these words, which struck me forcibly: "Politics are a science in which I think I am perfect." Had he ever measured the outline, or formed a conception of the extent and difficulty of a complete legislation, he would not have made such an assertion; and presumption, in this case, as in any other, is the surest test of ignorance.—*Note by Dumont.*

Nothing remained of his acquirements at his theological seminary or at the Sorbonne. It appears that at Chartres, where he always spent the greater part of the summer, he lived like a recluse, because he did not like provincial society, and would put himself out of the way for nobody. He read little, but meditated a great deal. The works he preferred were Rousseau's "*Contrat Social*," the writings of Condillac, and Adam Smith's "*Wealth of Nations*." He had written much, but could not bear the work of revision. He fancied he did not possess what is called the knack of writing; he envied Mirabeau's power and facility in this respect, and would willingly have confided his manuscripts to any one capable of giving them that last polish which he felt to be beyond his power. He was little moved by the charms of women, which perhaps originated in a weak and sickly constitution, but was passionately fond of music, with the theory of which he was conversant, besides being an excellent performer. This is all I was able to collect concerning his character and habits. At the period I am speaking of, he might be considered the real leader of the *tiers-etat*, although no one made less display. But his work on the "*Means of Execution*," &c. had pointed out the line of conduct to be pursued by the assembly, and it was he who exploded

the term *tiers-état* to substitute in its stead that of the *commons*.\*

The Bishop of Chartres was one of the prelates attached to the popular party ; that is to say, he was favourable to the union of the orders, the vote by individual numbers, and a new constitution. He was neither a politician nor a man of profound learning ; but had much good faith and candour, and suspected nothing wrong. He could not imagine, in the *tiers-état*, any other views than the reform of abuses and the public good. A stranger to intrigue and sincere in his intentions, he followed the dictates of his conscience, and was acted upon by the purest sense of duty. In religion, as in politics, he was a believer, but tolerant, and was much rejoiced at seeing the removal of the protestant disabilities. He expected that the clergy would be called upon to make great sacrifices, but did not anticipate that they would become victims of the revolution. I saw him when the property of the church was declared national property. I found him, one day, with tears in his eyes,

\* Active and ardent in his party, he caused more to be done by others than he did himself. He laid down the plan of the battle, but remained in his tent during the combat. Girardin said of him, " He is to a party what a mole is to a grass-plot, he labours and raises it."—*Note by Dumont.*

discharging his servants, reducing his hospitable establishment, and preparing to sell his jewels for the liquidation of his debts. He assuaged his grief by entering with me into the most confidential details. His regret was not selfish ; but he accused himself of having submitted to be made a dupe of by the *tiers-etat*, whose interests he had embraced, and who, as soon as they became strong, had violated the engagements they had contracted during their weakness. It was indeed painful to an honest and well-meaning man, to have contributed to the success of so unjust a party; but never could blame attach less to any individual than to the Bishop of Chartres. I cannot but mention two anecdotes of this worthy prelate, which I never think of without admiration. During the first insurrections, he was deputed by the assembly to proceed to a village near Versailles, and endeavour to save the life of an unfortunate baker, named Thomassin, against whom the people were furious. The venerable bishop had exhausted all the means of reason and persuasion, but to no purpose. He saw the ferocious savages seize the unhappy wretch to tear him to pieces. He had not an instant to lose. Without hesitation he threw himself upon his knees in a deep mire, and called upon the assassins to kill him also, rather than force him to witness so atrocious a crime. The frenzied multitude of men and women, struck with respect at this action, drew back an

instant, and gave the bishop time to help into his carriage the wounded and bleeding Thomassin.

The other anecdote cannot be compared to this ; but it serves to show his excessive delicacy and high probity. At a period when pretended national reforms had reduced so many individuals to distress, he had purchased, in the street, a gold box at a very low price. On his return home he perceived that the box was worth much more than he had paid for it. Uneasy at his purchase, and fearful of having taken an undue advantage of the wants of the seller, he did not rest until he had found him out and given him several louis-d'or in addition to what he had already paid, although he would have preferred to return the box, which, at that price, was no longer in unison with a situation he already perceived to be inevitable. "But," said he, "if I return the box, his wants may force him to sell it at a lower price than I first paid. This is but a small sacrifice, and it is perhaps the last I shall have it in my power to make." To conclude what I have to say about this excellent man,—when, after his emigration, he was residing in a village in Germany, the Marquis of Lansdowne, who had known him at Spa, sent him, anonymously, a letter of credit for a hundred pounds. But he would not at first accept it, declaring that if he were unable to discharge such a debt, he would at least know his benefactor, for he did not choose to be exempted

from gratitude. I had the satisfaction of being the interpreter of Lord Lansdowne's sentiments on this occasion, and of testifying to him, under his misfortunes, that respect and esteem still entertained towards him by every person who had known him during his prosperity.

## CHAPTER IV.

MORE than a month had elapsed in this state of suspense. Sieyes thought it was high time to send a positive summons to the nobility and clergy, and, on their refusal, to proceed to the verification of powers, and put the commons into a state of activity. But this apparent loss of time had been turned to profit by the deputies of the *tiers-etat*.

They had obtained public favour. The other two orders were divided among themselves, and the votes among the clergy nearly equalized. The people, who saw only the surface of things, considered the nobility and clergy as too obstinate to enter into any arrangement, they having already refused to assemble in the same hall as the deputies of the *tiers-etat*. The inhabitants of Versailles were in the habit of insulting, in the street and at the doors of the assembly, those whom they termed *aristocrats*, a term which, like all other party expressions, subsequently acquired a most direful influence.

What surprises me is, that there was no counter designation to distinguish the opposite party, then called *the nation*. The effect of the latter term, placed in the balance with the other, may readily be conceived. The people of Paris, so easy to govern and so indolent in their state of repose, became by degrees filled, like a balloon, with inflammable gas.

Though the commons began already to feel their strength, there were many different opinions on the manner of bringing it into use, and on the name which should be taken by the assembly as a collective body. The audacity afterwards shown, was then only in embryo. Every man of forethought judged that the most important consequences would result from the decision of such a question. To call themselves a *national assembly*, would be to depreciate to the lowest degree the king, the nobles, and the clergy; —it would, if the government displayed any vigour, prove the beginning of civil war. To vote themselves simply an *assembly of the commons* would, on the other hand, be only expressing an undoubted fact, and would not force the nobles and clergy to join them; it merely maintained the subdivisions of the assembly then existing. Several titles were proposed as modifications of these two; for each member endeavoured to conceal his views and pretensions; and even Sieyes himself, who rejected every thing tend-



ing to maintain the orders, did not dare at once to propose the decisive term of *national assembly*. He first suggested an ambiguous denomination, implying but not expressing that idea ; nor was it till after a debate of two or three days, that he ventured to pass the Rubicon, and get the motion made by a deputy called Legrand. There was an immediate and general call for putting it to the vote, and this voting, which lasted till very late at night, had something sombre and awful. The galleries had, with great difficulty, been forced to absolute silence. There were eighty votes against the denomination of *national assembly*, and nearly five hundred in its favour.

I have reserved, to mention separately, the part taken by Mirabeau in this debate. The question had already been discussed in our little society. The danger of a scission with the court and the nobles ; the evil of opening the states-general by a rupture between the orders ; the necessity of recurring to violent measures to support this first step and overcome resistance ; all these considerations were duly weighed ; but what had still more influence over us, was that we bore in mind the English constitution, which we took for our model, and the division of the legislature into two branches appeared to us far preferable to a single assembly over whom

there could be no check. Though we ultimately adopted this opinion, it was no easy matter to get Mirabeau to support it as his own. It was against the popular torrent ; and it required courage to commence a determined and systematic opposition to Sieyes, the Bretons and the Palais Royal, and brave calumnies, clamours, and suspicions which such an apparent deviation from democratic principles might produce. But Mirabeau possessed, in a high degree, the courage produced by excitement, and was endowed with great presence of mind. He had no objection to an opposition of *ecclat* ; was not pleased with Sieyes, who did not flatter him ; and had sufficient confidence in himself to think, that he could redeem his popularity, should he be deprived of it by the opinion he was about to advocate. In presenting his motion, he paid many flattering compliments to the dominant party, abused the privileged orders, and concluded by proposing that the commons should be designated by the title of *assembly of the French people*.

This motion, not very well understood at first, was not strongly opposed ; but when Mallouet, who passed for a ministerial, was seen to support it, and was bringing the moderates to his way of thinking, the popular party, in alarm, commenced a violent attack on Mirabeau. The word *people*, which had at first appeared synonymous with the word *nation*, was now placed

in another light, as having been invented to form opposition with the nobility and clergy who were not *the people*, and pretended to be above them. Invectives were not spared : the author of the motion was termed an aristocrat in disguise, who had insidiously endeavoured, by this title, to villify the true representatives of the French nation. The tempest, increasing by degrees, seemed to burst with tenfold fury. I was then in one of the galleries talking to Lord Elgin, a young Scottish nobleman who much admired Mirabeau's motion. Indignant at the absurdities uttered about the word *people*, I was unable to resist the pleasure of writing what I should myself have said, had I been a member of the assembly. After discussing the question, I wrote with a pencil a sort of apostrophe intended as a peroration. It was addressed to those pretended friends of liberty who fancied themselves degraded at being called deputies of the people. This sketch, very rapidly written, was not wanting in force and elevation. Lord Elgin begged I would permit him to read it, and as I had no ultimate view in writing it, I showed him the paper, with which he appeared much pleased.

The dinner hour suspended the sitting. I dined at Mirabeau's. Duroverai reproached him with the weakness of his speech, and proved to him that he had neglected the strongest and most convincing arguments. I showed him my sketch, and the peroration

appeared to him so conclusive, that he instantly determined, he said, "to throw that burning tile at their heads." "This is impossible," said I, "for I showed it to Lord Elgin, who was next to me in the gallery." "And what difference does that make?" replied Mirabeau; "had you shown it to the whole world, I should certainly quote it as the passage best adapted to the subject."

Duroverai, who had an extraordinary desire that this motion should succeed, began to write a refutation of all the arguments used against it. Mirabeau copied as fast as he could, and the result was a tolerably complete oration, for the delivery of which, it was only necessary to be allowed to speak. He found much difficulty in obtaining a hearing; but the galleries were so fond of listening to him, that the assembly durst not persist in a refusal. The exordium which I had written, excited a tolerable degree of attention—the argumentative part passed off with alternate murmurs and applause—but the peroration, which he delivered in a voice of thunder, and which was heard with a species of terror, produced an extraordinary effect. It was succeeded, not by cries, but by convulsions of rage. The agitation was general, and a storm of invectives burst upon the speaker from all parts of the hall. But he stood, calm and unmoved, whilst I, the poor author of this unhappy attempt, remained petrified in a corner, lamenting

an error of judgment so fatal to my friend and cause.\*

\* The following is the peroration. "I persevere in my motion and in its only expression that has called forth animadversion.—I mean the denomination of *French people*. I adopt it, I defend it, and I proclaim it for the very reason urged in objection to it.—Yes! it is because the term *people* is not sufficiently respected in France, that it is cast into the shade and covered with the rust of prejudice ;—because it presents an idea alarming to our pride and revolting to our vanity—and is pronounced with contempt in the chamber of the aristocrats. It is for these very reasons, gentlemen, that I could wish (and we ought to impose the task upon ourselves), not only to elevate but to ennoble the name, and thus render it respectable to ministers, and dear to every heart. If this title were not, in fact, already ours, it ought to be selected from amongst every other, and its adoption considered the most valuable opportunity of serving that people from whom we derive our authority—that people whose representatives we are—whose rights we defend—and yet, whose name, as forming our own denomination and title, would seem to raise the blush of shame on our cheeks.—Oh! how should I exult if, by the choice of such a title, firmness and courage were restored to a trodden-down people! My mind is elevated by the contemplation in futurity, of the happy results which may proceed from the use of this name! The people will look up to us, and we to the people; and our title will remind us of our duties and of our strength. Under the shelter of a name which neither startles nor alarms us, we can sow and cultivate the seeds of liberty ;—we can avert those fatal blasts that would nip it in the bud; and if we so protect its

When the tumult had somewhat subsided, Mirabeau, in a grave and solemn tone, thus addressed the president: “ Sir, I deposit upon your table the

growth, our descendants will sit under the vivifying shade of its wide-spreading branches.—Representatives of the people! vouchsafe to answer me! Will you go and tell your constituents that you have rejected this name of *people*?—that if you are not ashamed of them, you have, at all events, endeavoured to elude using their name, which does not appear to you a sufficiently flattering title?—that you want a more fastuous denomination than they could confer upon you? Gentlemen! do you not perceive that the title of representatives of the people is absolutely necessary, inasmuch as it will insure to you the attachment of the people, that imposing mass, without which you would be nothing but single individuals—nothing but slender reeds which might easily be broken one by one? Do you not see that you require the word *people*, because it shows the people that you have united your fate to theirs; and it will teach them to centre in you all their thoughts and all their hopes!—The Batavian heroes who founded the liberties of their country, were more able tacticians than we are. They adopted the denomination of *gueux* or beggarly fellows;—they chose this title, because their tyrants had endeavoured to cast it upon them as a term of opprobrium; and this designation, by attaching to their party that numerous and powerful class so degraded by the despotism of the aristocracy, was, at the same time, their glory, their strength, and the pledge of their success. The friends of freedom select the name which is most useful to them, and not that by which they are the most flattered. They are called *remonstrators* in America, *shepherds* in Switzerland, and *gueux* in the Low Countries.

speech which has elicited such strong marks of disapprobation, because it has not been properly understood. I consent to be judged, on the merits of its contents, by all the friends of liberty." So saying he left the hall amid threats and furious imprecations.

I called on Mirabeau an hour after. I was overcome by feelings of dread and disappointment, but I found him triumphant, and reading his speech to some inhabitants of Marseilles who were expressing the most enthusiastic admiration of it. I must confess that he paid back to the assembly the slights he had received from them. He compared them to wild asses, who had obtained from nature no other faculty than that of kicking and biting. "They did not frighten me, my dear friend," said he in a prophetic tone, "and in a week you shall see me more powerful than ever. They must come to me, when they find themselves about to be overwhelmed by the tempest they have themselves raised. Regret not, therefore, the events of this evening. The thinkers will see something very profound in my motion. As for the fools, I despise them too much to hate them, and will save them in spite of themselves." With

They consider the terms of reproach applied to them by their enemies, as their proudest boast; for they deprive such terms of all power of humiliation, the moment they have succeeded in coupling them with honourable deeds!—*Note by the Genevese Editor.*

all this excess of pride and temporary courage, he had not sufficient firmness to attend at the *call of the house*. He did not, therefore, vote upon the question; and thus it was that his name did not appear on the list of the eighty deputies held up, to the people, as traitors sold to the aristocracy. Even his popularity did not suffer at the Palais Royal, whilst Mallouet, Mounier and several others who had maintained the same opinion less openly, were delivered over to popular censure.

On the following day, when Sieyes appeared in the hall, all the members, from a spontaneous feeling of respect, rose to receive him, and applause thundered from every side. "How contemptible!" said Mirabeau. "Do they imagine that all is over? I should not be surprised if civil war were the fruit of their wise decree."

The nobles were confounded at the audacity of the *tiers-etat*. They who had access to the king, told him that all would be lost, if he did not oppose this usurpation on the part of the commons. The debates in the chamber of the nobility, were scenes of infuriated madness. The decree of the *tiers-etat* was termed an outrage, treachery, high treason. The frenzy was at its height; and the king ought to have called all his faithful subjects to defend him, put himself at the head of his troops, ordered the seditious to be arrested, and dissolved the assembly.



The cause of the events which followed, was to be traced to the excitement of party spirit, and to the violent language which resulted from it. It is necessary to have witnessed this ferment to comprehend what followed. Many historical facts, stripped of the circumstances by which they were prepared, seem inexplicable. The atmosphere at Versailles was dark and scorching; and the explosion which was expected to follow, must needs be terrible.

At this juncture, Duroverai conceived a plan which he mentioned to M. Mallouet, but feared to confide to the indiscretion of Mirabeau, in whom neither party had any confidence. This plan was, that the king should sit as the provisional legislator of France, and annul the decree of the commons which constituted them a national assembly; but that, at the same time, he should order the nobles and clergy to join the *tiers-etat* for the joint verification of their powers, and proceed in concert for the future. The object of this sitting was, therefore, to do by royal authority that which the commons had effected by setting aside the king's power: and to decree the union of the nobles and clergy with the *tiers-etat*, in order that this union should emanate from the king, and not from the commons. This was intended only to save appearances, for the result would be the same. But by this measure, the nobility would not appear at the assembly under

circumstances humiliating to their pride, and it would, moreover, put an end to those violent disputes between the three orders, which could only end either in the triumph of the commons, by means of a popular movement, or in the dissolution of the assembly, which would be the precursor of a civil war.

Mallouet entered warmly into Duroverai's plan, and brought M. Necker to the same way of thinking ; but there was no direct communication between the latter and Duroverai.

The plan of the royal session was adopted by the king, but M. Necker's arguments in its favour were made subservient to a modification which certainly he never intended. After an animated discussion in the council, the Count d'Artois and his party triumphed ; and it was resolved that the decree of the commons should be annulled, but without enjoining a union of the orders. Thus was the real object of the measure done away, and nothing but its form remained. M. Necker had aimed at combining democracy with royalty ; but this measure had only invested aristocracy with despotism. The forms of authority which, with propriety, might be used to ennoble a necessary act of condescension, became revolting, when employed in an act of violence which the king had no means of following up. Not but the royal session in itself, when fairly considered,

will be found to contain the strongest concessions which monarch ever made to his subjects; and which, at any other period, would have called forth their warmest gratitude. When a prince is powerful, every thing he grants is a gift, every thing he does not take, is a favour; but if he be weak, that which he grants is only a debt due—that which he refuses to comply with, an injustice.

The commons determined to be a national assembly. Nothing less would satisfy them. If the government chose to oppose this, they should have prepared the means of doing so; but to annul the decrees, and excite popular ferment, without taking a single precaution, without even having a party in the assembly, was an act of madness which led to the overthrow of the monarchy. Nothing is more dangerous than to stimulate a weak man to acts beyond his strength; for when resistance to his will has shown his real weakness, he has no resource left. Thus was the royal authority degraded, and even the people discovered the secret of the king's want of power.

The measures attendant upon the royal session were as badly combined as if they had related to the acts of unruly school-boys. The hall of the states-general was closed for three or four days. A display of soldiers imparted to this measure the appearance of

violence. The deputies, driven from their hall at the point of the bayonet, met in the famous *Jeu-de-Paume*, or Tennis-court, where they swore never to separate, until they had obtained a constitution.

Even the eighty members forming the minority who had opposed the decree, took this oath ; for being ignorant of what was going on, they imagined that the king was about to dissolve the states-general ; and Mirabeau, then labouring under the same mistake, spoke so energetically against such dissolution, that even his greatest enemies began to look upon him as a giant, whose strength, in the present crisis of affairs, had become necessary to them. This scene, —where fear was masked by an appearance of bold determination—where the most timid became the most violent—must have been witnessed to convey an adequate conception of the evils it produced in the course of the revolution. The alarmed deputies were for ever alienated from the king's government ; the oath was a tie of honour, and from that day, the deputies of the *tiers-etat* were confederated against the royal authority. This appearance of persecution redoubled the popularity of the commons, and the Parisians were alarmed at their danger. The Palais-Royal was a scene of absolute frenzy ; and dark rumours seemed to menace the lives of some of the most distinguished individuals at court. In a hazy horizon, objects cannot be seen as they really are.

The alarmed populace became suspicious and active, nor could any subsequent conciliatory measures of the court restore the public confidence. Such was the true origin of that burning excitement so carefully kept alive by two classes of men, the factious and the timid.

The day after the meeting at the *Jeu-de-Paume*, the deputies, still excluded from their hall, in which preparations were being made for the king's sitting, presented themselves at the door of several churches, but were not admitted. The sight of the representatives of the nation thus seeking an asylum and finding none, increased the popular discontent. At length they entered the church of St Louis, where a doubtful majority of the clergy, headed by the Archbishop of Vienne, the Archbishop of Bordeaux, and the Bishop of Chartres, joined the deputies of the *tiers-etat* amid transports which the approaching danger rendered sincere. Greetings, applauses, pathetic speeches, and even tears, announced that all were united heart and hand against a common peril; and the conduct of the clergy on this occasion was the more meritorious because it was voluntary. Who would have anticipated at this period, that very shortly after, an ecclesiastic would be unable to appear in public without suffering the most degrading insults!

On the day of the royal session, I went to the pal-

ace to witness the splendid pageant. I well remember the hostile and triumphant looks of many individuals, in their way to the chateau. They thought their victory sure. I saw the king's ministers, whose emotion, though they affected unconcern, was but too apparent. The attitude of the Count d'Artois was haughty; the king seemed pensive and sad. The crowd was great, and the silence profound. When the king got into his carriage, there were rolling of drums and flourishes of trumpets, but not a sign of approbation from the people, and fear alone prevented an explosion of popular discontent. At length the vast procession began to move. The royal household and its officers, the guards, infantry and cavalry, proceeded towards the hall of the states-general, in which the three orders assembled were defying each other with looks of mute indignation, and impatiently awaiting the result of this important day. Never had passions so violent, and so diametrically opposed to each other, been before pent up in so small a space. The ceremony was precisely the same as on the opening of the states-general, but what a difference was there in the feelings of the assembly! The day of the first ceremony was a national festival,—the regeneration of political freedom; but now, the same pomp which had delighted every eye, was covered with a veil of terror. The sumptuous dresses of the nobles, the magnificence of regal state, and the

splendour of royal pageantry, seemed the accompaniment of a funeral procession.

I was not present at the sitting, and have obtained my knowledge of what passed from the recital of others; but I know, that when the king and nobles had withdrawn, the commons attempted to disguise their consternation. They began to perceive the consequences of the decree they had so unheedingly promulgated, and found that they had now no other alternative than to subjugate the monarchy, or basely recall their act. No one had yet attempted to speak, when a message from the king ordered them to separate. It was then that Mirabeau uttered those famous words which form an epoch in the revolution, and which roused the sunken spirits of the assembly.\* The deliberation assumed a decisive character, and the royal sitting was termed a bed of justice. This called to mind how the parliaments had always acted on such emergencies—how often the latter had dared to annul the orders given to them by the king in person, and succeeded, by their perseverance, in triumphing over the court. Before the deputies separated, they confirmed their decree, and renewed the oath of the *Jeu-de-Paume*; and scarcely had the king entered the palace, when the proceedings of the royal session were cancelled.

\* "Go, tell your master that we are here by the power of the people, and nothing but the force of bayonets shall drive us hence!"

One circumstance which encouraged the resistance of the deputies, was that M. Necker had not attended the king on this occasion. He was the only minister not present, and his absence seemed to mark his disapprobation of the measure. His popularity thence prodigiously increased, and the people considered him as their safe-guard against the storm. The assembly, who afterwards became jealous of the people's affection for him, because they wanted to engross it all to themselves, felt it their interest at that period, to make him a public idol, and, with his name, to counterbalance the court. His absence, however, originated in a very simple cause. There was a certain M. de Riol, who called himself a *Chevalier* and wore some Swedish order,—a very *significant* personage, who contrived to thrust himself every where. Although a subaltern, he lived on terms of great familiarity with M. Necker. We had become acquainted with this individual, who called upon us on the very day of the royal session. He assured us that he had found M. Necker on the point of setting out for M. de Montmorin's, in order to proceed to the palace, and accompany the king to the assembly; but that he (Riol) conjured him to do no such thing, as he would inevitably have to share in the odium of the measure, and would be unable to do any good in future. Riol added, that he had carried his zeal so far as to tell Necker he would



rather break one of his arms or legs, than suffer him to proceed; and that Madame Necker, in great agitation, having joined her entreaties to his, M. Necker at last yielded. I have no reason either to doubt or to confirm this fact; but if it be true, M. Necker suffered his determination, on so important a matter, to be influenced by a very insignificant personage.\* It is, however, certain, that a witless man often communicates his fears in a more persuasive manner than an intellectual one; and his gestures sometimes produce a stronger effect than either reason or eloquence. But surely M. Necker was not to blame for not sanctioning, with his presence, a measure in furtherance of which his speeches had been insidiously used, after changing the vital part of the plan he had proposed.

Mirabeau was made acquainted by Claviere, who could not keep a secret, with the true origin of the royal session. He complained of it to me in terms of indignation. "Duroverai," said he, "did not think me worthy of being consulted. He looks upon

\* Impartiality forces us to state that Madame de Stael, in her "Considerations on the French Revolution," (Chap 20) attributes M. Necker's absence to a determination previously taken, in consequence of the changes made in his plan; and according to the same authority, M. Necker replied to the wish, expressed by the court, that he should be present at the royal session, by tendering his resignation.

me, I know, as a madman with lucid intervals. But I could have told him beforehand what would be the fate of his plan. It is not with such an elastic temperament as that of the French, that these brutal forms must be resorted to. And what kind of man is this M. Necker, that he should be trusted with such means? You might as well make an issue in a wooden leg as give him advice; for he certainly could not follow it." And getting warmer as he proceeded, he concluded with these remarkable words, "*It is thus that kings are led to the scaffold.*"

## CHAPTER V.

AT this period great agitation commenced among the people. I have no doubt that there were meetings to promote insurrection, paid declaimers, a great deal of money distributed, and that the primary agents of the directors at Versailles, were more numerous among the minority of the nobles, than in the *tiers-etat*. I will not, indeed, venture to assert, that I am acquainted with particulars; but I firmly believe that the deputies of the *tiers-etat* acted, at this momentous crisis, with very little concert among themselves. There was a commencement of organization only among the deputies from Brittany, who had already been somewhat drilled into the tactics of popular assemblies, by their public disputes in their native province. So far as I was able to ascertain, the Breton club, which was acquiring great importance, had been got up by the minority of the nobles; but there will be no complete history of the revolution, until some member of this party publishes the

secret memoirs of its transactions. I well remember an anecdote of that period. I one day encountered Sieyes, who had just quitted a meeting composed of Bretons, and of members belonging to the minority of the nobles. He mentioned no names, but said, "I will return to those men no more. Their politics are too cavernous, and they propose crimes instead of expedients."

Duport and the Lameths had the reputation of having machinated the revolution of Paris. It was easy for the Duke of Orleans to put the centre districts in motion. He was like a spider in the midst of his web. But I know nothing of these events, except through public channels. Mirabeau was not connected with them. His fiery and ungovernable temper disqualified him for coalitions. His ideas were not sufficiently connected, nor did he inspire sufficient confidence to become a chief, and he had too much pride to play a subordinate part. He therefore remained independent; envious to an excess of every rising influence, epigrammatic by wholesale, a retail dealer in flattery, and alienated from his colleagues by his contempt for some, and his jealousy of others. I often went to Paris with him, and I am convinced that he had no share in the rising of the Parisians.

They who would account for the French revolution, by attributing it to concealed machinators, are

mistaken. Such machinators did certainly not produce the public feeling; they only took advantage of it. It is true, that they excited and directed it; but it is absurd to suppose that any conspirators, at this period, could have caused so sudden and violent an impulse;—one, in short, so vast as to include, simultaneously, the whole French nation. Every one was in motion at Paris; even the coldest and most calculating participated in the phrenzy of the moment. The whole popular mass was in a state of extreme caldescence. A word from the Palais Royal, an accidental movement, the merest trifle, in fine, might cause a general commotion. In such a state of things, tumult begets tumult, and the disease of the evening is aggravated next day.

Although the details are somewhat effaced from my recollection, I yet well remember the interval between the royal session and the mournful apparition of the king, at the assembly, when he came to deliver himself up, or rather to place his person in deposit there, after the capture of the Bastille. I recollect this period as one of trouble, confusion, and obscurity. False alarms were given, people knew and did not know, orders were given and revoked, every thing was attempted to be guessed at and explained, and a motive was attributed to the most indifferent actions. The palace was watched; spies were placed every where, and each trifle was

made of consequence. There were insurrections at Versailles, originating, not in a preconcerted plan, but in a suspicious and irascible disposition. Meantime, the three orders remained divided, and had assumed hostile attitudes. The court sent troops to quell these insurrections. Versailles was filled with foreign soldiers, and military measures seemed every where adopted. There were whispers of a change of ministry, and the new names mentioned did not tend to tranquillize the commons. So much bustle on the part of the court, could be intended only to enforce obedience to the royal session, either by removing the assembly to a greater distance from Paris, its proximity to which was dangerous, or by dissolving it altogether, if this could be done without the risk of a civil war, the idea of which made the king shudder. But whatever were the intentions of the court or of those who conducted its affairs, such intentions were certainly not in unison with those of the king; there was an alarming secrecy in the whole conduct of the court party; secret preparations were discovered, and plans seemed to be in a course of development, but no result was ever perceived. Such conduct raised general indignation, and the fermentation at Paris was dreadful.

Reybaz and Claviere returned from Paris, and assured us that it would be impossible to contain the

people. They urged Mirabeau to stand forward upon this occasion. "If," said they, "the *tiers-etat* were wrong in voting themselves a national assembly, still it is a measure which cannot now be recalled, without degrading the representatives of the people, and affording a complete triumph to the insolence of the aristocracy. Should the states-general be dissolved, a national bankruptcy must be the inevitable consequence. The people will rejoice at this, because the government will reduce the taxes; there will be then no further difficulty, and the cause of freedom will be lost." I am certain, that at this period, the creditors of the state, a very numerous and active body, who were all powerful at Paris, were acting in direct opposition to the court, because they perceived but too plainly, that if the government declared a national bankruptcy, the *deficit* would be thought no more of, and the words *states-general*, *constitution*, and *sovereignty of the people*, totally forgotten.

It was at length discovered, that agents of the court were sounding the regiments recently arrived at Versailles, and likewise the French guards, in order to ascertain how far their fidelity to the government might be depended on. There was now no time to be lost, and it was thought necessary that the king himself should be warned of these manœuvres, the object and danger of which were probably con-

cealed from him. These points were introduced by Mirabeau into his famous speech upon the removal of the troops. This speech was a sort of abstract of every thing that had been said upon the subject, during our private conferences. I wrote it, and Duroverai drew up the resolutions containing the proposed measure. One of these resolutions called upon the king to establish a militia of citizens. It was the only one rejected by the assembly, though, perhaps, it was the most important. Duroverai saw that if the people took up arms, the royal authority would be annihilated; but if the king himself armed the citizens, such a choice of men and officers might be made, that this institution, like the English militia, would be a bulwark against insurrection, without alarming the advocates of liberty. The last of these resolutions was to present an address to the king, relative to the removal of the troops. A committee was appointed to draw up this address; for the assembly sent every thing to committees, in order to give as little importance as possible to individuals. But as writing in common is the most difficult of all conjunct functions, Mirabeau was requested by the committee to make a draft of the address. Animated by the success of the speech, and full of the subject, encouraged, moreover, by the flattery and affectionate caresses of Mirabeau, whom the applause of the assembly had filled with delight, I wrote with



great ease and rapidity, in the interval between one sitting and another, the address to the king.\*

I remember a circumstance which amused me at the time. Garat, who was a member of the committee, came to ask the hour at which Mirabeau could attend. I was then in the heat of composition, and he was obliged to elude replying, by shuffling and giving an oblique turn to the question. Next day, at M. de la Rochefoucauld's, another member of the committee, whose name I forget, spoke greatly in favour of this address, and praised the modesty of Mirabeau, who had consented to all the alterations demanded, as if, in this composition, he had foregone his vanity of authorship. I know not whether my self-love were more sensible on the occasion than his, but I certainly thought that the alterations had not improved the address. Duroverai kept the original for a long time, a thing I did not even think of. Though flattered by the applause bestowed upon this production, I was not silly enough to fancy it a masterpiece. I considered that its greatest merit arose from the circumstance which occasioned it. There was dignity and simplicity in the style, with as much oratorical eloquence as was consistent with the respect due to the monarch, and with the dignity of the assembly who addressed him. The

\* Vide Appendix, No. 1.

expressions were measured and unctuous, and the whole was in good keeping with the subject. Mirabeau approved of it the more because he felt himself unable to write in this particular way : “ My style readily assumes force,” said he, “ and I have a command of strong expressions ; but, if I want to be mild, unctuous, and measured, I become insipid, and my flabby style makes me sick.”

Had I afterwards discovered any faults in this address, I must not have pointed them out to Mirabeau ; for he attached himself so strongly to his adopted children that he felt for them the affection of a parent.\*

If the honour of these compositions had belonged to another, it must not be thought that the unknown author would have derived no satisfaction from them. The approbation of a circle of some half dozen friends is always flattering, without including those whom they may have let into the secret. I have not to accuse myself of any indiscretion of this kind ; or,

\* When I worked for Mirabeau, I seemed to feel the pleasure of an obscure individual who had changed his children at nurse, and introduced them into a great family. He would be obliged to respect them, although he was their father. Such was the case with my writings. When Mirabeau had once adopted them, he would have defended them even against me ; more than that—he would have allowed me to admire them, as an act of esteem and friendship for himself.—*Note by Dumont.*

strictly speaking, perhaps, my own self-love may have been the best guardian of the secret; for the instant I had been tempted to reveal it, I should have fancied that I perceived an expression of doubt and incredulity upon every countenance. But in sober earnest, I can declare that, knowing such a proceeding to be repugnant to delicacy and friendship, the temptation never once occurred to me.

I was not long in perceiving that Mirabeau's friends considered Duroverai and me as his *writers*. His life of agitation, his being much out, his occupations at the assembly, his committees, his loss of time, and his taste for pleasure, prevented those who knew him from considering him the author of the writings which appeared in his name. At a later period, a greater number of workmen were added to this manufactory. But when I was designated in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and other pamphlets, at one of Mirabeau's authors, I no longer felt the same pleasure in writing for him; and this circumstance determined me, as I shall hereafter explain, to return to England.

The king's answer to the address was not satisfactory. His personal intentions were thought good, and he was supposed to be led astray by deception practised upon him. There was a plan in a course of development, whose extent and object were not known. But the threats of certain subordinates, their insulting looks, apparent preparations for a

*coup d'état*, the movements of the troops, nocturnal visits to the guard houses by officers of rank, secret councils at court, to which M. Necker was not summoned, and a thousand particulars of the same description, constituted the events of every day. These were again exaggerated and distorted by the general uneasiness and alarm. No one was yet bold enough to speak of the *conspiracy of the court*—this name was not applied till after the victory;—but the consternation was general. The approach of the troops and the dismissal of M. Necker, brought on the insurrection of Paris. I say nothing of the public events of which I was not an eye-witness. I remained at Versailles with the national assembly, whose intrepidity was not to be shaken by the approach of danger. It was no longer divided into parties; all had one unanimous feeling. The dissolution of the states-general appeared to all pregnant with the greatest danger.

The sitting of Monday, the 13th of July, was awfully calm. There were a thousand confused reports relative to what had occurred at Paris on the preceding day. It was known that the people had repulsed the regiment of the prince of Lambesc, and driven it back to the Tuilleries: that the French guards had joined the people, and had been engaged with the Swiss; that the populace were arming, that they had broken open the armourer's shops, and

closed the city gates ; and that Paris, in a word, was in open insurrection. Mirabeau told us that he had a list of proscriptions ; that Sieyes, Chapelier, Lafayette, Lameth, himself, and several others, were to be arrested ; that they had been put upon their guard and intended to pass the night at the assembly, where they should consider themselves safer than in their own houses. The assembly continued its sitting throughout the night, and in the intervals between the deputations dispatched to the king to beseech him to withdraw the troops whose presence had inflamed the metropolis ; they discussed, if I remember rightly, a declaration of the rights of man, presented by Lafayette. In his answer to the deputation, the king stated that his heart was lacerated ; that it was impossible the orders he had given, for the restoration of the public peace, could have led to the rising of Paris. But he spoke not of withdrawing the troops, and the individuals by whom he was surrounded, were not calculated to restore confidence. The plan of the court seemed to continue its progress, when the assembly made a last effort, and on the Tuesday morning sent a more solemn deputation to the king. Mirabeau, with a voice rendered hoarse by watching, fatigue, and uneasiness, said a few words, which were rapturously applauded.

It is a well known fact that the troops at Versailles had declined obedience ; and that after the fall of

the Bastille, and the metamorphosis, which, in two days, had changed the peaceful citizens of Paris into an army of two hundred thousand men, the king had no other alternative than to unite himself to the national assembly, and seek his safety among its members. What a contrast, then, did the sitting of the 18th of June form with those which had preceded it! The king announced his intention of going to Paris forthwith. Mirabeau, astonished at this resolve, and still more so at its subsequent execution, afterwards said to me, "He must be a bold mortal who advised this step. Had the king not followed the advice, Paris was lost to him for ever. Two or three days later, and he would have been unable to return thither." I attribute these words to the singular sagacity with which Mirabeau was gifted. He knew the Duke of Orleans's party, and might have thought that this prince would have taken advantage of the circumstances to obtain possession of the metropolis. If the Duke's party did indeed form any such plan, it was frustrated by the sudden appearance of the king, who, thereby, in some degree, revived the almost extinct affection of the Parisians. It seemed as though the two hundred thousand men under arms had concerted among themselves to receive him with the most appalling solemnity. In proceeding to the Hotel-de-Ville, he heard no other cry than, "long live the assembly!" but on his return, as if the chas-

tisement had been severe enough, he was saluted by acclamations of "long live the king!"

The king was a man of weak character, but by no means timid; of which his conduct on this day furnished a striking illustration. It required a great degree of courage to go into the midst of an enraged populace, who seemed conferring a favour on their monarch by receiving him within the walls of his own capital. When M. Bailly told him that Henry IV. had conquered his people, but the people had now conquered their king, he turned round and said in a whisper to the Prince of Beauveau, "Perhaps I had better not hear that." The Prince of Beauveau made a sign in reply, and the orator proceeded.

The death of the Marquis of Mirabeau, the author of "*The Friend of Man*," obliged Mirabeau to absent himself from the assembly for a few days. This occurred during the motions for the recall of M. Necker, and against the new ministers. M. Bertrand de Molleville, who has enriched his pretended "*Annals of the Revolution*" with all his own prejudices, has attributed Mirabeau's silence on these occasions to *profound intentions*.

Mirabeau had made me promise to employ my leisure time in writing for him a sketch of the revolution. I began it at Paris, but I had great difficulty in collecting facts, reconciling contradictions, reducing exaggeration, and separating truth from false-

hood. The causes of events were always hidden, the secret councils of the court unknown. Much might always be urged on both sides of the question, and it might be maintained with perhaps equal plausibility, that there was a court conspiracy, and that there was not. It appeared to me necessary to distinguish the acts of the king from those of his ministers, and to represent him as having concurred in a plan of which the most vital points had been concealed from him. Even with regard to Paris itself, the more the scene was extended, the more confused were the details. Some described to me the capture of the Bastille as a wonderful achievement; others reduced it to a mere nothing, and I really knew not what conclusion to come to with regard to Launay and his invalids. The crimes of the period appeared to me the mere effect of sudden excitement, but every one seemed to believe that they were mixed up with treachery. Persuaded at last that the secret history of no great political event was ever well known even at the period of its occurrence, I wrote, in the best way I could, the account contained in the nineteenth letter of Mirabeau to his constituents, in which he made some alterations, and struck out some expressions of doubt, because the court conspiracy was more manifest to him than to me. This letter was prodigiously successful.



## CHAPTER VI.

ALL Mirabeau's letters to his constituents, beginning from the eleventh, were written by either Duroverai or me. Mirabeau, who was very desirous of keeping us at Paris during the session of the National Assembly, proposed a literary partnership which offered a good chance of profit. This was to write a regular journal in his name, the profits of which, after deducting the expenses, should be equally divided between himself, le Jay the bookseller, Duroverai and me. We were to include in the outgoings of the paper a reasonable monthly sum for our current expenses. The title of the journal was "*Le Courrier de Provence.*" It was announced in the nineteenth letter to which I alluded at the end of the last chapter; and although the subscription was high, so many subscribers appeared, that we all fancied our fortunes made. In a few days, our list contained more than three thousand names. Orders from the provinces were large in proportion. If le Jay had been a man of

business, or if his wife, who managed every thing, had shown a little order and probity, they would have acquired a rapid fortune, for they had a considerable allowance for printing and commission. They had, besides, a fourth part of the net profits, and Mirabeau had given up his share to them also; but their impropriety of conduct and rapacity ruined the undertaking. Being entirely occupied in writing the articles, and residing, moreover, at Versailles, we were obliged to trust wholly to their integrity. The subscribers were continually making complaints; and those in the provinces were so neglected that they were sometimes a whole month without receiving any paper, because le Jay had often not money enough to pay for the carriage of the papers by the diligence. The parcels were delayed, and the country booksellers complained without obtaining redress. The printer at Paris refused to print when his payments were behind hand, and Mirabeau was often obliged to make advances to keep the thing going. When, at the expiration of four months, we called for an account, there was none forthcoming. Madame le Jay concealed her books. She had furnished her house and stocked her shop with the money received, and her small pamphlet stall had been converted into a splendid bookseller's shop; in short, all in her establishment announced opulence; but having appropriated to herself the amount of the subscriptions, she would come to no

settlement. I left it to Duroverai to settle this business, for litigation did not accord with my habits. Money matters interested me very little, and I understood them not. Mirabeau was placed between two fires. He was irritated at Madame le Jay's dishonesty, and said to her one day in my presence, "Madame le Jay, if probity did not exist, it should be invented as a means of growing rich." But Madame le Jay had other means of obtaining the victory, and Mirabeau's *liaison* with this artful and determined female permitted him not to make too much noise. She was in possession of all his secrets; knew too many anecdotes about him; and was too dangerous and too fond of mischief for him to think of a rupture, although he was tired of her, and in the high sphere in which he was moving, often felt that such a connection degraded him. This is the only time, during the whole course of my life, that I was ever involved in a dispute relative to money matters, and had an opportunity of closely observing the manœuvres of fraud and the passion of cupidity. Le Jay was a fool who promised every thing; but he trembled like a child before his wife. Mirabeau, ashamed of our disappointment, swore that the national assembly was easier to govern than a woman who had made up her mind. But violence is always overcome by *sang-froid*. She replied to his reproaches with the most piquant raillery. "All the bar,"

said he, "would grow grey before they could convince her. I defy the most artful lawyer to find the subtleties which she invents." As it was impossible to recover our money by a law-suit, we came to a determination of ceasing our contributions to the journal. This disconcerted her at first; but she thought she could easily induce me to go on again, and undertook it in a conversation full of artifice. Without anger, and without even alluding to the subject of our quarrel, I drily told her that I would never separate from Duroverai. "Very well," replied she, "do as you please. I am sorry for it; but there are other writers in this great city besides you, and I have already received advances from several." On leaving me she applied to all the literary men she knew, and proposed her journal; for in her own opinion it was as much her property as any estate she might have purchased; and she had considered Duroverai and me merely as two labourers in her hire. After many fruitless attempts, she at length got two individuals to undertake it; one of whom was M. Guiraudez, a man of talent and learning, whom I had met at Mirabeau's. Such a proceeding, more than uncivil, and which surprised me much, met with its just reward; for had these gentlemen possessed more talent than really belonged to them, they had not not been in the practice of attending the national assembly, were unable to designate individuals, and having no communi-

cations with any of the deputies, through whom alone they could have ascertained what was going on behind the scenes, they gave nothing but long and tame extracts from speeches, without being able to afford any interesting information. Mirabeau was furious at the abuse of his name, and wanted to insert notices in all the public prints.

Complaints to Madame le Jay poured in from all quarters. Guiraudez and his colleague, ashamed of their conduct, and still more at their want of success, —overwhelmed, moreover, with reproaches from Mirabeau,—repented of what they had done; and without coming to any settlement with Madame le Jay about the past, we entered into a new arrangement for the future.

I know not why I have written these insignificant details. I shall expunge them if I find hereafter that these Recollections become sufficiently interesting to deserve my more particular attention.

The composition of this journal became a source of amusement to us. Duroverai and I undertook the alternate sittings of the assembly. A few words written in pencil, sufficed to call to our recollection the arguments of a speech and the order of a debate. We never intended to give all the idle prating in the tribune. As most of the important speeches were written, Mirabeau took care to ask for them for us, and many deputies sent them as from themselves.

The most diffuse sometimes complained of our reducing their dropsical and turgescient productions.

Though few were satisfied, yet Mirabeau received thanks which he did not fail to transmit us. "The provincials must think," said Chapelier to him, "that we speak like oracles, when we are read stripped of our verbiage and nonsense."

Our principal care in important discussions, was to omit no argument advanced by either party. It was an impartial *expose* of the case. Even Mirabeau, although his extravagances were palliated, obtained no flattery. Barring a few innocent pleasantries, which served to amuse our readers, we never indulged in personalities, and, except in a few particular cases, Mirabeau himself felt that the greatest service we could render him was never to lend ourselves to the vengeance of his self-love. Sieyes complained bitterly of some criticisms upon his "Rights of Man" and upon his "Principles of Constitutions." "Do not make me quarrel with that man," said Mirabeau, "for his vanity is implacable."

I have lately read many articles of this journal, and am now surprised at the boldness with which the assembly is censured. The want of order and connection in its constitutional and financial operations; its manner of laying down general principles and overlooking details; its insidious manner of anticipating decisions; its having overthrown the old established

authority before other institutions were formed to replace it; its constituting itself an office of delation; and its usurpation of ministerial duties, are all visited with severe comments. The defects of its internal regulations are presented with the boldness of naked truth, and a faithful picture is given of its incoherent disorder, and the fiery impatience always attendant upon its proceedings.

During an absence of Duroverai, in 1790, M. Reybaz, who had already supplied us with several very interesting articles, undertook his share of the work, and executed it with much more accuracy than he. I ended my labours, in the beginning of March, by a discussion on religious communities and the spirit of monarchism. Duroverai and Reybaz continued together for some months, and the paper, abandoned at length by Mirabeau, became a mere compilation of speeches and decrees, and retained nothing of our journal but the name.

I was often disgusted with this work, because the simple operation of abridging speeches and reporting the tumultuous proceedings of the assembly, was not a kind of occupation to afford me pleasure. On the other hand, the rapidity of the whirlwind by which the assembly was swept along, left no time for study and meditation. Thus the work, in spite of some tolerable articles, is mediocre and often very bad. I am not surprised that it incurred at last

the same contempt as all the ephemeral productions of that period. I shall, however, extract in another place, some passages which may serve to give an idea of the interior of the assembly, and which no one would take the trouble of looking for in a large compilation.

Besides my contributions to this journal, I continued to supply my share of Mirabeau's legislative labours. I shall now proceed to matters much more interesting.



## CHAPTER VII.

AFTER the insurrection of Paris, the national assembly was soon completed by the union with it of the majority of the nobles and the minority of the clergy. The forms of ordinary civility were still entertained, by the *tiers-etat*, towards these two orders, who were received with silence and dignity, but without bravado. The speeches of Bailly, then president of the assembly, were too complimentary, and sincerity was sacrificed to good-breeding. Whilst the bosoms of all were ulcerated and bleeding, their words breathed nothing but friendship and concord. These manœuvres were intended to impose upon the people ; but the people were not to be so imposed upon, and such forced and evidently hypocritical language tended only to destroy their confidence in the assembly.

The disorders of the Paris insurrection had not ceased, and the massacres with which the metropolis had been disgraced, were imitated in the provinces.

er these circumstances, several members proposed an address from the national assembly to the people. After the success of my first, I considered addresses as belonging to my peculiar department, and I wrote one which was a species of political sermon. It was at first applauded, but ultimately rejected. I know not whether it thwarted the views of certain persons; be that as it may, it was much praised but not accepted. It was afterwards printed in the *Courrier de Provence*.<sup>\*</sup> Whether this address were adopted or not, it would have made not the slightest difference. Insurrections are not to be arrested by words; and if, under such circumstances, an exhortation ever succeeds, it is when used only as a preamble to force.

So fearful were the assembly of offending the people, that motions tending to the repression of disorder, and the censure of popular excesses, were considered almost as snares. Mistrust was still in every bosom. The assembly had triumphed by means of the people, towards whom, therefore, they could not display great severity; and it is a notorious fact, that although they often stated in their preambles how severely they were afflicted and irritated, at the violent excesses committed by the brigands, who burned chateaus and insulted the nobility—they

\* Vide Appendix, No. 2.

secretly rejoiced, in reality, at the existence of a terror, which they conceived salutary. They had placed themselves between the alternatives of fearing the nobles, or being feared by them. They censured to save appearances, but policy prevented them from punishing; they paid compliments to authority, but gave encouragement to licentiousness. Respect for the executive was, with them, a mere formula of style, and, in fact, when the king's ministers came and manifested their weakness, and revealed their direful anticipations, the assembly, remembering their own late fears, were not sorry that fear had changed sides. "If you were powerful enough to be feared by the people, you would be sufficiently so to be feared by us!" Such was the feeling prevalent among what was called the *cote gauche*. It was the reaction of fear.

I must not omit that, at this period, not only the general opinion in France, but that of all Europe, was in favour of the democratic party in the assembly. A feeling of pleasure was generally entertained at a revolution which had overthrown the ancient government of France.

It may be said, with truth, that throughout Europe, all who were not patricians, had trembled for the fate of the commons, and had considered their delivery as a service rendered to the human race in general. It was the cause of mankind against the

powers usurped by the exclusive and privileged classes. The unhappy events which debased the revolution, throw at the present day a sinister shade even upon its very cradle. We are ashamed of having admired, at its birth, a cause which, during its progress, we were forced to abhor. But let the impartial historian recollect, that when the French revolution first broke out, there was a general excitement, a sort of intoxication of hope; and that the enthusiasm raised by the grandeur of the object, generated a degree of insensibility to its first excesses, which were considered merely as unfortunate accidents occurring during the ceremony of a national triumph. Surely, every part of a ruined and antiquated edifice could not fall to the ground without crushing some of the mistaken individuals who persevered in their endeavours to prop it up. Such was the opinion of the master minds of Europe, of the soundest philosophers, the greatest philanthropists, and the dearest friends of freedom. If it were an error, it was a universal one. England, as the noblest and most free, declared her opinions in a more marked manner than other states; and in that kingdom, the news of the fall of the Bastille was received with the most joyful acclamations. If the British government did not allow that event to be represented on the stage, it was only from personal respect for the king of France. The whole nation

felt the strongest sympathy towards the French people, with whom they sincerely rejoiced at the overthrow of despotism.

This enthusiasm was maintained almost throughout the existence of the first national assembly. It diminished after the events of the 5th and 6th of October. Many admirers cooled in their praise, and many influential men began to think that the French people were treating, with too great indignity, a king who had done so much for them; and to fear that the national character was too impetuous, and too violent for the rational enjoyment of freedom. So small, however, was the number of individuals who disapproved, that their opinion made but a slight impression. The first decisive blow struck at the enthusiasm in favour of the revolution, was that famous production of Burke's, in which alone he grappled with the gigantic strength of the assembly, and represented these new legislators, in the full enjoyment of power and honours, as so many maniacs, who could destroy, but who were unable to replace. This work, resplendent with genius and eloquence, though written in an age when imagination was on the decline, led to the formation of two parties in England. However the arguments of Burke may seem to have been justified by posterior events, it yet remains to be shown, that the war cry then raised against France did not greatly contribute to the violence which

characterised that period. It is possible, that had he merely roused the attention of the governments and wealthy classes to the dangers of this new political creed, he might have proved the saviour of Europe; but he made such exaggerated statements, and used arguments so alarming to freedom, that on many points, he was not only plausibly, but victoriously refuted. Be that as it may, this publication of Burke's, which was a manifesto against the assembly, had a prodigious success in England. The Germans, who more than any other people, had winced under the yoke of the nobles, persevered in their admiration of the French legislators.

The united national assembly commenced their proceedings with the famous declaration on the rights of man. The idea was American, and there was scarcely a member who did not consider such a declaration an indispensable preliminary. I well remember the long debate on the subject, which lasted several weeks, as a period of mortal *ennui*. There were silly disputes about words, much metaphysical trash, and dreadfully tedious prosing. The assembly had converted itself into a Sorbonne, and each apprentice in the art of legislation was trying his yet unfledged wings upon such puerilities. After the rejection of several models, a committee of five members was appointed to present a new one. Mirabeau, one of the five, undertook the work with his

usual generosity, but imposed its execution upon his friends. He set about the task, and there were he, Duroverai, Claviere, and I, writing, disputing, adding, striking out, and exhausting both time and patience upon this ridiculous subject. At length we produced our piece of patchwork, our mosaic of pretended natural rights which never existed. During the progress of this stupid compilation, I made some reflections, which had never struck me before.

I felt the inconsistency and ridicule of a work, which was only a puerile fiction. A declaration of rights could be made only after the framing of the constitution, and as one of its consequences; for rights exist in virtue of laws, and therefore do not precede them. The maxims sanctioned by this declaration; that is to say, the principles intended to be established by it, are dangerous in themselves, for legislators should not be tied down to general propositions which they are afterwards obliged to alter or modify;—above all, they must not be cramped by false maxims. *Men are born free and equal!* that is not true. They are not born free; on the contrary, they are born in a state of weakness and necessary dependence. *Equal!* how are they so? or how *can* they be so? if by *equality* is understood equality of fortune, of talents, of virtue, of industry, or of rank, then the falsehood is manifest. It would require volumes of argument to give any reasonable meaning

to that equality proclaimed without exception. In a word, my opinion against the declaration of the rights of man was so strongly formed, that this time it influenced that of our little committee. Mirabeau, on presenting the project, even ventured to make some objections to it, and proposed to defer the declaration of rights until the constitution should be completed. "I can safely predict," said he, in his bold and energetic style, "that any declaration of rights anterior to the constitution, *will prove but the almanac of a single year!*"

Mirabeau, generally satisfied with a happy turn of expression, never gave himself the trouble of studying a subject sufficiently to be able to discuss it, and patiently maintain the opinion he had advanced. He seized every thing with marvellous facility, but developed nothing. He wanted the practice of refutation. This great art, so indispensable to a political orator, was unknown to him. His opinion on the declaration surprised the assembly, because, when the question was previously discussed, he had argued in favour of its necessity. The most violent reproaches were addressed to him at this sudden change of sentiment. "What manner of man is this," cried some one, "who uses his ascendancy here to make the assembly adopt by turns both sides of a question? Shall we condescend to be the sport of his perpetual tergiversation?" Mirabeau had on this occasion



so many good reasons to urge in favor of his proposition, that he would no doubt have triumphed had he known how to make use of them, but he withdrew his motion at the instant when several deputies had come over to his way of thinking. The eternal babble had then full range, and at last gave birth to the unfortunate declaration of the rights of man. I have now a complete refutation of it, clause by clause, from the pen of a great master who has exposed, in the clearest manner, the contradictions, absurdities and dangers of this programme of sedition, which proved alone sufficient to overthrow the constitution of which it formed part. It may be compared to a powder magazine placed under an edifice, which it might overthrow by an explosion produced by the smallest spark.\*

But if the assembly wasted much time in discussions on the rights of man, this was amply compensated in the nocturnal sitting of the 4th of August. Never was so much work done in so short a space of time. That which would have required twelve months of careful examination, was proposed, discussed, put to the vote, and passed by general acclamation. I know not how many laws were decreed;—the abolition of feudal rights, tithes, and provincial privileges—three questions embracing a whole system of jurisprudence and politics—were, with ten or

\* Vide *Tactique des Assemblées délibérantes*, vol. 2.

twelve others, disposed of in less time than the English parliament would decide upon the first reading of any bill of consequence. The assembly resembled a dying man who had made his will in a hurry; or to speak more plainly, each member gave away what did not belong to him, and prided himself upon his generosity at the expense of others.

I was present at this extraordinary and unexpected scene, which occurred on a day when Sieyes, Mirabeau and several other leading deputies were absent.

The proceedings commenced with a report on the excesses in the provinces, the burning of chateaus, and the bands of banditti who attacked the nobles and laid waste the country. The Dukes of Aiguillon and Noailles and several other members of the minority of the nobles, after a vivid description of the disasters, declared that it was by a great act of generosity alone that tranquillity and confidence could be restored; that it was, therefore, time to forego odious privileges, and make the people feel the benefits of the revolution. It is impossible to describe the effervescence which burst forth in the assembly at this declaration. There was no longer calmness or reflection. Each came forward with a sacrifice—each laid a fresh offering upon the altar of his country—each despoiled himself or despoiled others. There was no time taken for consideration, or for objection; a sentimental contagion seemed to drag every heart

into one general torrent. This renunciation of all privileges, this abandonment of so many rights burdensome to the people, these multiplied sacrifices, bore a stamp of magnanimity which covered with its splendour the indecent haste and precipitation, so ill-suited to legislators, with which they were made. On this night I saw good and brave deputies shed tears of joy on perceiving their work of political regeneration advance so rapidly, and on finding themselves borne on the wings of enthusiasm even beyond their most sanguine hopes. It is true that all were not actuated by the same feeling. He who found himself ruined by a proposition unanimously agreed to, moved another from spite, and because he would not suffer alone. But the assembly were not in the secret of the principal movers of these measures, and the latter took advantage of the general enthusiasm to carry their point. The renunciation of the provincial privileges was made by the deputies of the respective provinces. The deputies from Brittany, who had promised to maintain theirs, were much more embarrassed; but they came forward in a body and declared that they would exert their utmost influence with their constituents to obtain a ratification of this abandonment of their privileges. This great and magnanimous measure was necessary to restore political unity in a kingdom formed by a successive aggregation of several smaller states, each

of which had preserved certain antiquated rights and particular privileges which it was now necessary to destroy, in order to form a social body susceptible of receiving one general constitution.

The following day brought reflection, and with it discontent. Mirabeau and Sieyes, each, however, from personal motives, very strongly reprobated the madness of such enthusiasm. "This is just the character of our Frenchmen," said the former, "they are three months disputing about syllables, and in a single night they overturn the whole venerable edifice of the monarchy." Sieyes was more annoyed at the abolition of tithes than at all the rest. It was hoped that in a subsequent sitting the most imprudent clauses of these precipitate décrets might be amended; but it was not easy to recall concessions which the people already looked upon as an indisputable right. Sieyes made a speech full of force and logic, in which he showed that to abolish tithes without an indemnity, was spoliating the clergy to enrich the land owners; for each having purchased his property with the burthen of tithes upon it, would on a sudden find himself richer by one tenth part, which would be a gratuitous present. This speech, impossible to be refuted, he concluded with the famous saying: "They would be free, and know not how to be just!"... The prejudice was so strong that even Sieyes was not listened to. He was looked

upon as an ecclesiastic unable to forego his personal interest, and who was paying the tribute of error to his gown. A little more, and he would have been hooted and hissed. I beheld him next day full of bitter resentment and profound indignation against the injustice and folly of the assembly, whom he never pardoned. He gave vent to his irritated feelings in a conversation with Mirabeau, when the latter said to him: "My dear abbe, you have let loose the bull and you now complain that he gores you!" These two men had always a very contemptible opinion of the national assembly. They were well qualified to appreciate its faults, yet neither of them granted it his esteem but on condition that his own opinion should always prevail. If either was applauded, he discovered that the majority had good sense when left to their own judgment; if either received marks of disapprobation, he then discovered that the assembly was composed of fools under the influence of a few seditious members. I have often seen Mirabeau graduate his opinion by this kind of thermometer; and assuredly he was not the only one. The contempt of Sieyes might have been thought sincere, because he did not lay himself out for applause, and always preserved a disdainful silence; but Mirabeau was infected with the speaking mania, and no one could for a moment believe that he was indifferent to applause. Both felt that a single

legislative assembly was insufficient, because there was nothing to controul it ; and the occurrences of the 4th of August proved to what extent the contagion of enthusiasm and eloquence could influence its proceedings, and make it adopt the most absurd measures.

Far from having put a stop to violence and brigandage, the decrees of the 4th of August showed the people their strength, and convinced them that the most monstrous attacks upon the nobility would be overlooked, if they did not even elicit a recompense. I repeat, that what is granted through fear, never satisfies ; and they whom you think your concessions will disarm, acquire tenfold confidence and audacity.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Soon after the discussion on the decrees of the 4th of August, constitutional questions were introduced, and one of the most important was that of the *veto*. It must not be supposed that this subject underwent a regular debate similar to those in the English house of commons. A list of speakers for and against was made out; each appeared, manuscript in hand, and read a dissertation unconnected with any thing that had been urged by preceding orators. I can imagine nothing more disgustingly tedious than this species of academic lecture,—the reading of those heavy pamphlets teeming with repetitions and devoid of any continued chain of argument. The form of a debate in which each speaks either to reply or attack, stimulates all the faculties and keeps up the attention; but those prepared speeches refuted objections which had never been urged, and did not refute those which had been urged. The proceedings were always in the same stage;

each speaker opened the question as if no other had preceded him, and nothing but the fanaticism attendant upon public events could have resisted the mortal *ennui* of these sittings. Mirabeau had determined to support the *absolute veto*, considered of vital importance to the monarchy; but with regard to the manner of treating this question, he had placed himself under the tuition of the Marquis de Caseaux, author of an unintelligible book on the mechanism of human societies, and of another entitled "Simplicity of the Idea of a Constitution" which no one had been able to read or understand. I believe that, for once, Mirabeau was not sorry to proceed without us. He therefore concealed from us his alliance with his apocalyptic friend, and merely informed us he was prepared and had made a few notes, which he should develop in the tribune. After being forced to listen to so many execrable speeches. Mirabeau's appearance in the tribune delighted every body; but scarcely had he begun when I recognized the style and doctrines of Caseaux. The embarrassed constructions, the singularity of the words, the lengthy periods and the obscurity of the reasoning, soon cooled the attention of the assembly. It was at length made out that he supported the absolute veto, and this excited much disapprobation. Mirabeau, who had scarcely looked at this trash before he left home, threw himself immediately into digressions,



inveighed against despotism, and by some smart things, which he had always at command, obtained the applause of the galleries; but the moment he reverted to his fatal manuscript, the tumult again commenced, and he had much difficulty in getting to the end of his speech, although on such occasions his courage never deserted him. By supporting the absolute veto, Mirabeau gave great offence to the popular party; but his speech was so obscure, that the galleries never found out what side of the question he had taken, and the Palais Royal, who were in a frenzy against the supporters of the absolute veto, did not cease to consider Mirabeau as one of its most zealous opponents. That which would have destroyed the popularity of any other, seemed to have no power over his. The *cote gauche* thought that he had affected obscurity on this occasion in order to be able to turn to any side of the question; so that the nonsense of Caseaux was imputed to a profound politician, and pure machiavelism was traced in every part of a writing which no one could understand. I never saw Mirabeau out of countenance but this once. He confessed to me that as he proceeded with the manuscript, which he had not before read, he felt himself in a cold perspiration; and that he had omitted one half of it without being able to substitute any thing in its stead, having, in his over confidence in Caseaux, neglected to study the subject. We cor-

rected this speech a little before we published it in the *Courrier de Provence*; but the original fantastic style and obscurity could not be entirely effaced. It is thus the most important matters in legislation were treated; *ex ungue leonem*. This was the first constitutional question in which the people took a strong interest; and it may be readily supposed that it was a question which they little understood. The veto, in their eyes, assumed every possible form—it was a monster that would devour them all. I shall never forget that in going to Paris with Mirabeau, either on that day or the next, there were many people congregated on the outside of Madame le Jay's shop, waiting for him. They ran to him and conjured him, with tears in their eyes, not to suffer the king to have the absolute veto. "Monsieur le Comte, you are the father of the people; you must save us, you must defend us against those who want to deliver us up to despotism. If the king is to have the veto, there will be no further occasion for a national assembly; all will be lost and we shall be slaves!" A thousand such absurdities were uttered, and all proceeded from the most earnest dread of a thing they had not the slightest idea of. On these occasions Mirabeau always displayed great dignity and condescension; he managed to appease them with vague answers, and dismissed them with a politeness somewhat patrician.

Mirabeau did not vote upon the question, and that is the reason why he was not upon the list, taken to the Palais Royal, of those who had supported the absolute veto. Surely this conduct was pusillanimous, but he covered it with the mask of his *soi-disant* contempt for the assembly. The proceedings on this question proved the absurdity of voting separately upon constitutional laws; for it is evident that they must be compared with each other to try whether they perfectly coincide. The law which might be very good when combined with some other, might produce a very bad effect if taken alone. Nothing but presumption and inexperience could have induced the national assembly to proceed in any other way, and daily issue unconnected constitutional decrees, without having previously determined upon the plan of a constitution, so as to have a whole before them. In the veto, for instance;—before they decided upon the question, they should have determined whether the legislation were to consist of two chambers or of only one. The settlement of the latter point was an indispensable preliminary; for if the legislature were not divided, the absolute veto became positively necessary to prevent the single chamber from usurping the supreme power. At the same time, the king would have been too weak to exercise the absolute veto against the strong and unanimous wish of the national assem-

bly. It would not be good policy in a sovereign, under such circumstances, to oppose the wish of the whole nation. If the legislature were divided into two sections, then the absolute veto would become less necessary, because there was not even a probability that the two sections would go hand in hand upon every question. One might, therefore, oppose the other. Thus the decision of one question depending upon another, both ought to be considered in coming to a conclusion. The greatest fault the assembly committed, was to work upon detached parts; for thus it is that an irregular edifice was constructed without proportion or correctness. Some parts were too strong, others too weak. There were incoherent masses which could not sustain the slightest shock, a gigantic elevation, and foundations which gave way under the weight of the fabric. But these defects originated in an extreme ambition to shine, and in an eager anxiety, in making a motion, to anticipate that of some other member. There was nothing concerted, nothing prepared. Each delighted in pilfering the propositions of another, in smuggling in an article out of its placé, and in surprising the assembly by something unexpected. A constitution committee had been appointed, but this committee, a prey to jealousy and quarrels, could come to no understanding, nor direct their labours to a common object. It was a miniature likeness of

the assembly; composed of the same elements, the same prejudices, the same desire of shining exclusively and the same struggle of self-love. Each, in short, took upon himself to introduce matters according to his own judgment, and often for no earthly reason than to be beforehand with the others. Study and meditation were foreign to the habits of the assembly; its decrees were passed almost at the sword's point, and the most fiery passions had neither truce nor interval. After having overthrown every thing that existed, all must be reconstructed at once; and so high an opinion had the assembly of their own powers, that they would willingly have undertaken to frame a code for all nations. Historians will say enough about the misfortunes of the revolution, but it would be not less essential to denounce the primitive faults which led to these misfortunes; to go still further back,—the composition of the assembly ought to be examined, and particularly the circumstances in which originated the mistrust, the struggle between the orders, the victory of the commons and the degradation of the royal authority.

The most leading trait in the French character is self-vanity. Each member of the assembly thought himself equal to any undertaking. Never were seen so many men congregated together, who fancied themselves legislators, capable of repairing the faults of the past, finding a remedy for all the errors of the

human mind, and securing the happiness of future generations. Doubt of their own powers never once found its way into their bosoms, and infallibility always presided over their decisions. In vain did a strong minority accuse them, and protest against their measures; the more they were attacked, the more were they satisfied with their own transcendent wisdom. When the king presumed to transmit to them some mild remonstrances upon the decrees of the 4th of August and the declaration of rights, they were surprised that ministers should dare to criticise their proceedings, and M. Necker, who was the author of the criticisms, began from that moment to lose his influence among them.

I have been able to compare the English and French of the same rank in life, and I have attended assiduously the sittings of the English parliament and those of the national assembly. There is no point of opposition in the character of the two nations more striking than the reserve, approaching timidity, of the Englishman, and the confidence in himself displayed by the Frenchman. I often used to think that if a hundred persons indiscriminately were stopped in the streets of London, and the same number in the streets of Paris, and a proposal made to each individual to undertake the government of his country, ninety-nine would accept the offer at Paris and ninety-nine refuse it in London.

Few of the speeches made in the assembly were written by the parties who uttered them. A Frenchman made no scruple of using the composition of another, and acquiring honour by a species of public imposture. No Englishman of character would consent to play such a part. A Frenchman would put himself forward and make any motion suggested to him, without once troubling himself about the consequences; whilst an Englishman would be afraid of exposing himself, if he had not sufficiently studied his subject to be able to answer every reasonable objection, and support the opinion he had advanced. A Frenchman affirms upon very light grounds; an assertion costs him nothing;—an Englishman is in no haste to believe, and before he publicly advances a fact, he traces it to its source, weighs his authorities, and makes himself master of particulars. A Frenchman believes that with a little wit he can stem a torrent of difficulties. He is ready to undertake things the most foreign to his habits and studies, and it was thus that Mirabeau got himself appointed reporter to the committee of mines, without having the slightest knowledge concerning mines. An Englishman would expose himself to eternal ridicule if he dared to invade a department of which he knew nothing; and he is more disposed to refuse undertaking that which he is able to perform, than to be ambitious of doing what he knows to be beyond his powers. The

Frenchman believes that wit supplies the place of every thing; the Englishman is persuaded that nothing can be properly done without both knowledge and practice. A French gentleman being asked if he could play upon the harpsichord, replied, "I do not know, for I never tried; but I will go and see." Now this is *badinage*, but make it serious;—for harpsichord substitute government, and for music legislation, and, instead of one French gentleman you would find twelve hundred.

Romilly had written a very interesting work upon the regulations observed in the English house of commons. These regulations are the fruit of long and closely reasoned experience; and the more they are examined, the more worthy are they found of admiration. They are rigorously enforced in an assembly extremely jealous of innovation; and as they are not written, it required much pains and labour to collect them. This little code indicated the best manner of putting questions, preparing motions, discussing them, telling the votes, appointing committees,—of carrying on, in short, all the proceedings of a political assembly. At the commencement of the meeting of the states-general, I translated this work. Mirabeau presented it, and deposited it upon the *bureau* of the commons, at the time when it was in contemplation to draw up a set of regulations for the national assembly. "We are not English, and we want nothing English!"



was the reply. This translation of Romilly's work, although printed, was not taken the least notice of; nor did any member ever condescend to inquire how matters were conducted in so celebrated an assembly as the British parliament. The national vanity was wounded at the idea of borrowing the wisdom of any other people, and they preferred maintaining their own defective and dangerous mode of conducting their proceedings, of which the sitting of the 4th of August was a painful illustration.

When Brissot talked about constitution, his familiar phrase was, "That is what lost England." Sieyes, Dupont, Condorcet, and many others with whom I was acquainted, were precisely of the same way of thinking. "How!" once replied Duroverai, feigning astonishment, "is England lost?" when did you receive the news, and in what latitude was she lost?" The laugh was against Brissot; and Mirabeau, who was then writing one of his speeches against Mounier, attributed to the latter Brissot's stupid saying, in order to have the pleasure of making him the object of Duroverai's *bon mot*. Mounier complained of this in his first pamphlet, wherein he points out Mirabeau's mistatements relative to a sitting of which he professed to give a faithful account.

## CHAPTER IX.

I HAVE not many recollections of the month of September. During that period I met at Mirabeau's two men of very different characters. The first was Camille Desmoulins, who signed several of his writings as *the attorney-general of the lantern*. It must not, however, be imagined that he excited the people to use the lantern posts in the stead of gallows, an abomination attributed to him by M. Bertrand de Molleville ;—quite the reverse, he pointed out the danger and injustice of such summary executions, but in a tone of lightness and *badinage* by no means in keeping with so serious a subject. Camille appeared to me what is called a *good fellow* ; of rather exaggerated feelings, devoid of reflection or judgment, as ignorant as he was unthinking, not deficient in wit, but in politics possessing not even the first elements of reason. Walking with him one day, I gave him some explanations on the constitution of England, of which he had been talking with the most profound

ignorance of the subject. Three years afterwards, Camille, who had become a great man; by means of his jacobinism and his intimacy with Robespierre, and had cultivated his talents, wrote a work, in which, giving an account of his own life since the beginning of the revolution, he condescended, *en passant*, to give me a kindly recollection by representing me as an emissary of Pitt placed near Mirabeau to mislead him, and as preaching the English constitution at Versailles. I never read this work, but have been told that it was clever, Camille being one of those whom circumstances have led to acquire talents.

The other person whom I met at Mirabeau's was La Clos, the author of the *Liaisons Dangereuses*. This individual, belonging to the household of the Duke of Orleans, was witty though sombre, taciturn and reserved; with the face and look of a conspirator, he was so cold and distant, that although I met him several times, I scarcely ever spoke to him. I knew not his object in visiting Mirabeau. The events of the 5th and 6th of July have been attributed to the Duke of Orleans, and Mirabeau was implicated in the conspiracy. The national assembly decreed that there was no ground of accusation against either. But the acquittal of the assembly is not the verdict of history, and many doubts require still to be solved before a correct judgment can be formed. Notwithstanding my intimacy with Mirabeau at this period,

he never let me into the secret of his having formed any connection with the Duke of Orleans. If then such a fact be true, I am not aware of it. In my recollections of the most minute circumstances, which could not fail to betray a man so confiding and imprudent as Mirabeau, I find not the slightest ground for supposing him an accomplice in the project against the court. It is true, nevertheless, that his intimacy with La Clos might indicate some intention on the part of the duke to negotiate with him for his services. Mirabeau sometimes visited Montrouge, and once or twice, I believe, met the duke there; but it cannot be inferred from this that they conspired together. I remember hearing him speak somewhat favourably of this prince, that is to say of his natural talents; for in morals he said that nothing must be imputed to the duke, who had lost his taste, and could not therefore distinguish good from evil. About the same time, Mirabeau said to Duroverai and me, "I am quite astonished at finding myself a philosopher, because I was born to be an adventurer. But, who knows? They are going to tear the kingdom to pieces; I have some interest in Provence...." Duroverai interrupted him with a laugh. "Ah! he already thinks himself Count of Provence."—"Well," replied Mirabeau, "many have risen from smaller beginnings." All this was but the result of

high animal spirits, and his fervent imagination anticipated nothing but ruin and overthrow.

The only circumstance I know to his disadvantage, was his preparing a work which he concealed from us. When the assembly quitted Versailles, to meet at Paris, Duroverai and I having called at Mirabeau's, who was already gone, to collect some papers which concerned us jointly, le Jay arrived in a travelling dress, and had a van at the door. He seemed much agitated, and had some difficulty in making us comprehend the cause. He had been somewhere to fetch the edition of a book which had been printed clandestinely, ought to have arrived a week sooner, and which he was now afraid of taking to Paris. "What edition? What book? What is it about?"—"Why," replied le Jay, "it is the book against royalty."—"Against royalty, pray bring us a copy." It was a small volume, with a preface by Mirabeau, and the name of the author. I do not remember the precise title, but I think it was "*On Royalty, extracted from Milton.*" It was an abridgement or translation from Milton. Detached passages had been united, and a complete body of doctrine formed from the republican writings of the great English poet. I recollect seeing Mirabeau occupied about this translation with his friend Servan, governor of the pages, who, like all the inhabitants of Versailles,

was hostile to the court. Servan was afterwards minister of war. After the events of the 5th and 6th of October, such a publication by a member of the national assembly was not only a libel, but an act of high treason. We were the more annoyed at this conduct, because the first suspicions of Mirabeau's intimate acquaintances would have fallen upon us, as being naturally inclined to republicanism, and being, moreover, familiar with the English language. But independently of our own feelings, Mirabeau's situation was calculated to alarm us dreadfully. Duroverai put le Jay into such a fright that he already fancied himself in the Chatelet or La Tournelle. He consented to every thing we proposed, and we brought the whole edition into the house, and burned it the same day. Le Jay saved about a dozen copies. This expedition over, he returned to Paris, and gave an account to his wife of the dangers he had incurred, together with the manner in which we had got him out of the scrape. Madame le Jay, who had placed great dependence upon this libel, fell upon the poor husband, called him a fool, and made him feel at the same time her double superiority in strength and intelligence. She next went to Mirabeau, and denounced Duroverai; but Mirabeau had too much sense not to perceive that the book would have proved his ruin, had it been published. All he wanted was to keep it in

reserve against a future favourable opportunity; but he had behaved too ill in the business to dare to reproach us with the loss of a few thousand francs. I confess that on reflecting since upon this affair, the time at which it occurred—the delay of the edition, and the week earlier when it ought to have arrived—le Jay's journey to fetch it, and the secrecy which he was enjoined to preserve—I am sometimes tempted to think that the work was associated with some important events, and that Mirabeau was in the secret of the occurrences of the 5th and 6th of October. But on the other hand, I know that this compilation was begun long before, and that Mirabeau's rage for publishing was so great that it often got the better of all prudential considerations. The best conclusion at which I can arrive, after deliberately weighing every circumstance, is that, taking it for granted that the insurrection of Versailles was conducted by the Duke of Orleans, La Clos was too able a tactician to place the whole affair at Mirabeau's discretion, but had engaged him conditionally with only a partial confidence, and left a wide loop-hole to creep out at. It is impossible not to think that there was some connexion between them. "Instead of a glass of brandy, a bottle was given." This is the figure by which Mirabeau explained the movement of Paris, upon Versailles. I presume that if the king had fled, Mirabeau would have proclaimed the duke of Or-

leans lieutenant-general of the kingdom, and would have become his prime minister. Such a scheme might easily find place in a brain like Mirabeau's, and his subsequent anger against the Duke of Orleans might lead to the idea that he had been deceived in his expectations. M. de Lafayette is perhaps acquainted with the secret of these events, originating, perhaps, in the spontaneous rising of the people, excited by a dread of famine which had, for the time being, produced a real famine.

I was at Versailles, and saw part of what passed. But I know nothing in particular, neither did I see any thing that could characterise either a settled plan or a conspiracy. I can even say that when the event occurred, it was not explained in the same manner as it has since been. The people attributed the dearth to the aristocracy. The aristocrats, they said, destroyed the corn before it reached maturity, paid the bakers not to work, suspended trade, and threw the flour into the rivers;—in short, there was no absurdity too gross to appear improbable. The popular journals did not cease to circulate the grossest falsehoods. The arrival of a new regiment at Versailles had renewed the public alarm. The fete which had been given at the palace to the officers, was inconceivably imprudent. It could not be termed a conspiracy, because people do not conspire at a public banquet of five hundred persons; but seve-



ral anti-popular songs were sung, the national cockade insulted, the infant dauphin led about, and the king and queen, yielding to the enjoyment of these testimonies of affection, increased, by their presence, the general enthusiasm. At any other period, it would not have been imputed as a crime, that the young officers of the king's guard should become animated at a banquet, and display their affection for the royal family. The cloud which hung over this unhappy family, and the misfortunes which threatened them, were a fresh stimulus to the feelings of chivalrous honour which pervaded the bosoms of these young nobles, devoted, by profession, to the defence of their sovereign. But when the particulars of this banquet were made public, with every possible exaggeration, it was construed into an intention of rendering the revolution odious, and of forming a fresh league for the king's defence, and was therefore denounced in the assembly as evidence of a court conspiracy against the people. The *cote droit* was furious, and inveighed against the calumny. Mirabeau, whom Servan had excited, threw himself into the midst of the tumult, and declared that he was ready to name the principal author in the impious fete, provided it were decreed beforehand that the king's person was sacred and inviolable. This single expression, which cast a direct accusation upon the queen, threw the *cote droit* into con-

steration, and made the democrats themselves fear that they had gone too far.

If, on this occasion, Mirabeau had adopted the most generous line of policy, and opposed the popular rage, it would have been easy to give another colour to this circumstance, and place those testimonies of affection for the king in a favourable point of view. He might have openly complained of its being supposed that the entire assembly did not participate in these marks of affection, and have proposed a similar fete, at which the king should appear surrounded by all the representatives of France. He might, at the same time, have asked for the removal of the regiment of Flanders, whose presence was unnecessary. But it must be admitted that this assembly, though very prodigal of their expressions of attachment to the king, had never yet shown it by any tangible act.

The dearth which kept the people in a state of effervescence, and the banquet scene at the chateau appeared, at the time, sufficient to account for the insurrection at Paris, and the invasion at Versailles.

It was not till afterwards that a plot was imagined and attributed to the duke of Orleans. This suspicion acquired consistency when it was known that M. de Lafayette had insisted upon the duke leaving Paris and proceeding to England. The secret of this intrigue has never transpired, but I recollect that

two years after, in a confidential conversation with M. de Talleyrand, bishop of Autun, that prelate uttered these remarkable words: "*The Duke of Orleans is the stop-pail into which is thrown all the filth of the revolution!*"

The following, so far as my recollection serves me, was Mirabeau's conduct during these two days. On the fifth, we dined with M. Servan, in the palace called les Petites-Ecuries, in which, as governor of the pages, he had apartments. We could see from the windows opening upon the great square, the arrival of the Parisian multitudes, including the *poissardes* or fish women, and the market porters. This crowd demanded nothing but bread. The regiment of Flanders and the national guard were drawn up outside the external enclosure of the chateau. The king's guards, both cavalry and infantry, were formed within the great and lesser courts. There was a tumultuous movement among the crowd, the cause of which we could not well distinguish. Mirabeau was not long with us; nay, I have an idea that he did not stay to dinner. Though the crowd was great, and there was no knowing what might happen, we walked about every where. We saw the king's carriages go off through unfrequented streets, and thought they were conveying the royal family to a place of safety. Tired of wandering, I went to the assembly at about eight o'clock in the evening. The

hall presented a curious spectacle. It had been invaded by the people from Paris, and was quite full of them. The galleries were crowded with women and men armed with halberts, bludgeons and pikes. The sitting was suspended, but a message came from the king, calling upon the president to resume it, and send a deputation to the chateau. I went to Mirabeau, whom I found in bed, although it was not eleven o'clock. He rose, and we returned to the assembly. When we arrived, the president was exhausting his strength in a fruitless endeavour to obtain silence. Mirabeau immediately raised his voice, and called upon the president to make the assembly respected, and order the strangers in the hall to quit the members' benches, which they had invaded. It required all Mirabeau's popularity to succeed. By degrees the populace withdrew, and the deputies began to discuss some clauses of the penal code. In the gallery in which I was sitting, there was a *pois-sarde* who assumed superior authority, and directed the motions of about a hundred women, awaiting her orders to make a noise or be silent. She called familiarly to the deputies, and said, "Who is speaking yonder? Make that babbler hold his tongue! We do not want his speechifying; we want bread! Let our little mother Mirabeau speak; we should like to hear him!" *Our little mother Mirabeau* became the cry of the whole band; but Mirabeau was

not a man to show off on such occasions, and his popularity never made him lose sight of his dignity.

About midnight, an aide-de-camp announced the arrival of M. de Lafayette, at the head of the national guard of Paris, and every one now thought himself safe. The soldiers of the national guard had renewed their oath of fidelity to the law and the king, and the multitude, on being made acquainted with the king's assurances, became calmer. About two in the morning, we left the assembly, which was still sitting. On awaking some hours after, a confused account was given me of what had occurred ; of the invasion of the chateau, and the disarming of the guards. These events were then attributed to misunderstandings, imprudences and chance quarrels. Mirabeau went early to the assembly, and I was informed that he opposed a compliance with the king's desire of removing the assembly to the chateau, as the only means of keeping the multitude in check. The pretended dignity, which he put forward as a reason for sending only a deputation, certainly appeared suspicious. Was that a time to consult etiquette? Was there a duty more imperious than that of forming a living rampart around the monarch in danger? Certain it is, that had a conspiracy against the king really existed, and Mirabeau been an accomplice, he could not have behaved otherwise than he did. But, on the other hand, how happened it,

that the assembly, who surely were not in the plot, all so instantly concurred in his opinion? This is a reason for believing that he had only taken advantage of the general feeling, and that his motion was not premeditated. There was, at this time, a marked opposition between the court and the national assembly, because the king had given but a half sanction to the declaration of the rights of man, and to the explanatory decrees of the 4th of August. The assembly was mean enough, on this occasion, to take advantage of the disorder, and call upon the king for his full and unqualified consent; just as if his refusal had been one of the causes of the insurrection. Mounier presided on that day;—Mirabeau was very jealous of him, and had, perhaps, no other motive, even without being conscious of it, than a desire to get the better of Mounier, and injure him, by representing his opinions as derogatory from the national dignity. I did not, at the time, make these reflections, because, such was the rapidity of events, that one impression was soon effaced by another.

Several deputies, against whom the fury of the populace had been excited, took to flight; and having no hope from a revolution effected by such means, they dared not return to Paris, but abandoned their post. Lally-Tolendal and Mounier were among the number. There were fifty-five or fifty-six. This

desertion was not justifiable. But, on taking into consideration the violence they had suffered, it would be but fair, prior to accusing them of cowardice, that we should ourselves have suffered, for a time, the same outrages. I never met Mounier but once, and I was present at a conversation between him and Mirabeau, at the house of a painter. Mounier's account of this conversation is quite correct.

## CHAPTER X.

I DID not before allude to Mirabeau's celebrated speech on the national bankruptcy, because I wished, under the same head, to add a few further observations.

Mirabeau was not well acquainted with the subject, although he had published several papers on it, such as "*The Bank of St Charles,*" "*The Denunciation of Stock-jobbing,*" &c. But he had two able coadjutors in Panchaud and Claviere, the former of whom said, that Mirabeau was the first man in the world to speak on a question he knew nothing about. A ready conception, and the happiest expressions enabled him easily to lead artificial minds astray. When, from the effects of the revolution, the public revenue was considerably diminished, and the taxes of scarcely any value, M. Necker, unable to keep in motion an immense machine, whose moving power was almost annihilated, proposed to the assembly a loan, to which he had endeavoured to give a very



seductive form. He wanted, for this purpose, to make use of the credit of the *caisse d'escompte*. Claviere, who, I believe, had some feeling of personal hostility towards the company of the *caissé d'escompte*, engaged Mirabeau to oppose the measure. The assembly attempted to organise the loan, and proceeded with as little intelligence as on many other occasions. The consequence was, that the measure was unsuccessful, and the national credit, about which so much had been said, became worse than useless. M. Necker was soon after forced to present another project, a species of patriotic loan, somewhat resembling an income tax. This time, Mirabeau determined to support the minister, to whom, however, he was personally hostile. There had been no intercourse between them; for the intimacy which Duroverai and Mallouet had attempted to bring about, had failed. Some persons suspected, that Mirabeau's support was given, in order to fix upon Necker the responsibility of the certain failure of the plan. Several stupid members, who thought that the assembly would be wanting in dignity, if it adopted ministerial measures without altering something in them, proposed several modifications. Mirabeau was of opinion, that the plan required no alteration, and eagerly pressed the assembly to adopt it as it was. His principal argument was, the ill success of the last project of loan, which the friends of the minister

attributed to the assembly, who, by ill-judged modifications, had altered its nature. Thence proceeding to remark upon the dangerous state of public credit, and the failure of the revenue, he represented a national bankruptcy, as the probable consequence of the rejection of this plan. The force with which he presented so commonplace a subject, was miraculous; he elevated it to sublimity. Those who heard this speech will never forget it; it excited every gradation of terror, and a devouring gulph, with the groans of the victims it swallowed, of which the orator gave a very appalling description, seemed pictured to the senses of the audience.

The triumph was complete; not an attempt was made to reply. The assembly were subjugated by that power of a superior and energetic mind, which acts upon the multitude, as if it were only a single individual, and the project was adopted without a dissenting voice. From that day, Mirabeau was considered as a being superior to other men. He had no rival. There were, indeed, other orators, but he alone was eloquent; and this impression was stronger, because, in his speech on this question, he was obliged to depend entirely upon his own resources; for it was an unexpected reply, and could not, therefore, have been prepared.\*

\* This is the passage in Mirabeau's reply, to which M. Du-

Mole, the celebrated actor at the *Theatre Français*, was present. The force and dramatic effect of Mirabeau's eloquence, and the sublimity of his voice, had made a deep impression upon this distinguished comedian, who, with visible emotion, approached

most alludes: "Oh! if less solemn declarations did not insure our respect for public faith, and our horror of the infamous word *bankruptcy*, I would search into the secret motives, unknown, perhaps, to ourselves, which make us draw back at the very instant we are called upon to consummate a great sacrifice;—inefficacious, it is true, unless it be sincere;—and I would say to those who, from the fear of sacrifices and the dread of taxes, are, perhaps, familiarizing their minds with the idea of not keeping faith with the public creditor:—What is such a bankruptcy itself, but the most cruel, the most iniquitous, the most unequal, and the most ruinous of taxes?—My friends, listen to a word—a single word!—Two centuries of depredations and robbery have dug the gulph into which the kingdom is about to fall. This horrible gulph must be filled up! But how? There is but one way. Here is a list of rich men in France. Choose from among the richest, in order that you may sacrifice fewer citizens;—but choose, at all events, for must not the smaller number perish to save the great mass of the people? Well! these two thousand rich men are possessed of sufficient wealth to make up the deficiency. Restore order to your finances, peace and prosperity to the country;—strike, immolate your victims without pity; precipitate them into the abyss, and it will close. . . What, do you draw back horror-struck, ye inconsistent, ye pusillanimous men! Well, then, do you not perceive, &c. &c."—*Note by the Genevese Editor.*

the orator to offer his compliments. "Ah! Monsieur le Comte," said he in a pathetic tone of voice, "what a speech! and with what an accent did you deliver it! You have surely missed your vocation!" Mole smiled on perceiving the singularity of the compliment which his dramatic enthusiasm had led him to utter, but Mirabeau was much flattered by it.

Some days after, in the beginning of October, the King being already at Paris, it was determined to press this ministerial measure by an address from the national assembly to the nation. Mirabeau was requested to write this address, and he transferred the task to me. I undertook it with more readiness, because I was still of opinion that a solemn address, supported by authority, might yet serve as a vehicle for important truths. I had no desire to palliate the excesses of the revolution, but wished, on the contrary, to prove, in the strongest manner possible, that the nation would be lost if it were misled any longer by wrong notions of liberty, whose mask licentiousness had assumed to render her odious. This composition was not so rapid as the address to the king, because the subject was more complicated and delicate; for great caution was requisite not to offend the assembly itself, whose ears were irritable as those of a despot, and who took umbrage at the most indirect reproach. I devoted three days to this work, which was well received, but produced

upon the nation just about as much effect as a sermon upon a congregation. Scarcely had it been applauded, when it was already forgotten. I found among my papers the original of this address almost in the same state as when I gave it to Mirabeau; there being only two or three slight alterations made by the committee appointed to draw it up.\*

Soon after this occurrence, Duroverai communicated to me a proposal made him by M. Delessert a banker of Paris, that we should accept a sum of money as a testimony of gratitude for the services we had rendered in supporting M. Necker's project; for our influence over Mirabeau was well known; and my contributions to several of his speeches, together with the hand I had in framing the address to the nation, were at least suspected. M. Delessert spoke in the name of several bankers, and offered a hundred louis d'or as his share of the contribution. Duroverai had neither accepted nor refused, but said he would mention the matter to me. I was very angry that he had not immediately declined the offer of these gentlemen, in the strongest terms, as he certainly would have done had it preceded instead of following the service. We had not acted in the matter with any view to their advantage—they, therefore, owed us nothing; and I could not but

\* Vide Appendix, No. 3.

perceive a bribe in disguise, in this pretended display of gratitude. A gift which cannot be loudly avowed and publicly proclaimed—a gift, in short, that will not bear the light of day, stamps itself as illicit and conveys a pledge of venality. The simple suspicion of personal interest appeared to me so disgraceful, that Duroverai had much difficulty in convincing me that there was no insult in M. Delessert's offer. The answer was dictated by these feelings;—for it is clear that this was an attempt upon our delicacy, and not a very indirect one. I soon forgot the matter, and never took the trouble to mention it to M. Delessert.

When the assembly was transferred to Paris, and met at the archbishop's palace, I prevailed upon Mirabeau to move a vote of thanks to M. Bailly and M. de Lafayette, and I composed a speech for him in which I pointed out the difficulties which, amid these political hurricanes, they had to encounter as public men. As he had always been envious of their popularity, this proposal displeased him at first; but I well knew that he would not resist the temptation of being thought the author of a motion, written in a style that flattered him. The *maire* and commandant of Paris were the more flattered at this, because it was unexpected, and I had the satisfaction of bringing together, at least for some days, men whose union appeared to me advantageous to the country. Jea-

lousy, hatred, and malevolence were the plagues which seemed to have attached themselves to the principal actors in the revolution. Could the latter have been brought to act in concert, they would have imparted a uniform motion both to the assembly and to the nation. But my hopes in this respect were the illusions of inexperience. No power but that of a government can suspend individual passions, and give them an impulsion towards a common object. In weak administrations, a thousand contending currents are formed, and each candidate for public favour, desirous of feathering his own nest, hates his fellows because he considers them rivals, and they thus mutually weaken each other until, at length, they all fall under the domination of one.

Lafayette was now in the meridian of his power. He was master of the chateau, and the national guard were wholly attached to him. But he bore his honours meekly, his intentions were pure and his personal character elicited general esteem. His house, under the direction of his virtuous and religious wife, was distinguished by that decorum of manners which the French nobles had too much neglected. I was invited by him to dinner to meet Mirabeau, M. de la Rochefoucauld, M. de Liancourt, and many others. I was in the full enjoyment of a reconciliation which I had brought about, without any one suspecting my share in the business.

As far as I can remember, a scheme for bringing Mirabeau into office was talked of, about this period. There were conferences and negotiations on the subject. M. Necker had almost agreed to it—the king was about to consent—but there was a *sine qua non* of Mirabeau's, which was that he should remain member of the assembly, without which he felt that his taking office would prove his destruction without advantage to the public cause. A suspicion of this project seemed to exist in the assembly. Perhaps it arose from secret treachery, or may be, simple indiscretion. Be that as it may, whilst the negotiation was still pending, Lameth, or Noailles, or Dupont, or some one of that party, moved that no member should accept an office in the executive, nor a king's minister sit in the assembly. Mirabeau opposed the motion in vain. Duroverai, I think, wrote a very powerful speech for him on this occasion. The votes were nearly equal, but the motion was carried by a feeble majority. An appeal to the usage in the English parliament, instead of telling against the motion, was instrumental to its success. The least idea of imitation offended the pride of the innovators, who pretended to establish a monarchical form of government without preserving a single element of monarchy. Mirabeau's exasperation may easily be imagined, when he found his ambitious hopes overthrown by this motion of the Lameths and their party.



In the constitution-committee, Sieyes had made two proposals which were rejected, and which, according to custom, he had not taken the least trouble to get accepted. One was a civic inscription, to admit young men, with a certain degree of solemnity, into the body of active citizens. I liked this idea, not as a great legislative measure, but as a means of inspection and education for youth. I wrote a short speech upon it, which Mirabeau pronounced at the assembly, and the proposal was unanimously adopted. Sieyes was delighted at the humiliation of the committee. He was much pleased with Mirabeau, and still more so with me. It was not a difficult matter for him to guess my share in the business; for, after the rejection of the proposal by the committee, he had mentioned it in a conversation at the house of the Bishop of Chartres, and I had expressed my opinion on the subject.

The other proposal, which I likewise treated with the same success, has escaped my memory, but I shall find it in looking over the numbers of the *Courrier de Provence*.

The question of qualifications for a deputy having been brought forward, Duroverai wrote a speech for Mirabeau, which tended to declare bankrupts ineligible to any public employment. This was one of the laws of Geneva, to prove the utility of which, Montesquieu had devoted a whole chapter. There

are, however, some strong objections to the principle. A merchant may fail without being to blame, and it is hard to punish misfortune by a disgraceful exclusion.\* A bankrupt may be a man of overwhelming talent, and it would not be just to deprive the public of his services. Experience at Geneva, however, had shown that the advantages of this law more than counterbalanced its evils, and the authority of Montesquieu, though not very powerful with the democratic party, contributed, nevertheless, to the success of the motion. M. Reybaz sent a laughable letter on this subject to the *Courrier de Provence*.\*

I forgot to mention another law passed at Versailles, after the king had gone to Paris, and suggested by Duroverai; namely, the *martial law*. Insurrections had become so frequent, that the duties of a municipal officer or a town-major were more difficult than when in the presence of a hostile army. In many places the troops, imbued with the revolutionary spirit of the day, instead of supporting the authorities, had joined the people. The revolution existed in the army as in the nation. A handful of mutineers were sufficient to make the commandant of a citadel tremble. Every act of personal defence became a capital crime, and the clamours of the populace were more formidable than an enemy's battery.

\* Vide Appendix, No. 4.

Mirabeau had long thought that this popular dictatorship should be put down, and, if I mistake not, was the first to propose the martial law, which encountered a violent opposition. It is remarkable that he again opposed the popular party, and yet his popularity was not affected by it. Duroverai drew up the law upon the English model, and England was often, though improperly, quoted throughout this debate. There were at this period at Versailles, two English barristers with whom I was intimate. Duroverai, who had a superabundance of activity in the pursuit of his plan, requested that I would ask them to write a letter to Mirabeau, explaining martial law as it existed in England. I told him that I was sure of not succeeding in such a demand; I had good reasons for thinking so, and it was not until repeatedly urged by Duroverai, that I consented to make the application. I asked my English friends if they would answer a letter from Mirabeau, soliciting information on the subject; but I could obtain nothing from either. They would not expose themselves to have their names mentioned, their letter shown, or to the suspicion of having, in any way, attempted to influence the deliberations of the assembly.

I should not have mentioned this circumstance but to remark, that this reserve belongs to the national character of the English, and that the fear of appear-

ing in a matter in which they had no concern—the suspicion of intrigue or officious interference, is a feeling as common among Englishmen, as the desire of taking a prominent part and interfering with every thing, is a universal feeling among Frenchmen.

## CHAPTER XI.

I HAVE, in my head, a confusion of dates concerning the occurrences of November and December. It was in the former month, that Duroverai went to England. His absence, which was not to have exceeded a week, lasted five or six. M. Seybaz, who, as I have already stated, undertook to supply his place in the *Courrier de Provence*, seldom attended the assembly, from which he resided at too great a distance, but took his materials from other journals, which were now becoming very numerous. The *Moniteur* was already begun, and in it was published every speech made in the assembly, whether good or bad.

As great accuracy in dates is requisite for what follows, I fear I shall be unable to establish them from simple recollections. I must refer to documents, and shall, therefore, be unable to finish this chapter, until my return to London.

During Duroverai's absence, Mirabeau called upon

me one morning, and said, he had a most important communication to make. He began by representing in the blackest colours, the complete disorganization of the kingdom, expatiated on the impossibility of doing any good with the national assembly, as then constituted, and at length, drew from his portfolio a paper, in his own hand writing, of seven or eight pages. "Here," said he, "is a plan by which France may yet be saved, and her freedom secured; for you know me too well, my friend, to suppose that I would co-operate, in any measure, of which liberty were not the basis. Read it through, without interruption. I will then talk to you about the means of execution, and you will perceive that they are commensurate with the greatness of the measure. I cannot, however, tell you all, or name the parties concerned. It is a secret of honour—a solemn engagement."

I here have occasion to regret the imperfection of my memory, and the lapse of time which has effaced from my recollection most of the details of this project. It was founded upon the departure of the king, who could no longer bear his captivity at Paris. He was to escape to Metz, or some other strongly fortified city, garrisoned with troops and officers of well known fidelity. On his arrival thither, he was to appeal, by proclamation, to the body of the people. He was to remind the country of his benefactions, and de-

nounce the crimes of the metropolis. He was to cancel the decrees of the national assembly, as being contrary to law, and founded upon a manifest usurpation of power. He was next to dissolve the assembly itself, and order an immediate convocation of the *bailliages* to elect fresh deputies. He was, at the same time, to order all the commandants to resume their authority, and the parliaments their functions, and to act in conjunction against the rebels. He was to summon the nobles to rally round him, for the defence of the monarch and his throne. Mirabeau was to remain at Paris, and watch the motions of the assembly. So soon as the royal proclamation should appear, all the *cote-droit* and the moderates of the *cote-gauche* were, if my memory serves me correctly, to vote that they should immediately follow the king, and separate from those who were of a contrary opinion. If Paris persevered in its disobedience, all communication with it was to be stopped, and it was to be reduced by famine. It was certain, that the clergy, who had been despoiled of their wealth by the national assembly, would employ all their religious influence over the people, in furtherance of this plan; and the bishops were to meet, and protest, in the name of religion, against the sacrilegious usurpations of the legislative body.—There were four or five pages in the same strain. The project appeared arranged with much art, and all its parts seemed so

skilfully combined, as to be likely to work well in conjunction.

I cannot describe my emotion, or rather my alarm, on reading this paper. After a few moments silence, I told Mirabeau that I saw, in this confidence, the strongest proof of his friendship for me; that I had no observations to make, such projects being beyond my skill; that I was not competent to decide upon the fate of the monarchy, nor to give an opinion upon the differences between the king and the assembly; but that my resolution was taken, and I should quit Paris in two days.

The tone of this conversation is strong in my memory. We spoke in a low voice, and very slowly, like men weighing the importance of each word, and who, to contain their internal agitation, compress every motion of the body, as if they feared a sudden and involuntary explosion.

“You are labouring under a misconception:” said Mirabeau, surprised at my determination; “you imagine this plan to be a signal of civil war. No such thing. You know not to what extent the nation are attached to their king, and how exclusively monarchical we are. The instant the king is free, the assembly will be annihilated. With him the body is a colossus; but without him, a heap of sand. There will be, doubtless, on the part of the Palais Royal, some attempts hostile to the measure. If Lafayette



should play the Washington, and put himself at the head of the national guard, he would deserve death, and his fate would be soon sealed.”—“As well as that of many others,” exclaimed I, “for assassination will take the place of massacre. I am ignorant of your means of execution, but I am sure they are radically bad, because the king has not energy enough to follow them up. He will make this plan miscarry like every other.”—“You do not know the queen;” he replied, “she has prodigious strength of mind: she has the courage of a man.”—“But have you seen her?” I inquired. “Have you been consulted with? Are you quite sure that full confidence is placed in you? Recollect with whom you are acting, what kind of men you are supporting. If you were at Metz, or in any other strong hold, and the first part of the project successful, be assured that you would be the first they would get rid of; for you have already made them fear you, and that they will never forgive. But let us forego personal considerations. Has not every thing yet attempted against the assembly proved favourable to it? Does it not command the the power of public opinion? Has it not paralyzed both the finances and the army? The king may establish himself upon the frontiers; he may obtain assistance from the emperor; but is it in his character to become the conqueror of his subjects? And is it with Austrian soldiers that you

would establish freedom? Is it not madness to begin the regeneration of France, with the most deplorable of misfortunes? . . . .” I recollect that, animated by this conversation, I was no longer upon my guard, and I raised my voice. After uttering something with great warmth, and in a very loud tone, Mirabeau and I were both surprised at perceiving, that the sound of a violin in the next room, from which we were separated only by a thin partition, had suddenly ceased. We had before paid but little attention to it, but its cessation struck us both simultaneously. “We may be overheard,” said Mirabeau, “let us go into another room. I had anticipated,” he continued, as soon as we had changed our quarters, “several of the objections you have urged. But I am certain that the court party are bent upon making the experiment, and I think my co-operation necessary to its success, and to direct it in favour of liberty, otherwise it will only lead to new errors, and to the total ruin of the country. If it does not succeed, the monarchy is lost.”—“And how can any man of sense,” said I, “stake his life in such an infernal game? You are irritated against the national assembly, on account of the decree which excluded you from the ministry, and you are unconsciously blinded by your resentment. If such a project had been formed by any one else, you would have considered it either the greatest of crimes, or the consummation of

an act of the greatest madness. I agree with you, that the assembly is badly conducted; but I am persuaded, that if seven or eight members only would unite, and act in concert, every thing would go right. If you have interest at court, which I very much doubt, you had better use it in the furtherance of what I now urge. All these half projects, these counter-revolutionary phantasies only tend to increase the general apprehension, and add to the alarms of the jacobins and the *comite de surveillance*. It is in the assembly alone that you have influence and power; out of it you possess neither; and if the court party have really the confidence in you, which you seem to think, you can serve them much better as a deputy than as a minister."

This is all I can remember of a conversation which lasted two or three hours. My objections had their due weight, and by degrees, I obtained from him a confession that he had proposed this plan on being sounded as to whether his services might be depended upon, in the event of the king quitting Paris. I then pointed out to him, that which he had overlooked in the blindness of his anger against the assembly; namely, that the court party had only assumed a hypothetical project; that, not being in the confidence of the Tuileries, he had no certain data to proceed upon, and that there was a great difference between giving a plan, and belonging to the council

who were to decide upon its adoption. This last consideration was decisive. He felt that he was employed only in a subordinate capacity—for he was not even acquainted with the names of the principal parties to the project of the king's escape—and that he could not answer for the king's vigorous adoption of the plan with all its consequences. He therefore gave me his word of honour that he would withdraw from it, and urge *Monsieur*,\* who had induced him to join in it, to forego his purpose and advise the court party to turn their views towards the national assembly.

Two or three days after, Mirabeau informed me that the court party, as well as he, had abandoned the plan; that the king was irresolute and only seemed determined upon attempting his evasion when wincing under some recent insult of the national assembly, but thought no more of it the moment they let him alone. There was a new scheme to form a confederation among the moderates, and Mirabeau's services were considered indispensable to its success. Dining, a few days after, at the Bishop of Chartres', Brissot, who was there, said to me with an air of triumph, "Well, you are always laughing at our *comite de surveillance* and at our detection of conspiracies; but this time you will not laugh. We

\* Afterwards Louis XVIII.

have the clue to a plot, a list of the highest names in the kingdom, as conspirators, and strong evidence to back the charge. I cannot tell you more at present, but to-morrow, when the denunciation is made, you will know all." On the following day, the *comite de surveillance* denounced the Marquis de Favras, who was in the service of *Monsieur*, and produced evidence of a plan to carry off the king; and convey him to some frontier town. I know that *Monsieur* was much alarmed, and thought it necessary to appear at the *commune* of Paris and disavow all connexion with the Marquis de Favras. He also wrote to the national assembly a letter of which Mirabeau claimed the authorship. The storm passed over. Favras, a ruined man and a gambler, was one of those adventurers whom great men always sacrifice when themselves are exposed to danger. During the proceedings against him, Favras behaved with as much *sang-froid* as the public evinced excitement. If an agent of *Monsieur*, he was faithful to the last, and he mounted the scaffold with a degree of courage that would have done honour to a better man. The secret of this intrigue was never known; but I have no doubt Favras was one of those men who, when employed as instruments, are led by vanity much further than their principals intend. Instead of confining themselves to their particular sphere, they are spurred on by the fatal ambition of

embracing objects beyond their reach, and are at last betrayed by their own activity. The fate of Favras convinced the court that their best policy was to form a party in the national assembly. As for Mirabeau, he bestowed a thousand curses upon the shuffling courtiers, those mountebank conspirators who confided the restoration of the monarchy to the exertions of a ruined gamester; but the praises he bestowed upon the intrepidity of Favras in his last interrogatory, made me shrewdly suspect that the death of the latter was not less consolatory to his friends than to his enemies.

I must not forget the part taken by Mirabeau in the debate upon church property. Turgot, in his article, *Foundation*, of the Encyclopedia, had shown that the legislature had an undoubted right to destroy private *corporations* whenever they became injurious to the public welfare. He had also shown the absurdity of believing that a *foundation*, that is to say, the private will of an individual, could have the force of law. It followed from the principles he had laid down, that the clergy being only a body of public functionaries, their property was nothing more than a salary for the services they performed. So long as the clergy were considered necessary to the state, so long ought they to be paid; but the state had an undoubted right to pay them either out of the public revenue, like the army, or by means

especially appropriated thereto, such as lands or tithes. Now the question was only to determine in which way they should be paid ; whether by allowing them a territorial domain or by fixed salaries, like other public officers. The Bishop of Axtun was the first to propose a sale of the church property for the extinction of the national debt, and to substitute a fixed salary in its stead. Mirabeau had embraced the same opinion, which was also that of the *cote gauche* and the popular party. There were two reasons for this measure :—the immense property of the clergy, of which immediate possession could be taken, and a consequent reduction of power, so as to bring that body to a level with its future place in a democratic constitution. A powerful clergy is a formidable instrument in the hands of a king. The cause of the ecclesiastical body was strenuously defended by the Abbe Maury, the Archbishop of Aix, and several others.

I had nothing to do with this discussion, nor did I write any speech for Mirabeau. I had my own opinions upon this question. I did not approve of immolating victims on the altar of public benefit; and I thought it unjust to discharge the national debt by the spoliation of the clergy. The abolition of convents, proceeded in with discretion, was a measure of humanity and wisdom, and the reduction in the future salaries of the clergy seemed compatible with

prudence and justice ; but it did not appear to me necessary to diminish the enjoyment of the actual possessors. I had many discussions on this subject with the incumbents themselves ; with the Abbe Morellet, for instance, who would willingly have consented to a sacrifice of part of his income, and approved of a proportionate reduction in the revenue of the prelates and great commendatories. I had imbibed my notions on the subject in England, were it is a principle in reforms never to effect them upon living persons. In France this principle was unknown. It had never been acknowledged by the old government. The expulsion of the jesuits was a violation of it ; M. Necker himself had never observed it, for he had never ceased to reduce, retrench, and economise without caring about the individuals he plundered, whom he considered liberally treated when they had sufficient left to keep them from actual starvation. The inflexible Camus, with his jansenist harshness, governed the poor state pensioners despotically ; and because, when he despoiled them of their pensions, he did not appropriate the money to his own use, he passed for a virtuous defender of the public property. He multiplied decrees whereby he rendered thousands miserable, without making a single individual happy ; for the pensioners, who were the sufferers, endured a loss affecting their very



means of subsistence, whilst the public, who gained by it, made but an imperceptible profit, spread as it was over the mass of the nation. How mistaken are those pretended reformers who can only better the condition of the one by sacrificing the other.

At this juncture, the clergy might really be thought not to form part of the French nation. The national assembly, however, did not carry their prejudice to exclusion, but purposed making a settlement upon the ecclesiastical body, which certainly would have proved sufficient, if there had been no subsequent falling off. The clergy themselves would have suffered without a murmur, had the promised settlement been regularly paid ; but the spoliation was real, for the payment of the indemnity was soon discontinued.

The person who wrote Mirabeau's speech on this question, was one Pelin, a native of Marseilles, by profession a lawyer. In his youth he had been implicated in some dirty transactions, had undergone a condemnation, and either suffered punishment or saved himself from it by a prudential voyage to the West Indies. He had been of use to Mirabeau during the tumultuous election at Marseilles, and he came to Paris with his wife, a very young and very pretty woman, doubtless aware that she was in no danger from

the austere morality of the tribune of the people. In appearance, Pelin was mild and timid; he did not talk too much, was reserved and discreet, not brilliant, but possessed of great abilities. He almost disappeared in the presence of Mirabeau, who treated him as a very humble subordinate, and often assumed a tone towards him which surprised me; for Pelin was very useful to him, and had written for him a report upon Marseilles, another upon the municipalities, and other works which I have forgotten. Pelin was paid for all this, it is true, but complained of not being adequately remunerated. What made Mirabeau assume this air of disdain and hauteur, was his profound contempt for the man, although he could appreciate his talents and determine to make use of them. One of the speeches upon church property written by Pelin, reminds me of a scene which I witnessed by chance. The Abbe Maury had refuted this speech very successfully. Mirabeau, unable to follow the abbe through his arguments, obtained leave to speak for the next day. On his return home, Pelin was not there. He dispatched two or three successive messengers in search of him, but no Pelin arrived. Towards evening Mirabeau became uneasy and sent again. At length Pelin came. As I perceived that Mirabeau was in a state of great excitement and made use of expressions which the pre-

sence of a third person rendered very humiliating, I withdrew into a closet with a glass door which I closed; but I could not help overhearing every word of the reproaches which, like a storm, now burst upon Pelin's head. "Were you at the assembly?"—"No!"—"What! you were not there? Is this the way you behave to me? See what an awkward situation you place me in. Maury spoke for an hour. . . . and what reply can you make to a speech you have not heard? You would prefer writing one against me; I know you well; but I tell you, that by to-morrow morning, I must have a complete refutation of Maury's speech. You will find some extracts from it in the evening papers." Pelin made some difficulty, and proposed that an adjournment of the question should be moved; but Mirabeau seized him by the throat, pinned him against the wall, enjoined him to do what he ordered without delay, and to look well to his conduct. Pelin, with his mind thus prepared for labour and eloquence, withdrew at about seven o'clock in the evening; and what appeared to me almost miraculous was, that at seven the next morning, I received from Mirabeau a voluminous manuscript with a note begging me to cast my eye over Pelin's lucubration of the preceding night; to give a little touch, if necessary, to the beginning and end, and

send it to him at the assembly at twelve. As I read this production, I was astonished at the flow of ideas, the force of reasoning, the logical arrangement of all its parts, and the subtlety of the arguments in refutation of those points in which Maury had the advantage. It was a work of mere dry reasoning, for Pelin had neither imagination nor eloquence; and its style was that of an ordinary advocate who discusses but embellishes nothing. Mirabeau, less struck by this kind of merit than by that with which Pelin was not endued, did not do him justice. I returned the manuscript with an assurance that it might be used without fear. I had merely struck out a few superfluities, and was in admiration of the facility and sound logic which pervaded the whole. After all this trouble, the question was adjourned, and the speech only appeared in the *Courrier de Provence*.

Mirabeau afterwards assured me that Pelin was so venal that he had more than once written for both parties upon the same question, and this amused him whilst he made it a source of considerable profit. But Mirabeau must still have had some confidence in the man, when he continued to employ him. Pelin, whose talents ought to have raised him to great influence among the jacobins, had been employed in the Low Countries by the d'Areberg

family, and thus found himself implicated by degrees with the aristocratic party. If this individual had displayed more honesty or more energy, he would have attained to distinguished rank in a revolution which opened so wide a field to talent of every description.

## CHAPTER XII.

MIRABEAU had quitted his furnished lodgings and taken a house in the Chaussee-d'Antin, which he fitted up like the boudoir of a *petite maitresse*. In his former straitened circumstances, he had never been able to indulge in his taste for luxury; but he was fond of pleasure and show, elegant furniture, a good table and much company. There would have been nothing to blame in the style in which he now lived, had it not exceeded his means. His father had left him, besides the title of marquis, which he would not assume because he thought he had given more celebrity to his title of count, very considerable estates, but eat up with incumbrances and in the hands of creditors. He confided to me that an offer had been made to extricate him from these embarrassments and put him in possession of his family estates. The source whence such an offer came, would have raised suspicion in a proudly independent mind. It was again *Monsieur*, who undertook to

advance him twenty thousand francs a month until these incumbrances were wiped off, and thus become his only creditor. Such, at least, was the pretence given to a pension paid him by the court. It was the Duke de Levis, attached from his infancy to the household of *Monsieur*, who had brought about this arrangement. When in receipt of the pension, Mirabeau no longer thought of paying his debts, except, indeed, the most pressing, and this had probably been anticipated. But as, in appearance at least, the court had abandoned the project of a counter-revolution by means of the king's evasion, and were making great exertions to form a party in the assembly, it was necessary to supply Mirabeau with an establishment and the means of action. An open house was an essential requisite for bringing together the men he wanted. But, on the other hand, his new and expensive mode of living must naturally have raised suspicions as to the source of his increased income, and a tribune of the people becoming a Lucullus, could not fail to render him an object of distrust. The pension of twenty thousand francs was not long paid. Mirabeau was found indocile; he did not consult the court party—paid no attention to the precautions which the latter thought they had a right to impose upon him—and treated with the greatest contempt men, who, as he stated, wished to destroy his popularity, which was the very instrument

of his success, and which alone could render his services available.

He received another pension from the court, at this time, through the Prince Louis d'Artemberg, who was devoted to the queen, and perceived much better than the other courtiers, the fault of neglecting to acquire influence in the assembly. Mirabeau introduced me to the prince as he also did Duroverai and Claviere. The conversations at which I was present related to the necessity of opposing, by prudent and measured publications, the unrestrained licentiousness of the public press, of obviating the excesses which could not but prove fatal to freedom, of convincing the nation that the king had entered with sincerity into the spirit of the revolution, and of eradicating that eternal mistrust which enervated all the measures of government. Certain it is, that, at this period, it was a duty incumbent upon every honest man in the kingdom to embrace the king's cause, because the latter felt himself bound, not only from honour and weakness of character, but from a dread of civil war, to proceed in concert with the national assembly; and because nothing but violent measures and direct attacks, upon the last remnants of royalty, could detach the king from the assembly. Mirabeau, who knew how to set off his friends to advantage as well as to shine by their means, and who displayed a sort of generous pride in placing them in



the most favourable light, had answered for our serving the king with zeal in all his exertions against anarchy. Claviere anticipated making his way to the ministry through this connexion.

But it must not be imagined that our little society was always free from disputes. I never quarrelled with any of its members, because I had no personal object and was independent. I had been of service to every one of them, and was under no obligation to either in return. I was often under the necessity of appeasing or reconciling them ; but on one occasion I thought a rupture inevitable. We dined with the prince Louis d'Areberg. Just as the dessert was put upon the table, the queen sent for the prince, who, as he should not be long absent, made us promise not to go till he returned. There had been a little altercation in the course of the morning, but it had blown over, although enough of excitement remained to require little to fan it into a flame. Mirabeau was playing with one of his rings, which Claviere looked at, and said in a sarcastic tone : " Is it a sphinx ? "—" No," replied Mirabeau, " it is a beautiful head of Cicero, and here is one of Minerva, which is much admired."—" Very good ! " observed Claviere ironically, " Cicero on one side, Minerva on the other, and Demosthenes between the two."—" As for you," retorted Mirabeau, who could never bear a joke, " if ever you get yourself painted as a

Minerva, do not forget the owl."—"I am not gay, I confess, my dear count, and your means of making me so, are rather too much for me."—"Oh! if my means won't suit you, you have your own. Have you not de Bourges's libels on me? Have you not Brissot's little productions? And have you not Madame le Jay's shop, where you state to all who will listen to you, that my reputation is a usurped one, that I am indebted for it to the labours of my friends, and that if I were reduced to my own resources, I should be little or nothing?"—After this reply, the storm burst. The most violent reproaches rapidly succeeded each other; each accused the other of libelling him, of leaguings with his enemies, and of reports injurious to his character. Their anger at length became so impetuous that they could no longer moderate their voices; and a servant, excited no doubt by curiosity at hearing this noise, opened the door and inquired if they had called. In an instant Mirabeau resumed his *sang-froid*, and with the greatest politeness thanked the man, telling him that if any thing was wanted they would ring. Duroverai now joined Claviere, bitterly reproached Mirabeau with many points of his conduct, and declared that what with his whims and temper, it was almost impossible to carry on any plan in conjunction with him. All soon became confusion—a medley of bitter sarcasms and mutual accusation. Mirabeau

and Claviere, in great agitation, had often occasion to wipe their eyes, which were certainly not filled with tears of compassion. As I had hitherto remained neuter, and said nothing except now and then a few conciliatory words, which proved of no avail, Duroverai made a direct appeal to me, calling upon me to declare whether I had not often blamed such and such parts of Mirabeau's conduct, and whether I were not of their opinion on every point in dispute. Mirabeau, desirous perhaps of keeping open a road to reconciliation, said that if I had blamed him, it was openly and in a friendly conversation, but that I had never leagued with his enemies as they had done, nor endeavoured to undermine his character behind his back, by representing him as a plagiarist. When I thought my turn was come to speak, I simply observed that such disputes must terminate, and could not twice occur between men of honour. That if they chose to come to a rupture, I should be much grieved at it, but my resolution was taken, and Mirabeau could not blame me for not separating, in such an event, from my oldest friends and fellow countrymen. But they would all three repent of such a rupture, founded, as it would be, merely upon those little inequalities of temper which they ought mutually to pardon in each other, or upon the exaggerated and malicious reports of evil-disposed persons. "No further discussion is necessary;" said I, "this

must be brought to an issue. You are met here for a common object, and what fresh discovery have you made since dinner, that obliges you to separate? Your being friends at three o'clock was ridiculous, if you are not to be so now."—By degrees the conversation resumed a milder tone, and we went home in the same carriage, without any thing but public measures being talked of on the way.

A singular circumstance, which struck me very forcibly, had called this quarrel to my recollection. Mirabeau and Claviere, although beside themselves with rage, maintained, with regard to each other's characters, a discretion which surprised me. I trembled every moment lest Claviere should utter some taunts regarding Mirabeau's private conduct, and tax him with meanness in pecuniary matters. But although he had frequently mentioned such things to me, he was too much master of himself to utter them now; whilst Mirabeau, on the other hand, foaming with pride and anger, had still the address to mingle with his invectives testimonies of esteem, and compliments upon Claviere's talents. Thus they scratched and caressed each other with the same hand. This rendered a reconciliation easier, and it convinced me that there is no candour even in the anger of a man of the world.

I can recollect only one more legislative question of importance in which I had any share. In reading

the *Contrat Social* and the *Observations on Poland*, I had remarked that Rousseau attached great importance to a system of gradual elections; that is to say, assimilating civil functionaries to military officers, by making them pass through different gradations of office. This has been done in most republics, without being the object of an express law, with the exception perhaps of Rome and Geneva, if such contrasting names may be mentioned together. It seemed to me that such a system would be advisable in France, where a citizen should either pass through a municipality to a department, and through the latter to the national assembly, or have previously exercised public functions of some kind, such, for instance, as those of judge or advocate. Two years of subaltern functions would not make a deputy grow old during his political apprenticeship, and would give him great facility in conducting the important business of the legislature. The question was soon debated among us, and Mirabeau warmly approved of the plan. I wrote a speech on the occasion, with which I took the greatest pains, and when it was first proposed, I had the pleasure of seeing the *cote droit* join the *cote gauche* in support of it. But something in it, I know not what, displeased the Lameths; and Barnave and Duport moved an adjournment. They perceived, they said, all kinds of aristocratic snares in this proposal, although sup-

ported on the high authority of Rousseau; and this party had taken such sure steps to obtain a docile majority in the assembly, that the warmest admirers of the project cooled upon it, and the adjournment was carried. This is another occasion on which I had to regret Mirabeau's possessing so little the talent of parliamentary debate, and studying a subject so superficially as he was accustomed to do. He could not reply to Barnave, because he knew nothing of the question beyond the speech I had written for him; indeed, he had paid so little attention to it, that he was unable even to reproduce, in the form of a reply, the arguments of that very speech. The motion was lost; but it had interested the reflecting portion of the assembly. Mallouet had spoken in its favour, and Rœderer enumerated the persons eligible in France, counting by the municipalities and the departments. I had the satisfaction to reply to Barnave in the *Courrier de Provence*, and I never wrote with greater pleasure. I completely refuted his arguments, and all the thinking members of the assembly, convinced of the utility of the measure, begged Mirabeau to bring it forward on some other occasion. But as the prudential considerations connected with the candidates at the next elections, would prevent its being carried into execution for some years at least, it was not urgent to press it at that time. Had it even been inserted

in the constitution, it would, for the first few years, have been of no use. Two or three of my friends in England who, after reading Mirabeau's first speech on this gradual system, had blamed it as imposing an unnecessary restraint upon elections, changed their opinion on reading my reply, in the *Courrier de Provence*, to Barnave's objections. The motion had only one defect, and that was a vital one; it was the clause which delayed for ten years the execution of the measure. This had been done with a view of gaining a sufficient number of candidates who had passed through the lower gradations; instead of which, the persons eligible should have been immediately limited, in order that at the ensuing elections, either the old deputies should be re-elected, or, in their stead, persons already in the municipalities and departments. Had this precaution been taken, the second assembly would have been composed of select men interested in maintaining the constitution.

## CHAPTER XIII.

I QUITTED Paris in the beginning of March. Several reasons induced me to do so. The quarrels between Duroverai and Mirabeau had become so frequent, from Madame le Jay's dishonest practices with regard to the *Courrier de Provence*, the whole profits of which she appropriated to herself, that I was glad to withdraw from the paper altogether. My sanguine hopes of regeneration and public good had considerably abated. Not that I conceived the national assembly would not succeed in framing a constitution; but I had observed its proceedings so closely, that the charm had disappeared, my curiosity was satisfied, and all illusion had vanished. Duroverai left me more than my share of the work, and I was sick to death of it, particularly when it originated quarrels and pecuniary discussions. Besides, my feelings towards Mirabeau, whom I had always personally liked on account of his great abilities and his affectionate manners towards me, were much



altered since I had become *too* well acquainted with him. His intentions were good, but his passions constantly carried him too far. He was attached to the king and desirous of serving the monarchy, threatened, as it was, on all sides, and the jacobins exerting themselves for its overthrow. But the motives of his services were not pure; and his expensive style of living, supported by means not over delicate, alienated me from him by degrees. What immediately determined me to leave Paris was, that in several political writings of the day, my name was associated with his. The first was a pamphlet by Pelletier entitled: *Domine salvum fac regem*, in which, after despoiling Mirabeau of his works, the addresses were attributed to Duroverai and the *Courrier de Provence* to me. In a short time we were named in a multitude of libels. I felt considerable pleasure in being known to a small circle of friends, but was disgusted at being mentioned publicly. The character of a subaltern writer was by no means flattering to my pride; and the idea of an influential intimacy with a man whose celebrity was not immaculate, revolted my delicacy. Instead of having credit for the good I had done, and the evil I had been instrumental in preventing, the very excesses which I had been the first to condemn, would naturally be attributed to me. I perceived that many respectable individuals showed me marked

coldness, from the contempt with which Mirabeau inspired them. I had long preserved all my first acquaintances at Paris, and I was much hurt at perceiving that party spirit had alienated many of them. My friends in London wrote to entreat I would return, because a connexion with Mirabeau was a stamp of reprobation springing from the prejudices against the revolutionary party, then becoming prevalent in England. I did return, and the unfavourable suspicions which had begun to spread among my acquaintances, immediately ceased.

During my residence at Paris, I had become more or less intimate with several individuals of whom I shall say a word. What I here state, however, is a mere memorandum, to enable me at a future period to remember some anecdotes. For they sometimes occur to my recollection unexpectedly, just as you often by chance find a thing you had lost, when looking for something else.

I used to meet Barrere de Vieuzac at a *table-d'hote*, where several deputies were in the habit of dining. I considered him of a mild and amiable temper. He was very well-bred, and seemed to love the revolution from a sentiment of benevolence. I am persuaded that his association with Robespierre, and the court which he paid to the different parties he successively joined and afterwards deserted, were less the effect of an evil disposition, than of a timid

and versatile character, and a conceit which made him think it incumbent upon him to appear as a public man. His talents as an orator were by no means of the first order; there were fifty speakers in the assembly superior to him. He was afterwards surnamed the Anacreon of the guillotine; but when I knew him he was only the Anacreon of the revolution, upon which, in his "*Point du jour*," he wrote some very amorous strains.

Barnave had a lodging in the house at Versailles of which we occupied a part, after we left the hotel Charost. I never could have become intimate with him, even had he not belonged to the Lameth faction, and been consequently Mirabeau's enemy. He displayed the most irritable self-love, an appearance of jealousy and ill-temper, and the most disgusting presumption. His talents in debate were powerful; that is to say, after he had exercised them; for in the beginning of his parliamentary career, he was dreadfully prolix and heavy. He was one of those men who owe their talents to their own exertions, and the development of his was very rapid.\* His jealousy of his co-deputy Mounier, had, as much as his revolutionary principles, estranged him from the latter.

I frequently saw Petion, without indeed guessing

\* Mirabeau once said of Barnave, at a time when he was satisfied with him: "He is a tree growing to become some day the mast of a line-of-battle ship."—*Note by Dumont.*

what he would one day become. He had the *embonpoint* of an indolent, and the manners of a good kind of man. But he was very vain, and considered himself a first rate orator, because, like Barnave, he spoke extempore. He possessed nothing above mediocrity either in wit or intellect,—no strength or force of expression.

I had known Target the year before, but since his election to a seat in the great assembly, he had become a man of such consequence, that I was too insignificant a personage to be noticed by him; and after once or twice encountering his airs of importance, I was not again tempted to obtrude myself upon his notice. It was said of him that he was *drowned in his talents*. He was always suffocated by hard words. In Mirabeau's journal, I revenged myself of his airs by some pleasantries, but it would have required much stronger powers than mine to puncture his dropsical eloquence.

Duroverai and I, when at Versailles, often dined with Mallouet whom we continued to visit at Paris. He has left upon me the impression of being an amiable man of mild manners and moderate in his political sentiments. He was continually making blunders in the assembly, to whose forms he could not accustom himself; every thing he did was in the wrong place. He constantly blurted out the most offensive words, and got himself into scrapes, for the

veriest trifles; but he had intellect, firmness of mind, good intentions and experience. His work in favour of the slave trade, was not one of his best titles to fame.

Volney, a tall, lathy, splenetic man, was in a course of reciprocal flattery with Mirabeau. He had exaggeration and much dryness, but he was not one of the working members of the assembly. It was deemed necessary one day to order the galleries to be silent. "What!" exclaimed Volney, "are we to impose silence upon our masters?"

I had twice occasion to converse with Robespierre. He had a sinister expression of countenance, never looked you in the face, and had a continual and unpleasant winking of the eyes. Having once asked me for some information relative to Geneva, I urged him to speak upon the subject in the assembly; but he told me that he was a prey to the most childish timidity, that he never approached the tribune without trembling, and that when he began to speak, his faculties were entirely absorbed by fear.

I sometimes met the Abbe Morellet, who had already become very violent against the national assembly. He would have pardoned its democracy, had it only respected—not the church, which he did not much respect himself—but church property, of which he had but lately received his share and thought it hard to lose it so soon. As he had been

one of the promoters of the then all-absorbing spirit of liberty, Lord Lansdowne wrote to him that he ought to consider himself *as a wounded soldier in a victorious army*. The victory, if it were one, did not, however, console him for his wound. I met Marmontel at his house. The topics of conversation were what the philosophers of the age had done for the eradication of prejudices, and the errors into which they had led the people, by their exaggerations. The general anticipations were far from realized by the aspect which public affairs then presented, and Marmontel, who was one of the discontented, said, "The national assembly often reminds me of a saying of Madame de Sevigne: '*I should like Provence if there were no Provençaux.*'"\*

I occasionally saw M. Necker, but only as minister and to confer about our affairs of Geneva. I even carried on a correspondence with him, and have some anecdotes on this circumstance, which I shall reserve for a separate chapter.

Champfort often visited Mirabeau, to whom he sometimes rendered literary services, and also communicated his violence and harshness. We always remarked that after a visit from Champfort, Mira-

\* Natives of Provence, a people peculiarly harsh and ill-mannered.—*English Editor.*

beau's sentiments had become more bitter and more exaggerated. Nothing being now left in the state for Champfort to overthrow, he prepared for Mirabeau a speech against academies in general, and against the French Academy in particular. The latter, from the object of his ambition, had become the subject of his epigrams.

About the end of 1790, I spent six months at Geneva. I went thither to meet my mother and sisters who had returned to visit their native country. On my way to Geneva, I remained about three weeks at Paris with Achille Duchatelet, my fellow traveller from London, where I had become acquainted with him. Achille Duchatelet had served in America and was imbued with republican principles. On the breaking out of the French revolution, he had embraced the popular party, and this bias was much strengthened by his intimacy with Condorcet. His ambition was solely confined to military glory. He was brave, open, honest, and generous; had information, taste and facility; was one of the most amiable men I knew; but displayed the unheeding impetuosity of a young Frenchman educated in the style of those whose noble birth superseded the necessity of knowledge. If the mind of such a man as Duchatelet had been formed in England, it would have possessed much more depth and greater strength; for in his justification it may be observed, that his faults

were only those of the school in which he had been brought up. He had been much struck with the discovery he had made, that England was a much more moral nation than his own. The examination of a religion less superstitious than the one he professed, overcame his prejudice against all religions. We had several interesting conversations on this subject, and my principles, much more serious than his, had tended rather to cement than to destroy our growing friendship. He was a great admirer of Mirabeau, who was often the theme of our conversation, as he was, at that period, of the conversation of all France, and all Europe. For he was the ruler of that assembly who ruled all. At the assembly, the eyes of every one were directed in search of him in the midst of his colleagues; each was happy at having heard him speak, and his most familiar expressions were preserved as apothegms. We found, even in the postilions, a singular mode of testifying their admiration of him. "Your horses are very bad," said we to a post boy between Calais and Amiens—"Yes," he replied, "my two side horses are bad, but my Mirabeau is excellent." The middle horse, in the shafts, being the strongest and doing the most work, was called the Mirabeau; and provided the latter was good, little attention was paid to the others. Duchatelet was aware that I had the credit, at Paris, of being the author of some of Mirabeau's speeches.



and he sounded me on the subject, but with discretion. I said nothing in reply to justify his surmises. "Mirabeau must indeed," said he, endeavouring to penetrate my thoughts, "be the author of his written speeches, because they are precisely in the same style as his extempore ones. They contain the same principles and the same expressions. If he had the materials prepared for him, I have no doubt that he put them together himself. But you, who have seen so much of him, must be able to give a positive opinion on this point."—"I think," said I, "that some people take a delight in undermining the fame of a man of celebrity. Nothing is more easy than to cast imputations of this kind, and nothing more difficult than to refute them. But what matters it whether he lays his friends under contribution or not, provided he make them produce that which, without him, they could not have done? For, in such a case, he is the real author. This species of merit does not belong to every body. And we may ask, how happens it that he is the only one who knows how to use coadjutors, and that no other person has the same resource?" It was thus I eluded his questions without deceiving him. But Mirabeau himself, by his usual indiscretion, soon betrayed the secret. The instant I arrived, I again became his confidant. Not only had he maintained his influence in the assembly, but had become more powerful than

ever. He had formed no precise party, but exercised a successive influence over both parties, and was treated with as a great power. The jacobins, who, at this period, formed a state within a state, and who sometimes successfully competed with the national assembly itself, were alternately governed by the Lameths, Robespierre and Petion; but whenever Mirabeau condescended to appear in their tribune, he always warped them to his will. He seldom, however, went among them; for his contempt of this dangerous faction was only equalled by his jealousy of their growing influence.

He informed me that he was on good terms with the court; that he had seen the Queen, whose councils he directed, and that he entertained well-founded hopes from that quarter. It had been found necessary to obtain his services, instead of listening to the imprudent advice of the emigrants, and the princes of the blood.

He had then a report to make, in the name of the diplomatic committee, on the feelings of the other European powers towards France. This report deeply interested the court; for in other hands, it might have become the torch of war, or at least excited general mistrust. Mirabeau's intention was to make it a means of conciliation—to overcome by it the prejudices which the jacobins continued to raise against the houses of Spain and Austria, and to con-

clude it by charging the executive power with the precautions necessary for the safety of the kingdom. He requested me to write the part of his speech relating to England;—to forget nothing that might consolidate the friendship of the two countries, and to strike hard at Burke's book against the French revolution. He was desirous of giving a democratic colouring to this speech, in order to insure the success of his proposal in favour of the executive power. I undertook this task the more willingly, because nothing was more in unison with my opinions than to combat, on such a momentous question, the prejudices existing against England, and preserve peace between the two nations. I had found so much exaggeration in Burke's work, that I felt no scruple in representing it as a piece of mere declamation, by no means expressing the sentiments of the English nation. I wrote three or four pages of argument on this subject. On the following day, Mirabeau came to Duchatelet's to fetch me, and being unable to contain his impatience, read the whole of his speech, with the exception of the portion upon England which I had not yet given him.

Duchatelet and I went to the assembly. The speech was well received, particularly the part about England and Burke; because peace with Great Britain was then sincerely desired, and the French were anxious to obtain the esteem of the English.

Duchatelet made no remark to me, but the same evening he said in my presence, to Madame Condorcet, "This man is one of those who prefer concealing what they do, to boasting of that which they have not done." Scarcely was I introduced into this society, when I received that polished kindness of which the French alone have the secret, and which is the more flattering, because there is no fuss made about it, and it consists more in attentions than in words. My reserve with Duchatelet on the subject of Mirabeau, obtained the same reward as modesty does, which is always centuple; and he attributed to me more than I really had done or could do.

I have not many recollections of these three weeks, because I saw too many people, and was in a constant bustle. I dined several times with Mirabeau, whose style of living was more sumptuous than ever. He was in a state of affluence such as he had never known before, and certainly did not enjoy it with discretion. I was surprised at seeing him, after dinner, display a casket of jewels of considerable value. This was proclaiming the civil list with a vengeance, and I was astonished it did not affect his popularity. He had purchased part of Buffon's library, which was not a large collection, but very valuable. His table was sumptuous, and his company numerous. At an early hour, his house was full of visitors; it was an uninterrupted levee from seven in the morning, till

the hour at which he went to the assembly often through a crowd waiting for him at the door, to enjoy the happiness of seeing him pass. Though titles had been abolished, his remained, and he was still the Count de Mirabeau, not only for his guests and his servants, but for the people, who always love to bedeck their idols. Surprised at all this ostentation, I said one day to Claviere, "Mirabeau is badly advised; he would make people suppose that he was afraid of being taken for an honest man."—"He is necessary to us; we cannot do without him;" replied Claviere, "he alone can keep the jacobins and the court in awe, and if he cost the nation a million, it would be money well laid out."

I might have become possessed of many secrets relative to his private political connexions, his particular views, his means, and his intrigues, for he seemed greatly disposed to unbosom himself to me; but I chose to become neither a censor, nor a sycophant, and his conduct was in too great discordance with my notion of the duties of a public man and the dignity of an independent mind, for me to think of entering with him into a subject which could only be unpleasant to both. He well knew my opinions, and hinted to me in a thousand different ways, that his only object was to save the monarchy if possible;—that for such purpose, luxury and ostentation were necessary—that morality in trifles was always the

enemy of morality in things of importance—that disinterested services were of very rare occurrence—and that the court had hitherto thoughtlessly and without advantage lavished money in profusion.

I remember an infamous anecdote of the Abbe Lamourette, afterwards bishop of Lyons. It occurred during dinner; and Garrat, Volney, Cabanis, Palissot, and several others were present. Lamourette was the author of Mirabeau's speeches upon the civil constitution of the clergy, and Mirabeau did not appear, in private, to entertain the same opinion upon this subject as he had maintained in public. On the contrary, he wished for a Catholic clergy, but not a dominant or exclusive one. Palissot was speaking of the Abbe Gregoire who evinced much zeal in the cause of religion, and whom, with the usual intolerance of these gentlemen, he accused of being a charlatan, and a hypocrite. "That I can safely deny," said Lamourette, "for I was his professor of theology; and I can vouch for his believing in God a hundred times more than is necessary."—"Take care what you say;" said Mirabeau, "here is a Genevese whom you will offend, for he believes in God from the bottom of his heart."—"And so do I," replied Lamourette, "I should be very sorry that he understood me otherwise."—After dinner, on opening a new book which lay upon the table, my attention was arrested by the following title: "*Med-*

*itations of the soul with its God*, by the Abbe Lamourette, Professor of Theology," &c.

Mirabeau was not satisfied with the side he had taken on the question of the clergy; and this I recollect perfectly. M. Bertrand de Molleville, in his *Annals*, imputes to him very profound views, and thinks that in furtherance of the plan he had formed, it was necessary to excite the clergy against the assembly, in order to bring fresh auxiliaries to the king. This reasoning is very far-fetched. I should rather suppose that he had acted from weakness, and feared to resist the opinion of the revolutionists, which opinion, nevertheless, he did not confound with that of the nation.

During the last week I spent at Paris, I saw Mirabeau in a new situation—one which he had often seemed to despise, rather I should think from envy than indifference;—he was made president of the assembly. Hitherto he had been carefully kept out of the presidency, although every other distinguished member, and many besides who had no claim to it, had already filled the chair. His present call to the presidency showed that the court party began to perceive how useful he might be to them, for he had too many secret enemies among the democrats to be elected by a majority consisting only of their votes. Never had this office been so well filled; he displayed in it a new kind of talent. He introduced a

degree of order and clearness in the proceedings, of the possibility of which no member had previously the least conception. He simplified forms; could render the question clear by a single word, and also by a single word put down tumult. His regard for all parties, the respect he always paid to the assembly, the precision of his observations, and his answers to the several deputations at the bar—answers which, whether prepared or extempore, were always remarkable for dignity and elegance, and satisfactory even in conveying a refusal;—in short, his activity, his impartiality, and his presence of mind increased his reputation, and added splendour to his talents in an office which had proved a quicksand to many of his predecessors. He had the art of appearing the first, and of fixing the general attention, even when, being no longer able to speak from the tribune, he seemed to have foregone his most valuable prerogative. His enemies and those jealous of his eloquence, who had voted for him, in order thereby to cast him in the shade and reduce him to silence, were bitterly disappointed when they saw him add another wreath to the chaplet of his glory.

He was far from enjoying good health at this period. “If I believed in slow poisons,” he said to me, “I should think myself poisoned. For I feel that I am dying by inches—that I am being consumed in a slow fire.” I observed to him that his mode of life



would long ago have destroyed any man less robust than he. Not an instant of rest from seven in the morning till ten or eleven at night; continual conversations, agitations of mind and excitement of every passion; too high living, in food only, for he was very moderate in drink. "You must," I said, "be a salamander to live in the fire which is consuming you." Like all public and ambitious men in their moments of *ennui* and fatigue, he entertained, at times, thoughts of retiring from public life. The irritation of his system, at this time, produced violent attacks of ophthalmia, and I have seen him, whilst he was president, sometimes apply leeches to his eyes in the interval during the adjournment of the sitting from the morning to the evening, and attend the assembly with his neck covered with linen to staunch the blood.

When we separated, he embraced me with an emotion I had never before seen him evince. "I shall die at the stake, my dear friend," said he, "and we shall never, perhaps, meet again. When I am gone, my value will be appreciated. Misfortunes to which I have put a stop, were overwhelming France in every direction; but that base faction whom I now overawe, will again be let loose upon the country. I have none but direful anticipations. Ah! my friend, how right were we when, in the beginning, we tried to prevent the commons from being declared a national

assembly. This is the origin of the evil. Since they have carried that point, they have not ceased to show that they are unworthy of confidence. They wanted to govern the king, instead of being governed by him ; but soon neither they nor he will govern ; a vile faction will rule the country, and debase it by the most atrocious crimes."

I did not then think that Mirabeau's forebodings would be realized in every point. I considered them as the mere workings of his ardent imagination, and felt by no means disposed to believe in the villainy of the individuals whom he designated as the chiefs of the jacobins. I had often seen his hatred towards individuals lead him into similar exaggerations, and I attributed his sinister prognostics, in the present instance, to the same cause.

Three months after this conversation, Mirabeau was no more. . . .

## CHAPTER XIV.

I AM not perfectly acquainted with the private life of Mirabeau, his domestic habits, or the particulars of his conduct to his parents and his wife. The violence of his youthful passions, may perhaps justify his father's severity ; but the Marquis de Mirabeau, as violent as his son, had certainly not the art of governing the impetuous temper of the latter. Instead of attempting to lead him by affection, to which the young man was feelingly alive, he would fain subjugate him by force. Mirabeau used to compare his family to that of Atreus and Thyestes. The eternal quarrels between the parents, formed the children into two hostile factions, and accustomed them, at a very early age, to constraint and dissimulation ; whilst the contagion of vice had but too much power over such a temperament as Mirabeau's, so precocious in every respect, and depraved by female intercourse long before his reason had attained to maturity. The manner in which he was brought up,

may explain that singular complication of contradictory qualities by which he was characterized.

I have heard, that to obtain the hand of his wife, he practised a very mean stratagem. The parents had refused their consent, from a preference for a rival. It therefore became necessary to force this rival to withdraw, which he is said to have effected by the following means. He gained the good graces of a maid servant in the house, with whom he had meetings after the family were gone to bed. He used to drive his carriage into a neighbouring street, in order to impart an air of mystery to his motions. This carriage was left there several hours, and the spies of the rival soon reported that the Count de Mirabeau was in the habit of passing the night at the house of his mistress. The lady's reputation became thus implicated, the rival withdrew, and the parents deemed themselves fortunate in hushing the matter up by consenting to the marriage. The happiness of this union, founded upon fraud, was soon interrupted by reciprocal infidelity and a separation.

Mirabeau's correspondence with Madame Mounier, from his prison at Vincennes, evinced more of sensuality than sentiment. Many of his letters are so repugnant to modesty, that they degrade the person to whom they are addressed; for no man would presume to adopt so licentious a style in writing to a woman for whom he had the least esteem. Garat

undertook to detect the plagiarisms in this correspondence. I heard his paper read at M. de Talleyrand's. Mirabeau, when writing to his mistress, would copy whole pages from several periodicals of the day. "Listen, my beloved," he would write, "whilst I pour my whole soul into thy bosom;" and such intimate confidence was a literal transcription from the *Mercure de France*, or a new novel.

During the leisure of his solitude in prison, he composed an obscene work, which was nothing more than a compilation of the most monstrous impurities found in the ancients.

That a mind like Mirabeau's should be formed from materials so impure, is doubtless matter of astonishment; but Mirabeau, though immoral, was not crapulous. He delighted in sensibility and affection. I have often heard him express disgust at seeing the unhappy victim of public prostitution. Nor did he make a merit of this, for he believed himself a greater sinner against society than they. Mirabeau could inspire, as well as feel affection.—He had attached himself in Holland to a woman of respectable family, who had united her fate to his from the effects of a passion which absorbed every other consideration. She was unmarried, young, beautiful, full of grace and modesty; she would have been an ornament to virtue, had she never seen Mirabeau; and no one, perhaps, was more deserving of indulgence and com-

miseration. Mirabeau's friends never forgave him for sacrificing this interesting creature to a wretched woman, who had the insolence of vice, and boasted of her licentiousness. But Madame le Jay had artifice and malice ; was familiar with intrigue, flattering and voluptuousness. This woman took advantage of her influence over Mirabeau to excite his natural violence and promote her own interest ; and his friends lamented to see him the prey of a covetous and debauched female, who had not one good quality to compensate her faults.

Mirabeau had a confidence in his own power, which supported him in difficulties under which another would have sunk. His imagination loved whatever was great, and his mind had extraordinary powers of discrimination. He had natural good taste, which he had cultivated by reading the best authors of several nations. Without any depth of information, he made good use of the little he knew ; in the turmoil of his stormy life he wanted leisure for study, but in his prison at Vincennes, he went through a course of general reading, made translations from foreign authors, and formed a collection of extracts from many eminent writers. All this, however, scarcely amounted to the stock of knowledge belonging to the most ordinary man of letters ; and when he spoke with the open confidence of friendship, he was by no means vain of his acquirements. But

what he possessed beyond other men, was an eloquent and impassioned soul, which, the instant it was excited, animated every feature of his countenance ; and nothing was more easy, than to bring on the requisite degree of excitement. He had been accustomed, from his youth, to consider the two great questions of politics and government ; but he was not competent to enter deeply into them. The work of discussion, examination, and doubt was beyond his reach. He had too much warmth and effervescence of mind for didactic method or laborious application. His mind proceeded by starts and leaps, but its conceptions were bold and vigorous. He abounded in forcible expressions, of which he made a particular study, and was peculiarly qualified to shine in a popular assembly, at a stormy period, when force and audacity were the necessary passports to success.

As an author he cannot rank high, for all his works, without exception, are a species of patch-work, of which very little would be left if each contributor took back his own. But he imparted splendour to whatever he touched, by introducing here and there luminous thoughts, original expressions, and apostrophes full of fire and eloquence. It was a singular faculty, that which he had of discovering obscure talents, applying to each the degree of encouragement necessary to its peculiar character, and animating those who possessed them with his own zeal, so as to

make them eagerly co-operate in a work of which he was to reap all the credit.

He felt himself absolutely incapable of writing upon any subject, except he were guided and supported by the work of another. His style, naturally strained, degenerated into turgescence, and he was soon disgusted with the emptiness and incoherence of his own ideas. But when he had materials to work upon, he could prune and connect, impart a greater degree of life and force, and imprint upon the whole the stamp of eloquence. That is what he called putting the *trait* to a work. This *trait* consisted of a forcible expression, an image, a flash of wit, an epigram, an irony, or an allusion; something, in short, smart and pungent, which he conceived absolutely necessary to keep up the attention of his readers. It will readily be perceived how dangerous the *trait*-mania, if indulged in, would become to good taste, and that it would rapidly lead to the affectation which characterized the ages of the decline of literature.

As a political orator, Mirabeau was, in certain points, superior to all other men. He had a rapid *coup-d'œil*, a quick and sure perception of the feelings of the assembly, and well knew how to apply his entire strength to the point of resistance without exhausting his means. No other orator did so much with a single word, nor hit the mark with so sure an



aim; none but Mirabeau ever forced the general opinion either by a happy insinuation, or by a strong expression which intimidated his adversaries. In the tribune he was immovable. They who have seen him well know that no agitation in the assembly had the least effect upon him, and that he remained master of his temper even under the severest personal attacks. I once recollect to have heard him make a report upon the city of Marseilles. Each sentence was interrupted from the *cote droit* with low abuse; the words calumniator, liar, assassin, and rascal, were very prodigally lavished upon him. On a sudden he stopped, and with a honeyed accent, as if what he had stated had been most favourably received, "I am waiting, gentleman," said he, "until the fine compliments you are paying me, are exhausted." He never considered himself sufficiently provoked to forget the decorum of public oratory. But what was wanting to make him a perfect political speaker was, the power of discussion. His mind could not embrace a chain of reasoning or of evidence, nor could he refute methodically. Thus, he was often obliged to abandon important motions after he had read his speech; for in reply, after a brilliant exordium, he had no alternative but to abandon the field of battle to his adversaries. This defect proceeded from his embracing too much, and not meditating sufficiently. He appeared with a speech that

had been written for him, and upon the arguments of which he had scarcely bestowed any reflection. He had not taken the pains to anticipate objections and discuss details; and in these respects he was very inferior to many of the intellectual giants whom I had heard in the English parliament. The triumph of Fox, for instance, is in refutation. He resumes all the arguments of the adverse party, puts them in a new light and gives them more force;—having thus placed himself in the most difficult situation, he pulverizes them one by one, and never appears stronger than when he seems about to be overthrown. The only speakers in the national assembly, possessing any share of this faculty, were Maury, Clermont Tonnerre, Barnave and Thouret. Barnave, in particular, was cased in an armour of logic and argument; he followed the reasoning of his opponents step by step, but he had neither imagination, style, nor eloquence. Some one comparing his didactic talents with Mirabeau's eloquence, another said to him, "How can you compare that artificial espalier to a tree exposed to every blast, spreading its branches in the full luxuriance of natural beauty!" Certain it is that the two individuals were not to be compared. But Mirabeau was conscious of his deficiency in power of discussion, and one day when one of his attempts at refutation had been crowned with a degree of success, he said to us, "I well perceive that to speak

extempore upon any subject, the orator must begin by making himself master of it."

Mirabeau's voice was full, manly and sonorous; it filled and pleased the ear. Always powerful, yet flexible, it could be heard as distinctly when he lowered as when he raised it. He could go through all its notes with equal ease and distinctness, and he pronounced his finals with so much care that the last syllable was never lost. His ordinary manner of speaking was very slow. He commenced with the appearance of a little embarrassment, often hesitated, but in a way to excite interest, and until he became animated, he seemed as if he were selecting the most agreeable expressions. In his most impassioned moments, the feelings which made him dwell upon certain words to give them emphasis, prevented him from ever speaking rapidly. He had the greatest contempt for French volubility and artificial warmth, which he termed the thunders and tempests of the opera. He never lost sight of the gravity of a senator, and it was a defect, perhaps, that when he commenced a speech, there was always a slight appearance of preparation and pretension. What seems incredible is that little notes written in pencil were often handed to him in the tribune, and he had the art of reading them whilst he was speaking, and embodying their contents in his speech with the greatest facility. Garat used to compare him to one

of those jugglers who tear a piece of paper into twenty little bits, swallow each bit separately, and at last bring forth the original piece whole. He had a most miraculous faculty of appropriating whatever he heard. A word, a historical fact or a quotation uttered in his presence, instantly became his own. One day when Barnave, who was very vain of his extemporaneous oratory, had just replied without preparation to a prepared speech, Champfort, who was talking to Mirabeau on the steps of the tribune, observed that facility was a fine talent if it were not made an improper use of. Mirabeau immediately took this proposition for his exordium, and thus began: "I have often said that facility was one of the finest gifts of nature, if it were not made an improper use of; and what I have just heard, does not induce me to alter my opinion," &c.

Among his personal advantages, he counted his robust frame, his size, and his strongly marked features seared with small pox. "You know not," said he, "all the power of my ugliness;" but he considered this ugliness very handsome. He paid the greatest attention to his dress, and wore an enormous quantity of hair dressed in the fashion of the day, and which considerably increased the size of his head. "When I shake my terrible locks," said he, "no one dares interrupt me." . . . He was fond of standing before a large pier glass, to see himself

speaking, squaring his shoulders and throwing back his head. He had also the mania of those vain men who are fond of hearing the sound of their own name, and derive pleasure from pronouncing it themselves. Thus he would suppose dialogues, and introduce himself as one of the speakers;—as, for instance: “The Count de Mirabeau will answer that,” &c.

Mirabeau did not possess, particularly at first, the qualities necessary for the leader of a party in a political assembly. He was too fond of showing off exclusively, of doing every thing himself, and of engrossing all the attention. He knew not how to flatter the self-love of others, had no general plan, took the chance of whatever might occur from one day to another, and became formidable to the *cote droit* without gaining the unreserved confidence of the *cote gauche*. Although fond of flourishing about his party, he had no legions of his own. He was unable to submit to follow up regularly and assiduously the sittings of the assembly; he scarcely ever attended in the evening, and he depended too much upon his own powers, to condescend to consult the other deputies, and obtain their approbation beforehand. For a considerable period he was quite alone; and he knew nothing of those preparatory tactics by which a permanent and solid body of partizans may be formed into a popular assembly. But in many points, he had much improved. No one knew bet-

ter how to benefit by experience. Reybaz, who wrote a great deal for him, and was the author of his speeches on the assignats and on many other topics, told me, that he had improved prodigiously, during the last six months; that is to say, since he had adopted a systematic plan, and aimed at forming, in favour of the monarchy, a powerful union against the jacobins.

Much has been said of the venality of Mirabeau; and if some of his detractors are worthy of credit, his talents were actually put up to the highest bidder. "Since I have been in the practice of selling myself," he would sometimes observe, "I ought to have gained sufficient to purchase a kingdom; but I know not how it happens, that I have always been poor, having at my command so many kings, and all their treasures." It may be admitted, that he was not over-scrupulous in money matters; but he was too proud to be dishonest, and he would have thrown out of the window any one who dared make him a humiliating proposal. He received a pension from *Monsieur*, and subsequently one from the king; but he considered himself an agent entrusted with their affairs, and he accepted those pensions not to be governed by, but to govern those who granted them. M. de Narbonne told me that he once heard him say, "A man like me might accept a hundred thousand crowns, but I am not to be bought for that sum."

It is possible, however, that this remark was nothing more than the effect of the same kind of vanity which makes a female opera-dancer find a charm in the high price at which her favours are valued. If Spain and England did really bribe him, what became of the sums he received?—How happens it that he died insolvent? Although the expenses of his establishment were considerable in proportion to his means, yet he did not live above the style of a man of ordinary opulence. And if he distributed, for the king's service, the moneys he received, he can no longer be accused of cupidity, for, in that case, he was nothing more than the king's banker.

I imagine that, in this kind of reputation, Mirabeau has paid the usury of some offences to others. Exaggeration is the first penalty inflicted by the code of public opinion. He was so fully aware that, if he had enjoyed personal consideration, all France would have been at his feet, that there were moments when he would have consented to pass "seven times through the heated furnace," to purify the name of Mirabeau. I have seen him weep with grief, and heard him say, almost suffocated with sobs, "I am cruelly expiating the errors of my youth!"

His vanity, which was never at rest, except in the intimate intercourse of friendship, rendered him more ridiculous than people chose to perceive, when he had become a great personage. To his peculiar

foible might be traced the names of several comedies, *The Author, The Noble, The Tribune of the People, &c.* He loved praise from all ranks and conditions: he was insatiable in this respect, and was not sparing of it towards himself, under every form which a man of wit and talent could make it assume. He was proud of his fencing, of his acting in plays, of the manner in which he corrected his proofs, in short of every thing. I told him one day, in jest, that with regard to praise, he would willingly breakfast upon an elephant, and sup upon a flesh-worm; and this joke was near producing a serious quarrel. The historian of the revolution will, no doubt, find some difficulty in drawing the public character of Mirabeau. He was essentially in favour of monarchy, and opposed the great measure by which the commons revolutionized France; that is to say, the decree which abolished the orders, and confounded them into one national assembly. He afterwards maintained the necessity of the *absolute veto*, because, according to his opinion, the king was an integral part of the legislative power. It is true, that after the royal session of the 21st June, he was the first to support the assembly against the king, and that such support rendered the crisis decisive. But this action must be judged by circumstances then existing, and not by the blunders and mishaps which afterwards overturned the throne. What I have



before stated on this subject sufficiently shows, that at this period, the triumph of a party was to be feared, who wanted to dissolve the assembly, and destroy all hopes of national freedom. The measure adopted by the king had been so badly prepared, that it alarmed the whole nation, and if Mirabeau is blamed on this account, the same blame must attach to all France.

Mirabeau was desirous of giving to his country a constitution as nearly resembling that of England as local circumstances would admit. But it must be allowed, that his passions, his thirst of popularity, the weakness of the court—particularly in the disbelief that he might be of use—M. Necker's mistrust, and the king's repugnance, threw him out of his direct course, and made him, in his political career, describe an irregular and tortuous curved line, which it is impossible to connect with any single plan, but in which the perseverance and firmness characteristic of a great citizen, are always visible. Had he lived, it is probable that he would not only have constrained, but overthrown the jacobins, and that in the revision of the constitution, he would have exercised unbounded influence. He would have given strength to the executive, and, above all, prevented the passing of the absurd decree whereby the members of the assembly, by declaring themselves ineligible a second time, abandoned their work whilst it was yet

too weak to support itself without their assistance.— He had previously caused the failure of two attempts to carry the same decree, one made by the aristocrats, and the other by the *cote gauche*.

Mirabeau is the only man of whom it may be thought, that if Providence had spared his life, the destinies of France would have taken another course. His death gave courage to all the factious. Robespierre, Petion and others, who dwindled into insignificance before him, immediately became great men.

Mirabeau himself may be termed, not a great, but an extraordinary man. As a writer, he does not belong to the first class; as an orator, he is below Cicero, Demosthenes, Pitt and Fox. Most of his writings are already forgotten, and his speeches, with few exceptions, have no longer any interest. The characteristic trait of his genius, consists in his political sagacity, in his anticipation of events, and in his knowledge of mankind; all of which, he appears, to me, to have displayed in a more remarkable degree than any other power of his vigorous mind. There were moments when he declared he felt himself a prophet; and, in truth, he seemed to have inspirations of futurity. His sayings were not attended to, because others could not see so far, and because his forebodings were attributed to disappointed ambition. But I know that, at the very period when he prognosticated the downfall of the monarchy, he

had the most glorious anticipations of the future destinies of his country. It may be seen, in his letter to Major Mauvillon, that he considered France as able to resist all Europe; and his correspondence contains many singular passages showing the wide range of his political horizon. In 1782, he met our Genevese exiles at Neufchatel, and spoke to them of the states-general in France as of an event that could not fail of success. "I shall be a deputy," he said, "and will restore your country to freedom". . . . No one felt, as he did, the consequences of the royal session, or penetrated so acutely into the views of the commons. I remember two truly prophetic speeches in which he pointed out all the evils of their separation from the king. "You will have massacres," said he in one of his speeches, "you will have butchering—but you will not have even the execrable honour of a civil war!" His uneasiness, during the cruel malady that carried him off so rapidly, is well known. "I take with me," said he to the bishop of Autun, "the last shreds of the monarchy." It was by the same instinctive penetration that he so easily detected the feelings of the assembly, and so often embarrassed his opponents by revealing their secret motives, and laying open that which they were most anxious to conceal. There seemed to exist no political enigma which he could not solve. He came at once to the most intimate secrets, and

his sagacity alone was of more use to him than a multitude of spies in the enemy's camp. I used sometimes to attribute the severity of his judgments to hatred or jealousy; but it has been justified by succeeding events, and there was not a man of any consequence in the assembly, the sum of whose conduct did not correspond with the opinion which Mirabeau had formed of him.

Independently of this natural gift, this intellect of penetration, his life had been so agitated, he had been so tossed upon the sea of human existence, as he used to say, that he had acquired vast experience of the world and of men. He detected, in a moment, every shade of character; and to express the result of his observations, he had invented a language scarcely intelligible to any but himself; had terms to indicate fractions of talents, qualities, virtues or vices—halves and quarters—and, at a glance, he could perceive every real or apparent contradiction. No form of vanity, disguised ambition, or tortuous proceedings, could escape his penetration; but he could also perceive good qualities, and no man had a higher esteem for energetic and virtuous characters. He possessed, within him, an intuitive enthusiasm for that which is great and noble, and he suffered it not to be degraded by his own vices. It was like a looking-glass which might be tarnished with the breath, but immediately resumed its brightness. Though his

conduct was often in contradiction with what he professed, it arose not from hypocrisy, but thoughtlessness. He had a purity of reason which elevated his soul, and violent passions which again dragged it down and degraded it. In a word, he was a colossus in every respect, and there was in him a great deal of good, and a great deal of evil: no one could know him without feeling a strong interest towards him, and he was a man born to fill a great sphere with his prodigious activity.

## CHAPTER XV.

I INTEND to place here, some detached anecdotes as they occur to my memory.

Mirabeau was fond of conferring nick-names, taken from well known names in history. This was an energetic mode of painting characters by the association of a single word. Voltaire had set the example; he had called the king of Prussia *Alaric-Cottin*. Mirabeau often designated Sieyes by the name of *Mahomet*, particularly at the period when the latter governed the commons; he called d'Espremenil, *Crispin-Catalina*, to show the ridicule of his conspiracies. The rigid Camus obtained the appellation of *Drapeau-Rouge* or red flag, in allusion to the red flag of the martial law, because he had a fiery countenance with a blood-coloured nose.

“He would fain be a *Grandison-Cromwell*,” said he, alluding to M. de Lafayette, whom he looked upon as an ambitious man without power, “and would coquet with the supreme authority without daring to

seize it, or indeed possessing the means of doing so." His hatred in this particular instance made him unjust. He also said of Lafayette, "he has made a good leap and fallen backwards;"—alluding to his not keeping up the high reputation he had gained in America. He accused him, besides, of desiring only the glory of gazettes. M. de Narbonne said that Lafayette had every great quality, but something was wanting in each. However, Mirabeau gave him credit for his *sang-froid*. "He has always possessed," said he, "the same degree of talent as he possesses now."\*

Washington was mentioned; his wisdom, the just proportions of his different qualities, and his general character. Mirabeau did him justice, but said that in his place, after having terminated the American revolution, he would have collected an army of adventurers and attempted the almost certain conquest of Spanish America. The fact is, that Mirabeau was incapable of enjoying, in peace and retirement, the

\* Knowing the great esteem entertained by M. Dumont for the character and talents of M. de Lafayette, I would have omitted this paragraph, had I not feared the reproach of garbling a manuscript confided to me. Many persons who had read the manuscript during the author's life time, might have fancied that more serious alterations had taken place, had they missed this opinion of Mirabeau on one of the men who does the most honour to his country.—*Note by the Genevese Editor.*

noble existence of a public man after his labours; he had no conception of *otium cum dignitate*.

Of M. Necker, he said, "he is like a clock that always goes too slow." The connection we had endeavoured to bring about between him and M. Necker was not successful; for the latter did not perceive the use he might be of, and was afraid to trust him. Necker would fain apply to his political connections the same delicacy as in a marriage, or a private transaction. He was acquainted with the age in which he lived, and Mirabeau judged him weak and powerless, considering him but a pigmy in the revolution. "Mallebranche saw every thing in God," said he, "but Necker sees every thing in Necker." He accused him of seeing the whole kingdom in the Rue Vivienne; that is to say in the state of the funds and of the treasury.\*

\* M. Necker evinced the prudery of an honest man in declining the acquaintance of a *roué*, as he considered Mirabeau. He has even denied this commencement of acquaintance. I was mentioning the circumstance to the archbishop of Bordeaux, who assured me that I was mistaken. "I know," said the prelate, "from M. Necker himself, that he only saw Mirabeau twice; it was at Versailles, and these interviews related solely to the affairs of Geneva." "He demanded a conference," said Necker, "and I could not refuse it." It is true that the affairs of Geneva had been the ostensible, but not the real object. What weakness in a man of sense!—*Notes by Dumont.*



He said that Claviere was a man in head, and a child in heart. He always wanted a regulator; left to himself, he never ceased to vary.

I have forgotten the name of a member of the assembly, who had at first been used as a speaking-trumpet, and who one day delivered a speech very superior to his own talents, and which had been written for him. This deputy Mirabeau termed the *Merry-Andrew of eloquence*.

Having one day seen an emblem of time armed with a scythe and clepsydra, he alluded to it, at the national assembly, and said, "we have taken the scythe, but not the clock."

He said of the national assembly, "it has Hannibals enough, it only wants a Fabius."

Speaking of the allusions which having once governed men, were for ever destroyed, he said, "we have long been looking with a magic lantern, but the glass is now broken."

"When a pond is full," said he, "a single mole, by piercing the bank, may cause an inundation."

He could not bear that praise should be bestowed on mediocre talents; for that is one of the secrets of envy to debase men of superior genius. He loved to repeat a saying of mine. I am not a man of *bon-mots*, nor is it a *bon-mot* that I am about to relate. "We call Clermont-Tonnere, the French Pitt," said some one, desirous of lowering Mirabeau. "Be it

so," I replied, "but I should like to know whether Mr Pitt would be flattered at being termed the English Clermont-Tonnere."

Mirabeau used to relate, with great glee, an anecdote of his brother. The Viscount de Mirabeau was a very fat and heavy man; the people called him *Tun-Mirabeau*. One evening, going to pay his court to *Mesdames* the king's aunts, the usher of the chamber, deceived by the darkness of the corridor and the heavy walk of the viscount, mistook him for *Monsieur*, the king's brother, whose gait was very similar, and announced him as such. "*Monsieur*," said he, throwing open the door of the apartment. "Oh! it is only *Monsieur*, brother of King Mirabeau," said the viscount, and the courtly circle laughed heartily at an allusion which was not entirely devoid of truth.

Mirabeau, dining one day with the Count de Montmorrin, was asked by the latter what he thought of his brother. "He would be," replied Mirabeau, "a man of wit and a scapegrace in any family but ours." The viscount was not behind-hand with him in epigrams. The friends of *Tun-Mirabeau*, reproaching him with having one evening attended the assembly almost in a state of intoxication, he replied, "My brother has left me only that one vice."

Doubts have been entertained of Mirabeau's per-

sonal courage; because he had wisely determined to decline every duel, during the sittings of the national assembly. "They can procure as many bullies as they like," he said, "and thus, by duels, get rid of every one who opposes them. For if a man kills ten of the fellows, he may fall by the hand of the eleventh." He was always armed with pistols, and so were his servants. He feared assassination, but without any good ground, for no attempt was ever made upon his life. And who indeed would have dared to commit so dangerous a crime, knowing his immense popularity! One evening at Versailles, having left us at about eleven o'clock, he returned some minutes after in manifest agitation. He was attended by one of his servants, who had stopped him in the street and pointed out a man, wrapped up in a cloak, apparently lying in wait. We went out with him to see who it could be. The suspicious individual was still in the same place. He allowed himself to be accosted. "Pray, sir," said Mirabeau, "may I ask what you are doing here at this late hour?"—"Sir," replied the stranger, "I am waiting for my master, who is in a neighbouring house,"—"and may I ask, why you have a sword under your cloak?"—"Because my master gives it to me when he enters that house, and resumes it on coming out." After this, we easily saw that the adventure was not a sinister one, and having escorted

Mirabeau to his own door, returned home without any suspicious encounter.

Mirabeau's servants were much attached to him. I went with him to the Bastile a few days after its capture; we visited every accessible part of the fortress, and descended to a dungeon, into which Mirabeau's servant was not allowed to follow us. The poor fellow burst into tears, and conjured me to keep an eye upon his master, who might otherwise be killed in the dungeon. The idea of the Bastile was associated in the minds of the people with the most sinister ideas, and the dead body of the monster still threw them into an agony of fear.

I forgot to mention this visit to the Bastile in its proper place. It was a triumphal procession for Mirabeau. The crowd in the Rue St Antoine and the adjacent parts, opened to afford him a passage. Poetry and flowers were thrown over him, and his carriage was filled with books and manuscripts, taken from the fortress during the first two or three days subsequent to its fall. I was put in possession of some of the most curious, which remained in my charge two or three months; but the committee at the Hotel-de-Ville, who published the reports, called upon such persons as had any of these manuscripts to deliver them up. Mine contained an account of a series of imprisonments which took place at the end of the reign of Louis XV. and the beginning of that of

Louis XVI. I felt a scruple of conscience in retaining them, and therefore forwarded them to the committee.

Mirabeau had a *valet-de-chambre*, whose name was Teutch. This man had been a smuggler, and had performed prodigies of valour without even suspecting that he had done any thing extraordinary. "How these freebooters debase courage," once observed Mirabeau; "the greatest intrepidity is the inheritance of the basest of men?" Teutch's personal services lasted a long time, for Mirabeau was very *recherche* in his toilet, and moreover, sometimes amused himself with kicking and thumping Teutch, who considered these rough caresses as marks of friendship. When, from occupation or some other cause, several days had elapsed without any such tokens being given, poor Teutch was very sad, and his service seemed to weigh heavily upon him. "What is the matter, Teutch?" said his master one day; "you look very melancholy."—"Monsieur le Comte neglects me quite."—"How? what do you mean?" said Mirabeau. "Monsieur le Comte has not taken any notice of me for this week past. Thus it was really a necessary act of humanity to give him now and then a good blow in the stomach; and if he were knocked down, he laughed heartily and was quite delighted. The despair of this man at Mirabeau's death is inconceivable. Mirabeau's secretary,

also, thought proper to carry his affliction a degree beyond that of the public, and in his grief, inflicted upon himself several stabs with a penknife, of which, however, he took good care not to die.

Mirabeau had a son five or six years old, whose mother I never knew. This poor boy was loved and neglected by his father. "That child," said Mirabeau, by way of praise, "has a ferocious heart." He thought that every thing connected with the blood of a Mirabeau, must needs be extraordinary. Finding the poor child very much neglected, I caressed and fondled him, and was much surprised at seeing this pretended ferocious little animal take my hands, not to bite, but to kiss them. He appeared to me of an amiable disposition, and might easily have been managed with a little affectionate care. The father did for his child as for himself, he stole the smart sayings of other children to attribute them to his, and it was perhaps in this way that he had himself been accustomed in his youth to live upon the property of others as if it were his own.

Mirabeau had imbibed much regard and esteem for Cabanis, then a very young physician, but who was amiable, witty, and had a most unbounded admiration for him. He trusted Cabanis from friendship, and was delighted at being able to contribute to his reputation. In his last illness, Mirabeau would have no other physician, although the danger was manifest ;

for he was anxious to show Cabanis that he did not doubt his abilities, and desirous of giving him the full credit of his cure. Cabanis published an account of Mirabeau's illness, and a copy of his will. I was then at Geneva. From this *expose*, our best practitioners were of opinion that, from the second day, the physician mistook the complaint, and lost his presence of mind; that the charge, in short, had been too much for him. Two years after, I ascertained that the physicians of Edinburgh were of the same opinion. They did not say that his death had been caused by the mode of treatment, but that nothing had been done to effect a cure; in a word, that the disorder, which is distinctly described in a work of Cabanis, had not been treated at all. There was not the slightest appearance of poison; and that idea was therefore deemed totally unfounded. The complaint was acute enteritis, brought on by excesses. Even the actresses at the opera sought the glory of captivating this Hercules, who, trusting to the strength of his constitution, gave himself up, without restraint, to every kind of pleasure.

The bishop of Autun, who saw much of him during his last illness, which lasted only four or five days, told me that as soon as the fits of dreadfully acute pain were over, he would resume his serenity, his mildness and his amiable attentions to those about him. He was the same to the last moment. He perceived

that he was an object of general interest, and did not for a moment cease speaking and acting as if he were a great and noble actor performing his part. *He dramatised his death*, was the happy expression of the bishop of Autun. In the extreme agony of convulsions, and covered with a chilly perspiration, there were moments when it required more than the force of a philosopher to support life. "I shall suffer," he would mildly say, "so long as you have the least hopes of my cure: but if you have no longer any, have the humanity to put an end to my sufferings, of which you can form no idea." After one of these violent attacks, which had overcome his fortitude, and forced him to groan aloud, he called for his papers, and having selected a speech upon wills, "There!" said he to the bishop of Autun, "these are the last thoughts the world will have of mine. I deposit this manuscript with you; read it when I am no more; it is my legacy to the assembly." This speech on wills was, to my knowledge, written by M. Reybaz. It is done with great care, and its style is not at all like that of Mirabeau. It is a remarkable fact that, on his very death bed, Mirabeau preserved his thirst for artificial fame, when he had so much personal glory that his reputation required not to be decked with the laurels of others.\*

\* A speech on the slave trade disappeared from among his papers. It was written by three or four different hands and



Had I not lived with Mirabeau, I never should have known all that can be done in one day, or rather in an interval of twelve hours. A day to him was of more value than a week or a month to others. The business which he carried on simultaneously was prodigious, from the conception of a project to its execution, there was no time lost. *To-morrow* was not to him the same imposter as to most other men. Conversation alone could seduce him from his labours, and even that he converted into a means of work; for it was always at the end of some conversation that active labour was begun, and writings prepared. He read little; but he read with great rapidity, and discovered at a glance whatever was new and interesting in a book. Writings were copied in his house with prodigious quickness. As fast as a speech changed its form by corrections or additions, he had fresh copies of it made. This labour sometimes proved too much for those who

Mirabeau had himself worked at it with affection. I recollect a beautiful image which he had thrown into a description: "Let us follow upon the Atlantic, that ship laden with captives, or rather that *long coffin*," &c. Impatient of applause, he read this speech at the jacobins' club, where he produced such an effect, that the persons interested in slave dealing united all their strength to prevent the subject from being discussed in the assembly. They were afraid lest Mirabeau's speech should, by a decree of enthusiasm, lead to the immediate abolition of the slave trade.—*Note by Dumont.*

undertook it; but his haste of temper was known, and he must be obeyed. "Monsieur le Comte," said his secretary to him one day, "the thing you require is impossible."—"Impossible!" exclaimed Mirabeau, starting from his chair; "never again use that *foolish word* in my presence!"

Mirabeau, in connecting himself with the court during the last six months of his life, had no other object than to become a minister. To attain this, it became necessary to revoke several decrees of the assembly. The project of a counter-revolution has been attributed to him, during this period. I am not aware of such a thing. His hatred and contempt of the constituent assembly rendered it indeed probable; but the experience he had acquired leads to the supposition that he would have undertaken nothing rashly. I am persuaded that he was desirous of restoring the royal authority; but I am confident that he would have insisted upon a constitution similar to that of England, and never sanctioned any plan of which the national representation did not constitute the basis. He was favourable to an aristocracy, because he considered it essential to a monarchy; and the decree abolishing titles of nobility is one which he would have caused to be revoked.

Bouille's memoirs leave no doubt of Mirabeau's connection with the court, from the beginning of 1791. The king, in his letter to Bouille, writes in

allusion to Mirabeau and some others, "Although these men are not respectable characters, and I have paid an enormous price for the services of the first, yet I think they may be of some use to me; and it seems advisable to adopt certain parts of their plan." This plan was to dissolve the assembly, by the force and will of the nation itself, by getting up addresses from the departments; and that, without having recourse to foreign armies, or destroying the people's hopes of freedom—for a new assembly was to be convoked forthwith. This plan, therefore, does not warrant Mirabeau's being considered as a traitor to the popular cause, he was too able a tactician for that. He well knew that all his power lay in the public opinion, and that by restoring absolute power to the king, he should destroy himself.

All his ambition was centered in the idea of becoming prime minister of France; and he thought that he should eclipse every minister who had preceded him. He felt himself powerful enough to attract within the sphere of his patronage every man of distinguished abilities, and he would, he said, compose a halo of talents whose brightness should dazzle Europe.

## CHAPTER XVI.

IN May 1791, I returned from Geneva, and went to reside with Biddermann the Swiss banker, one of my intimate friends. His house was the rendezvous of several members of the assembly, and Claviere, Brissot and Reybaz were among his guests. I seldom went to the assembly, which no longer interested me now Mirabeau was no more. It was occupied about the municipalities, the assignats, &c. The influence of the jacobins had increased, for the death of Mirabeau had freed them from their most powerful antagonist. Ambitious subalterns could now with safety try their mediocre powers of eloquence.

The king had gone to the assembly, and, without being called upon, had renewed the oath to be faithful to the constitution and co-operate in its establishment. A fortnight after, he escaped one evening from the palace, after having eluded the vigilance of Lafayette and his guards. The secret had been so well kept that not the least suspicion was raised.

D'Andre would not, at first, believe it, although informed of it at six o'clock in the morning, by one of his friends, a *valet-de-chambre* at the palace. Every one was in blind security; for it seemed impossible to elude the watchfulness of so many individuals.

The assembly proved worthy of itself on this occasion. The *cote droit*, uneasy in the midst of Paris, feared to testify their joy; the *cote gauche*, alarmed at an event which seemed to presage civil war, resolved to act with prudence. Prompt and quiet measures were taken to bring back the monarch; and the occurrence was mentioned in the assembly as the effect of a conspiracy against the king himself—as a forcible abduction, of which the nation would soon be avenged. Pains were taken to keep the people quiet, and the public works went on, as if no change had occurred, and the king only gone on an excursion of pleasure. In this moderation may be traced the effect of strong contending passions acting upon and containing each other; and it proves that the majority was composed of honest and enlightened men capable of calculating all the consequences of their actions; and who would not risk the peace of their country. If the king had not been taken, it is very probable that this majority of the assembly would have treated with him and satisfied him on the principal points of which he complained. The Parisians seemed inspired, on this occasion, with supe-

rior wisdom, and were as quiet as possible. Nothing was heard but jests upon the royal family; bitter jests, it is true, and which but too clearly indicated that this family had forfeited all respect and confidence. "The traitor is unmasked? This then is the result of his oaths; these are his courtly protestations! We were great fools to believe that a king could love freedom and forego the pleasures of despotism!" I heard such remarks in every public place. There was not a term of degradation that the people did not apply to the king, but with the greatest *sang-froid*, and unaccompanied with tumult. A few hours after the king's flight, every sign of royalty disappeared, one after the other. Whatever bore the name of the king or any other member of the royal family, was pulled down; for the people would not leave any thing standing which was calculated to remind them of a king *who had violated his oath*. The most libellous songs enlivened the streets, and in a few hours every one had found out that a king was not at all necessary. Levity, fickleness and inconsistency are the characteristics of the people of Paris. "If the king leaves us," said they gaily, "the nation remains. A nation may exist without a king, but not a king without a nation." Surely, if the king supposed that his departure would throw the multitude into consternation, he must have been astonished at the general indifference. Reliance

upon the assembly seemed the prevailing sentiment. At first M. de Lafayette was in danger, being considered an accomplice; but when it became known that he had been deluded by the court, his popularity increased. "There is our stumbling-block gone," was written to me by an individual, who rendered thanks to heaven that the king had thus abdicated the throne.

The famous Paine was at this time at Paris, and very intimate in Condorcet's family. He thought he had effected the revolution in America, and fancied himself called upon to bring about another in France.

The whim of writing upon these subjects seized me; I had an idea of making the *shade of Mirabeau* speak; and I anticipated a secret pleasure from hearing the observations of the public upon a work bearing his name. I began with some degree of success, and felt inspired by the subject. I represented the king's flight as a conspiracy of the court party; I called upon the people to give an imposing and majestic strength to the national assembly, and I pressed the assembly itself to declare that it would always support the king; and that when it had delivered him from his captivity, it would bring to condign punishment the conspirators who had violated the national dignity. I apostrophised the king, and pointed out to him the misfortune of a prince whom a base faction would fain oblige to conquer his people,

and render himself an odious tyrant. I flattered myself that I had conjured up the shade of Mirabeau to some purpose, and imparted to it language and sentiments which Mirabeau himself would not have disavowed, when Duchatelet called upon me. After a short preamble, he put into my hand an English manuscript, in the form of a proclamation to the French people. It was nothing less than a manifesto against royalty, and it called upon the nation to seize the opportunity, and become a republic. Paine was the author of it. Duchatelet was determined to adopt and put his name to it, to placard it on the walls of Paris and stand to the consequences. He came to request that I would translate it and add some necessary developments. I began by discussing with him this strange proposal; and pointed out the danger of raising the standard of republicanism without the concurrence of the national assembly. Nothing was yet known of the king's intentions or means; how he was supported, or what were his alliances, his army, and the assistance he would receive from the provinces. I asked Duchatelet whether he had consulted with any of the most influential men, such as Sieyes, Lafayette, and others? He had not; he acted alone. Paine and he, the one an American, the other a young thoughtless member of the French nobility, put themselves forward to change the whole system of government in France.



I resisted all his entreaties, and peremptorily refused to translate his proclamation. In vain did he urge that I shared none of the responsibility; that whether I acceded to his wishes or not, the thing would be done, and that I might as well assist him as a friend, and blame him, at the same time, if I thought proper. I afterwards congratulated myself on having remained inflexible, and for fear of evil consequences to myself, I determined to make Mirabeau return to the tomb. Next day, the republican proclamation, signed Duchatelet, appeared on the walls in every part of Paris, and was denounced to the assembly. The idea of a republic had presented itself to no one, and the first intimation of such a thing filled the *cote droit* and the moderates of the *cote gauche* with consternation. Mallouet, Cazales, and several others, proposed that the author should be prosecuted; but Chapelier, backed by a numerous party, fearful of adding fuel to the fire instead of extinguishing it, moved the order of the day, on the plea that the proposal was an absurdity and the author a madman.

I owe it to truth to declare, that Duchatelet sounded many persons, and was listened to by none; that Sieyes refused his concurrence in terms of the greatest contempt; that several individuals urged that the time for a republic was not yet come, and that Lafayette, in particular, repulsed all those who

spoke to him on the subject, and declared, if I am rightly informed, that it required at least twenty years more to bring freedom to maturity in France.

But some of the seed thrown out by the audacious hand of Paine, began to bud forth in the minds of many leading individuals. Since the flight of the king, Condorcet had become a determined republican; Claviere, Petion, and Brissot met to discuss the question; it was also mentioned at Bidderman's, and I saw the formation of the first filaments of republicanism which became so rapidly developed in the southern provinces. The following was the reasoning of the different committees: "The king has forfeited the public confidence, which he can never recover. The nation can never forget his flight after such positive oaths freely taken. He cannot himself forget that he has been brought back by force, and that he reigns by mere sufferance over a people who despise him either as a weak man or as a traitor. The elements of the monarchy are destroyed, for the king can no longer appear but as a conspirator; and nothing would be more absurd than to confide high powers in the constitution to one who has declared himself its enemy."

Though these arguments were very strong against the king personally, they were weak against royalty in the abstract. No line between the person and the office was drawn, because it presented a difficulty

which could not then be solved, except by placing some other member of the royal family upon the throne. This alternative pleased none of the individuals I have named, for the Duke of Orleans, the only prince who could have been selected, was considered too despicable.

It was further urged, that for two years past, it was the assembly who had governed, and not the king. The obstacles had all proceeded from the latter, the resources from the former. At length Condorcet said, "If a republic were formed by a revolution, and the people rose against the court, the consequences would be terrible; but if a republic be formed at present, whilst the assembly is all-powerful, the passage from monarchy to republicanism will not be difficult; and it is much better that it should take place now when the king, from the situation in which he has placed himself, is reduced to nothing, than when sufficient power has been restored to him to render his overthrow an effort." As for royalty itself, it was looked upon as a bugbear for children and a plaything for men.

Whilst the assembly were discussing the steps to be taken with regard to the king's conduct, these new republicans were desirous that he should be brought to trial, his abdication proclaimed, and France boldly declared a republic.

The opinion of persons with whom I was intimate

had an influence upon mine ; but after all, it was but an opinion, and one which raised constant doubts in my mind. I found great interest in attending their meetings and listening to the discussion of a subject of such vast importance. I remember one day, having met at Petion's to determine upon a motion to be made in the assembly upon the king's return ; Petion was playing the violin, and Brissot became seriously angry at such indifference and frivolity at a moment when the fate of the monarchy was to be decided upon. Petion had been deputed, with Barnave, to go and fetch the king at Varennes. It is certain that this honour had not changed him. Barnave, he informed us, was like a provincial *bourgeois*, struck with surprise and admiration at finding himself in the same carriage with the king. As for Petion himself—and I attribute it more to his insensibility than to his magnanimity—he was not even moved with compassion for a prince fallen from his greatness, and felt no personal vanity ; or rather, one species of pride had contended with another. The self-love of Petion, who was looking for popular honours, had rendered him insensible to courtly honours. As a courtier of the people, he despised the courtiers of the king. He thought that the popular favour led to power, and the royal favour to nothing at all. He was one of those men who can dispense with fortune, because they require no luxu-

ries. I believe him to have been incorruptible in money matters; but there are so many other sources of corruption!

Brissot was more disinterested, but fanatical and obstinate. I will speak of him more largely hereafter. He had many noble qualities, but they were corrupted by party spirit and degenerated into vices; though a man formed to do good, he became the tool of evil.

I had a high opinion of Condorcet, whose judgment influenced that of many others. The friends who met at his house, formed the true nucleus of the republic.\* It was said that Madame Condorcet had been treated contemptuously by the queen, and that her republican zeal originated in a woman's vengeance. But I do not believe it. Madame Condor-

\* The greatest misfortunes in France originated perhaps in the republic having arisen from a storm, instead of being formed with deliberation. I do not mean to assert that a good republic might have been made for France; only that the same spirit which deprived the king of his authority would have prevented him from resuming or maintaining it; and it is in this point of view alone that Condorcet and his followers ought to be judged. He was not a jacobin; he perceived what the jacobins wanted, and urged the formation of a republic by the assembly, to prevent one from being established by the populace. The most inconsistent were they who, like Sieyes, not being republicans, did not cease their attacks upon the feeble remains of royal authority.—*Note by Dumont.*

cet owed her love of republicanism to her own serious character, to a mind fond of philosophical meditation, to the reading of republican works, and to her passion for the writings of Rousseau. Her husband had an enthusiasm of reflection; she, of sentiment. Both felt convinced that freedom could never flourish in France, and spring up to a goodly tree, under the shadow of a throne. Paine had given them false notions of England, which I often combated in vain. America seemed to them the model of a good government, and they considered it easy to introduce the system of federalism into France.

Robespierre was so alarmed at the king's flight, that he had hid himself two whole days, and intended to proceed for safety to Marseilles. On the king's return, he began to listen to Brissot and Pétion, but with much reserve at first; and he continued to undermine the monarchy without declaring himself in favour of a republic.

From what I have stated, it is evident that the first republicans were not creatures of the duke of Orleans, as has been asserted. They were independent men, and I see not what moral reproach they incurred whilst their opinion remained only an opinion. The king's departure was proof clear enough that the court would never be reconciled to the con-

stitution, upon which the people then founded all their hopes of liberty.

Several members of the assembly, however, came to a more prudent way of thinking. They readily conceived that a humane and virtuous monarch might, by the endless humiliations inflicted upon him, be driven to an act of despair. From that time, Lafayette began to fear the jacobins more than the royalists. Duport, Barnave and the Lameths perceived the necessity of again supporting the monarch and attaching him to the constitution, by an interest common to both. They therefore pursued a new plan; but having found it easier to destroy than to re-establish, they lost, as moderates, the popularity which they had acquired as factious men.

I remained at Paris but a few days after the king's return. My fellow travellers to London were the celebrated Paine and Lord Daer, a young Scotchman, mad after liberty and republicanism—an honest and virtuous enthusiast, who thought that, by transplanting the principles of the French revolution into his own country, he should be rendering it the greatest service. I had met Paine five or six times before, and I could easily excuse, in an American, his prejudices against England. But his egregious conceit and presumptuous self-sufficiency quite disgusted me. He was drunk with vanity. If you believed him, it

was he who had done every thing in America. He was an absolute caricature of the vainest of Frenchmen. He fancied that his book upon the Rights of Man ought to be substituted for every other book in the world; and he told us roundly that, if it were in his power to annihilate every library in existence, he would do so without hesitation, in order to eradicate the errors they contained, and commence, with the Rights of Man, a new era of ideas and principles. He knew all his own writings by heart, but he knew nothing else. He repeated to us even love letters of his composition, written in the most fantastic style. They were the effusions of his youth, and worthy of Mascarillo. Yet Paine was a man of talent, full of imagination, gifted with popular eloquence, and wielded, not without skill, the weapon of irony. My curiosity concerning this celebrated writer was more than satisfied during this journey, and I saw him no more.

My friends forwarded to me in London, the first four numbers of the *Republican*, a periodical work to which I had promised to become a contributor.\*

\* I wrote, for this republican journal, an article which was published in the two first numbers, after my departure, but with such changes and mutilations that I no longer recognized it as my own. These alterations consisted in additions, suppressions and expressions injurious to the king, all which were not in



But my ideas, in a state of excitement from my residence at Paris, had soon become more temperate in London. Being no longer within the influence of a fascinating society, I considered the subject in a different point of view, and wrote a long letter to Claviere, not only to inform him that I retracted my engagement, but to represent to him that such a journal, being in direct opposition to the national assembly and the constitution already decreed, would be a criminal publication. I further urged that, since the king's return, the opportunity of founding a republic had gone by, and that he and all his friends would be incapacitated from serving the nation, if they persevered in principles which were no longer professed except by a particular faction. I replied in the same strain to the letters of Madame Condorcet. Claviere, soon after, wrote that the *Republican* was given up, and the idea of a republic no longer existed; that there was a reaction wholly in favour of monarchy; that the assembly itself seemed to be promoting a counter-revolution, and that the sole suspicion of republicanism had become an odious imputation.

The assembly, then *in the act of revising* the constitution, showed a desire to abandon its errors, correct exaggerations, and associate the king with

unison with either my political opinions or my personal feelings.  
—*Note by Dumont.*

public liberty. But each time a proposal was made tending to strengthen the executive, the *parti de la Montagne* called out treason. If, however, the well-thinking portion of the assembly, who had discovered their error, had then thought of meeting and concerting measures of united action, it is probable that the constitution would have undergone important amendments. I had many particulars from d'Andre, the leading personage in the assembly during these four months. Though not the most ostensible, he was the most skilful, the most flexible, and the most able member in preparing a motion and making it succeed. When a plan was agreed upon in the committee of Lafayette, La Rochefoucauld, &c., d'Andre went early to the assembly. As the members came in, he consulted them, insinuated his opinion, got them to press him to propose it, and did not seem to accede until they had promised to support him. This is the art he used to strengthen his party, and, in giving an opinion, he always seemed to be following one that had been suggested to him.

The *parti de la Montagne*, often thwarted by d'Andre, took a dislike to him. Brissot, in his *Patriot*, attacked him with incredible virulence. The jacobins looked upon him as a man sold to the king. He had much talent and dexterity, but no imposing eloquence, and this is the reason why he never suc-

ceeded in making himself popular. Sieyes, who would sometimes give way to a vein of pleasantry, was very fond of reciting a dialogue supposed to have passed between d'Andre and John, his *valet-de-chambre*.

“*D'Andre*. What is the order of the day?”

*John*. Sir, it is the question of the king's commissaries in the courts of justice.

*D'Andre*. Help me off with this coat, and give me the old one.

*John*. It is worn out at the elbows, sir.

*D'Andre*. So much the better; that is just what I want. Give me my old hat and my old stockings.

*John*. Will you have your boots, sir? It is wet under foot.

*D'Andre*. No, they are quite new; give me my thick shoes with iron nails; a little mud spoils nothing. This is an important question. Now, I am well dressed; who the devil, seeing me in this trim, would think of the civil list?”

D'Andre complained to me more of his associates than of his enemies. Their indolence was extreme; they were weakened by the secret consciousness of having changed their opinions; and when accused of inconsistency and contradiction, they could not reply to their opponents. In a word, they had been all fire in the attack, but were chilled in the defence.

They often assembled in private, deliberated a long time, and determined upon nothing. The *parti de la Montagne* had the advantage over them of consistency, whilst among the moderates were to be found traitors to their own principles.

D'Andre said that the greatest obstacles proceeded from the court. The king listened to a great many different counsellors, whose advice he rendered nugatory by an ill-judged amalgamation of the whole. There was a number of petty intrigues, but no really concerted co-operation. A succession of foolish measures brought suspicion upon the court, and gave the appearance of counter-revolution to the acts of those who were working heart and hand for the maintenance of the constitutional monarchy. The greatest of their annoyances was to find themselves connected with persons who would have hanged them all for the re-establishment of despotism.

The court party certainly committed suicide. The king was so badly advised, particularly by the queen, that he exerted all his influence to get the decree passed, which rendered the members of the first assembly ineligible to the second. D'Andre made me acquainted with all the particulars. He received a visit from one of the king's confidants, who, after preparing the way with a great deal of nonsense about gratitude, the esteem of the sovereign

and future favours, told him that the court depended upon him to support this decree. D'Andre, who considered it as destructive of the constitution, did all in his power to open the king's eyes upon this point. To save time he got the question adjourned; employed those who had influence at court, to point out the evils which would be the result—but the blindness was complete; and the resentment of the queen against most of the members of the *cote gauche*, was so violent, that she considered the monarchy saved, if she could only succeed in excluding from the assembly the men who had destroyed the power of the crown. The court had been led, or pretended to suppose, that the provinces were well-intentioned—that the king was beloved by his people, and that the electors would return men of a very different character, who would repair the faults of their predecessors. D'Andre, who presided when the decree was proposed, saw, with astonishment, the whole *cote droit*, who had been gained by the court party, join the *parti de la Montagne*, to get it passed without a discussion. “To the vote! to the vote!” sounded on all sides. D'Andre exerted himself to enable his friends to speak, and subdue this dangerous enthusiasm, but could not succeed. The decree was passed by acclamation, and the persons most pleased with its success, were they who, by supporting it, had prepared their own downfall.

The constitution was a true anomaly, containing too much of republicanism for a monarchy, and too much of monarchy for a republic. The king was an absolute excrescence ; he appeared every where, but possessed no real power.

## CHAPTER XVII.

No event ever inspired the whole of Europe with so deep an interest as the convocation of the states-general. Every enlightened and reflecting mind associated the most flattering anticipations with this public struggle against old and deeply rooted prejudices, and expected a new moral and political world to arise out of chaos. The necessity of hope was so great, that all faults were pardoned, all misfortunes imputed to accident; and in spite of calamities, the balance remained in favour of the constituent assembly. It was the prosecution of despotism by humanity.

Six weeks after the convocation of the states-general, they no longer existed—they had been converted into a national assembly, whose first misfortune was, that it owed its new title to a revolution; that is to say, to a change in its powers, its attributes, its title and its means. The commons should have acted in concert with the nobles, the clergy, and the king :

instead of which, they subjugated the clergy, the king, and the nobles, and acted not only without, but against them. This is the whole of the revolution.

We may reason *ad infinitum* upon the causes of the revolution; but in my mind, there is only one dominant and efficient cause—the weakness of the king's character. Had a firm and decided prince been in the place of Louis XVI. the revolution would not have happened. The whole of this monarch's reign led to it through different gradations. There is not a single period, during the existence of the first assembly, when the king could not have re-established his authority, and framed a mixed constitution much stronger and more solid than the old parliamentary and *nobiliary* monarchy of France. His weakness, his indecision, his half measures and half counsels, and more particularly his want of foresight, led to the catastrophe. The subordinate causes which concurred, are only the development of the first cause. When a prince is weak, his courtiers are *intrigants*; the factious, daring and insolent; the people audacious; honest men timid; the most zealous and faithful servants of the state discouraged; the services of men of talent rejected; and the best advice rendered nugatory.

A king with dignity and energy of character would have drawn towards him, those who proved hostile to him; and such men as Lafayette, the



Lameths, Mirabeau, and Sieyes, would not have even thought of acting as they did, but upon a different field of action, would have appeared quite different men.\*

After the forcible union of the orders, the assembly then enjoying the supreme power, pursued

\* *This article requires development.*—In England there are discontented individuals, but no discontented classes. The king, nobility, gentry, merchants, manufacturers, farmers, clergy, army and navy, are each proud of their profession, of the consideration they enjoy, and the prospects attached to their situation in life. In France, before the revolution, discontent pervaded all classes of society. The farmers and cultivators were tired of the inequality of the taxes, and the arbitrary manner in which they were often imposed. The merchants were despised by the nobility, whilst the smaller nobles were jealous of the higher, who were alone presented at court, and in favour. The parliaments, with their contested prerogatives, were sometimes powerful, at others ill-treated; exposed to exile when they resisted the government, and despised by the people when they yielded to the will of the court. The advocates, a numerous and widely-spread class, were kept below their pretensions, and their ambition was without hope. No place was offered to merit, in a kingdom where venality gave up all judicial appointments to fortune. A tie of common interest was wanting between the different orders. The provinces had, likewise, distinctions which led to rivalry and hatred; there were fifty different organizations, each jealous of the other, and forming different states, united under the same crown, but enemies from their privileges.—*Note by Dumont.*

a new plan. The faults of this body may be traced to nine causes.

1. Its heterogeneous composition. The parties were too much irritated against each other to act in concert. They only sought to throw difficulties in each other's way, and overcome each other. The discontented often got decrees passed, in the hope that the faults of the assembly would throw it into discredit with the public. They endeavoured to degrade it, and thus led it to self-destruction.

2. The composition of the commons. There was too great a number of men without property, and advocates who carried democracy to the extreme of exaggeration.

3. The bad method of carrying on their proceedings. Forms are to a popular assembly what tactics are to an army. There was as much difference between the debates of the national assembly and those of the English parliament, as between the scientific sieges and marches of the Austrians, and the irregular combats and skirmishes of the Croats.

4. The constitutional decrees, sanctioned as fast as they were drawn up, and made permanent, without regard to the constitution as a whole; which rendered the advantages of experience abortive, and drove the discontented to despair. Had these decrees been only provisional, the hope of amending them would have supported all parties.

5. The fear of a counter-revolution. The revolutionary party had set out by making powerful enemies; and they then fancied they could never take precautions enough for their own safety. Every thing that had the least appearance of royal authority gave umbrage; the king's power seemed never sufficiently destroyed; but, on the contrary, always on the point of resuscitation. The injury which they had done it, made it an object of dread to them. If the king but made himself popular by some step in favour of the revolution, the assembly became jealous. "*The executive is pretending to be dead!*" once observed Lameth.

6. The emigration. This was the greatest of all faults. The king was weakened by this desertion, and the emigrants, by their intrigues, their protestations, and the uneasiness they created, brought on an internal reaction.

7. The institution of the jacobins and other affiliated societies. The whole of the people were excited by these societies, which soon became powerful rivals of the assembly. A member who had no influence with the assembly, had only to affect exaggerated democracy, and he became a hero among the jacobins. These societies formed hot-houses, in which every venomous plant that could not be made to grow in the open air, was forced to maturity.

8. The false measures of the court party. The

latter began at first by acting against the assembly, in which they afterwards attempted to obtain influence; but it was too late. M. Necker displayed a prudery in this respect, honourable, no doubt, to a private individual, but indicative of great ignorance in a statesman. He knew not how to form a party, nor would he connect himself with Mirabeau, or flatter Sieyes to obtain his support.

9. The secession, after the king's return from Varennes, of the members of the *cote droit* who, during the monarch's captivity, refused to vote in the assembly. Their inaction paralyzed the moderate revolutionists, and rendered them too weak to resist the jacobins. Had these moderates joined Mallouet and the Lameths, they might yet have preserved the constitution.

The causes which overthrew this constitution, so solemnly sworn to, and so enthusiastically received by the whole nation, may be reduced to four.

1. The unity of the legislature. If there had been two councils or legislative bodies, their progress would have been less impetuous; and one would have served as a regulator to the other.

2. The independence of the legislative assembly. If the king had possessed the power of convoking or dissolving it, he could have made his share of authority respected. But the moment the assem-

bly attacked him, he found himself without the means of resistance.

3. The decree which rendered the members of the first assembly ineligible to the second. Though this be a secondary cause, it is, nevertheless, a very powerful one. The newly elected deputies were jealous of the glory won by their predecessors, and had no regard for a work in which they had not themselves concurred.

4. The immutability of the constitutional laws. If my opinion be a correct one, ten years at least should have been allowed for altering the defects in these laws. A legislature whose hands were thus tied, found themselves in too cramped a situation; and the two parties in the assembly soon concurred in a violent revolution which burst these absurd bonds.

This assembly, after enjoying so brilliant an existence, had an obscure end. From the moment of the king's return, it fell into disrepute, and dragged on the remnant of its being, between mistrust and contempt. Since it had discovered the evils arising from its excesses, and endeavoured to moderate them, it had lost that ascendancy which belongs to offensive warfare. It seemed as if it would deprive the people of the power it had conferred upon them; and it had the appearance of condemning its own work, which it was then completing with remorse and disgust.

Nothing was more brilliant than its beginning, nothing more insignificant than its end.

The assembly no doubt repented not having passed the constitutional laws provisionally, as it had been advised to do, so as to be able to compare and modify them as a whole, after the constitution was completed. By adopting a contrary system, an error became irremediable, and the effect of a bad law necessitated the framing of still worse laws.

The revision, which was only a methodical arrangement and classification, would have been the most important act of all, if the assembly had reserved a power of amendment over these laws. Maturity of judgment, acquired by an experience of three years, would then have aided in perfecting the work. But from ignorance and presumption, the assembly had pronounced itself infallible, and had made all improvement impossible. At each decree, the deputies burnt, as it were, the ship which had brought them, and thus cut off all means of retreat. The truth is, that each constitutional law was a party triumph, and they who gained it would not leave their adversaries any hope of recovering their loss. The result of these forced laws, declared immutable, was to bring about a revolution by which, in the space of eight months, they were all annihilated.

There is a fact which I distinctly remember, strongly illustrative of this defective mode of pro-

ceeding. The committee appointed to draw up the code of constitutional laws were in the greatest embarrassment to class and arrange them. Many fruitless attempts were made and many plans proposed and rejected. Every one capable of giving advice was consulted, and if I am not mistaken, they remained in this difficulty five or six weeks, when M. Ramond, Lafayette's friend, furnished the plan of arrangement which was adopted.

I have finished with more patience than I had anticipated the account of my connexion with Mirabeau, and my recollections of this first epoch of the French revolution. This is the most interesting period, and yet I have rendered it very little so. I must have made very imperfect observations, had very little active curiosity, or my memory must be very defective. That such a multitude of events which occurred before my eyes, and the numerous actors with whom I had constant communication, should have left so slight an impression upon my mind, is a reproach which I feel that I deserve. It is the effect of my indifference to things when they are passing before me : and whose importance I never perceive till after they are gone by. Whilst they last, the most extraordinary appear to me but common events, and obtain little of my attention. Though this confession may serve to convict me of stupidity, I cannot otherwise explain the little I saw

and retained of this great drama. It is true that wherever I have lived, I have always been the last in the house to perceive what was going on. If I am required to know any family circumstance, it must be mentioned to me ; for not only am I not penetrating and cannot guess, but I have no taste for confidences, nor have secrets any attraction for me. I make these reflections with the more vexation because I have retained less of the second part of my subject, upon which I am now about to enter, than of the first. My recollections are more scattered and the chain of events oftener broken. I have lost much of what I once knew ; and what is still more irreparable, I did not take advantage of the particular circumstances under which I was placed to become acquainted with half of what I might have known with very little trouble. I could never make up my mind to ask about any thing that was not first mentioned to me ; but it is also true that I obtained nothing by torture ; therefore all I know proceeds from free and voluntary testimony.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE first who came to England, after the close of the assembly, was Petion. I had been too intimate with him at Paris not to call upon him in London. But he was so well received, and his society so much courted, that the good fortune of finding him alone was very rare. It was who should have him at their house. He was overloaded with invitations and received the most flattering attentions. He had come, he said, to examine trial by jury in civil and criminal cases. He did not, it is true, understand the English language, but a barrister well acquainted with the French language offered to accompany him to the courts of law. A day was fixed, but Petion did not keep his appointment. He had been showing London to a friend just arrived. He remained only three weeks, and the attentions he received from a particular party excited the suspicion of the government.

Some time after, d'Andre sought refuge in Lon-

don. The pitiless Brissot had not ceased, in his paper called the *Patriot*, to propagatè calumnies against him. Brissot thought it necessary to ruin or at least drive him away; and as he was an active and intelligent man, devoted to the king, he was accused of participating in the civil list. If d'Andre enjoyed his share of royal favour, he did not, at all events, make an ostentatious display of it. After the closing of the assembly, he had the good sense, although a noble, to enter into trade, and open a grocer's shop at Paris. This conduct, so popular and so consonant to the spirit of the constitution, ought to have disarmed Brissot's malice; but Brissot was one of those men in whom party spirit prevailed over right and justice; or rather, he confined right and justice to his own party. He had more of the zeal of the monk than any man I ever knew. Had he been a capuchin, he would have doated upon his staff and his vermin—a dominican, he would have burnt heretics—a Roman, he would have proved not unworthy of Cato and Regulus. But he was a French republican, who had determined to overthrow the monarchy; and to accomplish this object he hesitated not to calumniate, to persecute, and to perish himself upon the scaffold.

I became acquainted with d'Andre at Versailles; but I afterwards saw very little of him at Paris. On his arrival in London, I called upon him, introduced

him to several of my friends, and had opportunities of knowing him well during his two or three years' residence in England. He had a great deal of wit, a quick glance, great facility of explanation without being an orator, and great clearness of conception—all which made him an expert and industrious member of the national assembly, and afterwards an excellent merchant. He was affectionate, generous, obliging, easy and simple in his manners; modest, retiring, and timid in company, to such a degree, that the man who had been four times president of the assembly, and had spoken before all France, was agitated and nervous at the idea of supporting an opinion or keeping up an indifferent conversation before three or four individuals. What he wanted was an air of dignity and an imposing carriage. A vulgar countenance, and an insignificant figure told against him in his elevated situation, nor had he any thing in his appearance to indicate, at a first glance, either his talents and quickness of perception, or his benevolence and goodness of heart.

I do not remember the exact time when M. de Talleyrand came to London. By a decree of the national assembly, which prohibited, during two years, its members from being employed by the executive, he could not have an ostensible public mission. But he had an equivalent. His was a journey of observation, and he was to negotiate, if he found

the English ministers accessible, that is to say, disposed to consider the constitutional king of France in a new light, and maintain the neutrality of Great Britain in the event of war, which began to appear inevitable on the continent.

I had formed no intimacy with the bishop of Autun at Paris, but we were acquainted, and he had not been long in London before he made me such advances as from our relative ranks ought to have come from him, if he were desirous of a closer acquaintance. He had particular letters of introduction to Lord Lansdowne; and his distinguished reputation, which opened to him the road to the highest political honours, caused his society to be courted by such as had not already imbibed strong prejudices against all who were connected with the French revolution.

M. de Talleyrand is descended from a family of sovereign counts, one of the most ancient houses in France. He was the eldest of three brothers; but being lame from infancy, he had been thought unworthy of figuring in the world, and was destined for the church, although he possessed not one of the qualifications which, in the Roman communion, can render this profession even tolerable. I have often heard him say, that, despised by his parents as a being disgraced by nature and fit for nothing, he had contracted, from his earliest youth, a sombre and

taciturn habit. Having been forced to yield the rights of primogeniture to a younger brother, he had never slept under the same roof with his parents. At the seminary he had but few intimate associates ; and from his habitual chagrin, which rendered him unsociable, he was considered very proud.\* Condemned to the ecclesiastical state against his will, he did not imbibe sacerdotal sentiments and opinions, any more than cardinal de Retz and many others. He even exceeded the limits of indulgence granted to youth and gentle blood : and his morals were any thing but clerical. But he managed to preserve appearances, and, whatever were his habits, no one knew better when to speak and when to be silent.

I am not sure that he was not somewhat too ambitious of producing effect by an air of reserve and reflection. He was always at first very cold, spoke little, and listened with great attention. His features, a little bloated, seemed to indicate effeminacy ; but his manly and brave voice formed a striking contrast with this expression. In society, he was always distant and reserved, and never exposed himself to familiarity. The English, who entertain the most absurd prejudices against the French, were surprized at finding in him neither vivacity, familiarity, indiscretion, or national gaiety. A sententious manner, frigid politeness, and an air of observation, formed

an impenetrable shield around his diplomatic character.

When among his intimate friends he was quite a different being. He was particularly fond of social conversation, which he usually prolonged to a very late hour. Familiar, affectionate, and attentive to the means of pleasing, he yielded to a species of intellectual epicurism, and became amusing that he might be himself amused. He was never in a hurry to speak, but selected his expressions with much care. The points of his wit were so acute, that to appreciate them fully required an ear accustomed to hear him speak. He is the author of the *bon-mot* quoted somewhere by Champfort, where Rulhiere said, "I know not why I am called a wicked man, for I never, in the whole course of my life, committed but one act of wickedness." The bishop of Autun, who had not previously taken any part in the conversation, immediately exclaimed, with his full sonorous voice and significant manner, "*But when will this act be at an end?*" One evening at whist, whilst he was in London, a lady of sixty was mentioned as just having married a footman. Several expressed their surprise at such a choice. "When you are nine," said the bishop of Autun, "you do not count honours!" This kind of wit belonged exclusively to him. He imbibed it from the writings of Fontenelle, of whom he was always a great admirer. He once related to me an

abominable act of his colleague, C . . at which I indignantly exclaimed, "The man who would do that, is capable of assassination!" "No," said M. de Talleyrand, "not of assassination, but of poisoning!" His manner of story-telling is peculiarly graceful; and he is a model of good taste in conversation. Indolent, voluptuous, born to wealth and grandeur, he had yet, during his exile, accustomed himself to a life of privation; and he liberally shared with his friends the only resources he had left, arising from the sale of the wreck of his superb library, which fetched a very low price, because, even in London, party-spirit prevented a competition of purchasers.

Talleyrand did not come to London for nothing. He had a long conference with Lord Grenville, of which I have read his written account. Its object was to point out the advantages which England might derive from France having a constitutional king, and to form a close connexion between the two courts. For, although the British cabinet appeared determined, in the event of war, to preserve a strict neutrality, it was extremely reserved towards France, because it neither sympathised with the French government, nor believed in the stability of the French constitution. This coldness gave great disquietude to the cabinet of the Tuileries, and it was Talleyrand's object to bring them closer together, even if he could not unite them, and thus make sure that, at

all events, France had nothing to fear from England. Lord Grenville was dry and laconic; nor did he lend himself, in any way, to the furtherance of Talleyrand's views, notwithstanding the advantages they held out to England. It is well known that Lord Grenville afterwards represented the bishop of Autun as a clever, but dangerous man. Mr Pitt, when very young, visited France, and spent some time with the archbishop of Rheims, Talleyrand's uncle. Here the latter became acquainted with him, and these young men passed several weeks together in friendly and familiarly intercourse. But in the only interview they had in England, Talleyrand thought it Pitt's place to recall this circumstance, and therefore did not mention it. Pitt, who was decidedly opposed to the object of Talleyrand's mission, took good care not to remember the uncle, lest he should be obliged to show some civility to the nephew.

On Talleyrand's presentation at court, the king took but little notice of him, and the queen turned her back upon him with marked contempt, which she subsequently imputed to his immoral character. From that period he was excluded from the higher circles of society, as a dangerous man, and the agent of a faction,—who could not actually be turned out of doors, but whom it was improper to receive well; and he could not hope for much success in a mission which began under such unfavourable auspices.



## CHAPTER XIX.

NEVER did I perform a more agreeable journey. Talleyrand was fond of having a small party in a carriage, because the conversation, of which, *soit dit en passant*, he was the life and soul, was friendly and uninterrupted. Hopes, projects and pleasing anticipations kept our minds to the necessary degree of tension, and we had not an instant of langour or indifference. Talleyrand, among many other singular anecdotes, described the manner in which the new clergy had been consecrated. Three bishops were necessary for the ceremony, and his two coadjutors had hesitated till the last moment. Nothing was less canonical than the means he employed to secure the co-operation of one of them, who wanted to withdraw and thereby prevent the ceremony from taking place.\* One species of fear overcame

\* Being told by the bishop of Lida, that the bishop of Babylon was wavering in his resolution, Talleyrand paid the latter

another, and the breviary by which they were convinced was a pistol and a menace of self-destruction. That so sacred a ceremony should have been brought about in such a manner, did not seem to me quite in unison with the principles of religion; but when the critical situation of the bishop of Autun is considered, and the danger he would have incurred had the weakness of his colleagues prevented the consecration of the new clergy, some excuse may be made for an act which tended to preserve the community from revolt and bloodshed.

As we entered Paris, on the 19th of March, a friend of M. de Talleyrand's stopped our carriage to inform us that the court party had obtained the dismissal of M. de Narbonne. His connexion with the Girondists had led to the measure; but people were surprised that the king should still venture upon inflicting this kind of disgrace. De Graves had been appointed to succeed M. de Narbonne.

a visit, and with a most serious look, informed him that their colleague, the bishop of Lida, was on the point of deserting them; that he well knew to what such conduct exposed them from the people; but his mind was made up never to suffer himself to be stoned by the mob, and he would certainly shoot himself if either of them betrayed him. As he said this, he produced a small pistol which he flourished with an air of determination. This menace had its due effect.—*Note by Dumont.*

I soon made myself acquainted with what was going on. There were three parties in the assembly, each of whom swore by the constitution, though all three were dissatisfied with it. The true constitutional party, at whose head was Vaublanc, were accused of secretly aiming at an extension of the royal authority, and the formation of two legislative chambers. This party, in their turn, imputed to the Girondists a conspiracy against the constitution, and the desire of establishing a republic. The Girondists cast upon the ultras of *la Montagne* the reproach of creating anarchy with a view to throw odium upon the two other parties. The *parti de la Montagne* accused the constitutionalists of having sold themselves to the king, and the Girondists of a wish to govern in such a manner as to sacrifice the country to the private interests of their own faction.—Hatred, mistrust and exaggeration were carried to a lamentable excess, and it is difficult to form an idea of the passions which swayed this legislative assembly. The moderates, as the first were called, were the most sincere and honest; the Girondists possessed all the talent, knowledge and eloquence; and the *parti de la Montagne* had, in addition to their audacity and violence, the support of the populace of the faubourgs.

There were two principal clubs: that of the Feuillans who supported the constitution, and that of the

jacobins whose principles tended to anarchy. The Girondists fluctuated between both, and joined either according to circumstances; but they were hostile to the principles of the Feuillans, whilst they only feared the excesses of the jacobins.

The king was governed by the Feuillans. The Lameths and Barnave, who, with others of their friends, were the leaders of this party, showed, then, as determined a hostility to the majority in the legislative assembly as they had formerly done to the court. They thought of nothing but turning this majority into ridicule, and bringing it into contempt. Such a thing was certainly not difficult, but might lead to dreadful acts of violence. They had obtained the dismissal of M. de Narbonne as devoted to the Girondists, whilst his imputed attachment to themselves had rendered him equally odious to the jacobins.

I will state my recollections of the Girondist party with whom, at first, I found myself connected from my intimacy with Condorcet, Brissot and Claviere.

They took me to breakfast-parties at the house of a lady named, I think, d'Odun, who resided in the Place-Vendome. These parties were usually attended by Brissot, Claviere, Rœderer, Gensonne, Guadet, Vergniaud, the Ducos, Condorcet, &c., who met at this house before they went to the assembly, and here concerted their measures. But it may be readily conceived that, at these meetings, there was more

prating and party gossip than business done. Brissot was the man of action ; he did every thing, and his activity sufficed to meet every emergency. .

Their principal object was to overthrow the court, by declaiming against the Austrian committee ; a sort of invisible power against which they might bring whatever charges they pleased. It was well known that the king had secret counsels, and the queen secret conferences ; that couriers were dispatched to the princes of the blood at Vienna and Coblenz ; that all the ambassadors to foreign potentates were attached to the old *regime*, and had adhered to the constitution against their will ; that, in a word, the professed opinion of the court was constitutional, but the real opinion decidedly hostile to the constitution.—The more the history of this period is studied, the stronger becomes the certainty that the court wore a mask. The king alone showed his face, but only in profile ; and there is no doubt that he would have modified the constitution, had he been able. This was, however, excusable, as it had already been admitted, by every man of reflection, that this constitution could never insure the primary object of a good government ; I mean, public tranquillity.

The Girondists, persuaded that there was a conspiracy, among several foreign courts, against the French people, attempted to get at the secret by the appointment of a ministry of their own choice, who could

dive to the bottom of the intrigue and cause its failure.

But the ambition of governing was the real object of their manœuvres; and they felt the necessity of power to enable them to encounter the jacobins of Robespierre, who were becoming formidable.\*

M. de Lessart, the minister for foreign affairs, was an honest man, tolerably constitutional, but more attached to the old than the new *regime*. The Girondists wanted to get rid of him; and his correspondence with M. de Noailles, ambassador at Vienna, afforded them the opportunity. The diplomatic committee, having called for and obtained copies of this correspondence, were loud in their complaints. They accused M. de Noailles of having debased the dignity of France, by temporizing under the insulting hauteur of the prince of Kaunitz; and M. de Lessart, of sanctioning further degradation, and seeming to apologize for suffering the constitution to exist, instead of assuming a proper tone of dignity, and making a strong declaration in its favour.

M. de Lessart had received instructions from the diplomatic committee to demand a categorical explanation of certain expressions used by the prince of

\* This illustrates the dangerous consequences of political excesses. A party which has made itself feared, must obtain power for its own safety; and is thus reduced to conquer or perish.—*Note by Dumont.*

**Kaunitz.** The explanation was given, but did not prove satisfactory. It was a violent attack upon the jacobins, whose excesses were represented as degrading to the king's majesty, and setting a dangerous example to the rest of Europe. This answer, supposed to have been concerted between the king and M. de Lessart, increased the enemies of the ministers, and its ultimate effect was to raise the jacobin faction into notice and power.

Alarmed at the complaints of the diplomatic committee, M. de Lessart thought to lull the storm by resigning his office. But Brissot prepared an act of impeachment against him, upon which he was sent to Orleans for trial by the high national court.

I heard this act, containing seventeen or eighteen counts, read in the committee. When alone with Brissot and Claviere, I made some observations on the subject. I said the counts were many of them one and the same thing; others so vague that it was impossible to answer them; that they were generally artful, and calculated to excite undue prejudice and violent animosity against the accused; that some of them were contradictory; and that personal invective ought to be carefully avoided in a criminal accusation, &c. I have forgotten what else I said; but if, upon the whole, I was displeased with this document, I was indignant at Brissot's reply. Laughing at my simplicity, he said, in a tone of disgusting lev-

ity, "It is a necessary party manoeuvre. De Lessart must positively go to Orleans, otherwise the king, who is attached to him, would replace him in the administration. We must steal a march upon the jacobins, and this act of impeachment gives us the merit of having done that which they would themselves do. This is so much taken from them. I know that the counts are multiplied without necessity, but the object of this is to lengthen the proceedings. Garand de Coulon, who is at the head of the high national court, is a nice observer of legal forms; he will proceed methodically in the examination of each separate count, and six months will elapse before de Lessart will be able to get rid of the affair. I know that he will be acquitted, because there is no evidence against him; but we shall have gained our object by preventing his return to office." "Good God!" I exclaimed, confounded at such odious principles, "are you so deep in party machiavelism? Are you the man whom I once knew so decided an enemy to subterfuge? Is it Brissot who now persecutes an innocent man? . . ." "But," he replied, disconcerted, "you are not aware of our situation. De Lessart's administration would destroy us, and we must get rid of him at any price. It is only a temporary measure. I know Garand's integrity, and de Lessart will come to no harm. But we must save the country, and we cannot overcome the Austrian cabinet unless the min-



ister of foreign affairs be a man on whom we can depend. Nevertheless, I will attend to your observations, and strike out the terms of invective to which you so properly object."

From that time, Brissot fell in my estimation. I did not come to a rupture with him, but my friendship weakened with my esteem. I had formerly known him candid and generous; he was now insidious and persecuting. If he had any qualms of conscience—for Brissot was both a moral and a religious man—they were allayed by the pretended necessity of saving the state. It is in times of political faction that we see illustrations of the correctness of the ideas of Helvetius upon what constitutes virtue: Brissot was faithful to his party, but a traitor to integrity. He was excited by a feeling of enthusiasm for which he was ready to sacrifice his life; and because he felt neither avarice nor ambition of office, he fancied himself a pure and virtuous citizen. "Look at the extreme simplicity of my dwelling, and my table, worthy of a Spartan—inquire into my domestic life, and see if you can justly reproach me with dissipation or frivolity. For two years I have not been near a theatre!!!" Such was the ground of his confidence. He perceived not that party zeal, love of power, hatred, and self-love are quite as dangerous in corrupting the human heart, as the thirst of riches, the ambition of office or the love of pleasure.

De Lessart's impeachment produced all the effect which the Girondists desired. Their influence was brought to light. They were considered all-powerful, and they really became so. The king, terror-struck, threw himself into their arms. De Graves, as the oldest member of the council, although he had been a member of it but six days, was called upon to furnish the king with a list of names to complete the new council of administration; but he feared to act under any other influence than that of the party who could impeach ministers and send them, for trial, before the high national court. This party, therefore, had the nomination of the new councillors, and the first they appointed were Dumouriez, Claviere, Roland, Lacoste and Duranton.

I had become slightly acquainted with de Graves in London, and I, therefore, paid him a simple visit of politeness at the *Hotel de la Guerre*. He received me in the most cordial manner. "When we used to walk together in Kensington Gardens," said he, "neither you nor I ever supposed that I should, one day, be a minister. I consented to take office for the sole purpose of acquiring greater experience of public affairs and of men. I have no ambition, neither have I a thirst for power or riches; but I am determined to try what a modest and disinterested man can do, who has no other object in view than the public good." I found that, all things considered,

he dwelt at too great length, and with a little silliness, upon his philosophy and moderation ; but he was astonished at finding himself in such a sphere, and they, who well knew him, were equally so. No one was less qualified to take a part in a stormy administration. He was an honest man, and his heart was good ; he was a stranger to all party feeling, but was weak both in body and mind ; he was not deficient in acquirements and laboured hard ; but he wanted energy of character and a firm will of his own. Madame Roland, in her memoirs, treats him with the most unjust contempt. She could see nothing in him but a *bel-esprit* of the drawing-room, a fop in the shape of a minister ; his amenity, mildness, and good breeding were so many blemishes, at a period requiring a development of the greatest energies. Certain it is that he was out of his sphere, and his acceptance of office was a great error in judgment. After two months of hard labour, he became bewildered ; and that to such a degree, that in his signatures he forgot his own name, and not being aware of what he was doing, once signed himself *Mayor of Paris*. I had this fact from himself.

From my very first conversation with him, I regretted not being sufficiently intimate to advise his resignation. Accustomed to the manner of Mirabeau, I now found myself at the Antipodes. De Graves, having been brought into office by the Lameths,

knew not how to behave towards the Girondists. He was friendly to the former and afraid of the latter; and in listening to both parties, he tried to draw a diagonal between them. He suffered himself to be governed by Dumouriez, while the latter was in the ministry; and from Dumouriez's well known activity, which absorbed every thing, the most fortunate circumstance which could occur to him was to be taken in tow by that minister.

I must here mention one of those singular circumstances which often designate the secret causes of events. I was seriously consulted upon the choice of a war minister. Such a thing is ridiculous, but it is nevertheless true. The Girondists, having filled up the appointments in the council, looked upon de Graves with displeasure, because he had been brought into office by the Feuillans. Brissot and his friends, aware of my intimacy with Duchatelet, asked me, in sober earnest, whether I thought him capable of filling the office of minister of war; what opinion I had formed of his talents and principles, and how far I considered him trust-worthy. No confidence was placed in Condorcet's opinion on these points, because Duchatelet might be deemed almost a member of his family. I got off by affecting to treat the matter as a joke. I found de Graves too weak, Duchatelet too violent. And in truth, the confidence which the former had in me, and my friendship for the latter, would have placed me in an awkward predicament,

had I not averted it by the natural idea of laughing at Claviere and Brissot for consulting me on such a subject. I informed Duchatelet, however, that his name had been mentioned; but he begged that I would contrive to spare him the necessity of refusing the office, because he anticipated war, and was anxious to go into active service. With superior knowledge and talents, he did not yet feel himself qualified to be a minister, and he never would take an office unsuited to his abilities. How the Girondists could reconcile with delicacy the idea of placing, among the king's responsible advisers, a man who had signed the first proclamation in favour of a republic, is more than I can pretend to explain. When I was sure of Duchatelet's refusal, I ventured an observation upon this inconsistency.

I had flattered myself a moment with the hope of being able, through the Chevalier de Graves, to bring about a treaty of peace between the Feuillans and the Girondists. These parties mutually accused each other of a desire to overthrow the constitution, the former to establish two legislative chambers and the latter a republic. I became a species of mediator who could create no distrust; I carried messages from one party to the other, and endeavoured to bring about conferences between them; but my plan did not succeed, because the Girondists, fearful of the hostility of the jacobins, would not unite themselves with the opponents of the latter.

The Girondists, then masters of the cabinet, were pretty well disposed towards the king. I wrote a speech for Gensonne, which was a profession of faith on behalf of his party. This speech was much applauded in the committee. Its object was to profess attachment to the constitution, and point out the factions by which it was endangered. It was composed with sufficient art to prevent strong declarations in favour of royalty, and a vigorous denunciation of anarchy, from giving offence. Though Gensonne's cold and feeble manner was very different from that of Mirabeau, still he was listened to and applauded. The king was much pleased ; and indeed, this was the last monarchical speech made in the assembly. I was well satisfied at having got this public step taken by a party always suspected of republicanism. But it was like a drop of oil upon the tempestuous ocean.

This speech was strangely mutilated in the *Moniteur*. The conclusion of it had not been well received by the *parti de la Montagne*, and the assembly had not, therefore, decreed that it should be printed. The Girondists already began to fear that they had gone too far, and to repent of having made concessions to the cause of royalty. I used to attend Pétion's public dinners, at the *Mairie*, at which the Girondists were always in strong force. At these parties, the conversation was always pointed, like a

battery, against the court. The Coblentz conspiracy, that of the Austrian cabinet, and the treachery of the court were animadverted upon; and the *moderantism* of the Feuillans was considered much more heinous than the anarchial fury of the jacobins. Chabot, of whom Madame Roland relates a *trait* of fanaticism which she was credulous enough to believe sincere, used to put on his *bonnet-rouge*, and amuse the company by low buffoonery, in ridicule of the king. Many of the guests, whose names I forget, were disgustingly coarse and vulgar; and I was surprised at seeing Condorcet derive pleasure from a society so much beneath him. I know nothing, in a popular party, more annoying to a well-bred man, than being obliged to associate with low and ill-mannered persons. Such, however, was the commencement of those disgusting manners and that *sans-culotism*, by which France was so degraded. Politeness and decorum of behaviour were aristocratical distinctions, necessary to be trodden under foot, in order to attain to equality with the rabble.\*

\* Four journals appeared, at that period, against the court, and their success was precisely in an inverse ratio to their merit. The *Chronique de Paris*, by Condorcet, written with much art, with traits of covered malice and veiled satire, was scarcely known except at Paris and in foreign countries. Brissot's *Patriote*, open and violent, but pure in style, circulated more in the *Cafes* and in the provinces. *Les An-*

The leaders of the Girondists were persons of a different description. Vergniaud was an indolent man, who spoke little, and required to be stimulated; but when excited, his eloquence was true, forcible, penetrating, and sincere. Guadet, who had more vivacity, wit, and smoothness, was eloquent and ingenious; always ready to appear in the tribune and face his opponents. Brissot was always writing, running about, getting up meetings, and putting his machinery in motion; but he had not the gift of oratory. He was deficient in dignity, ease, expression and presence of mind. Gensonne was of a mild and easy temper. The eloquence of Buzot was penetrating and persuasive. De Sers, who was unknown to the public, but had great influence in their committees, was sensible, moderate, and of amiable temper. He often made them revoke precipitate resolutions, and was the only one who could keep Brissot in order. Rœderer was a man

*nales Patriotiques*, by Mercier and Cara, obtained great vogue, from its meanly vulgar style, and was read aloud for the edification of all the affiliated clubs. But the *Pere Duchesne*, who dishonoured literature by the most obscene and infamous style, was the delight of the multitude. Such was the auction of popularity. It is right to show those who embrace this career, that the prize is always won by the most impudent. Condorcet, from his superiority of talent, was a mere subaltern of the *Pere Duchesne*.—  
*Note by Dumont.*



of intellect, but extremely ignorant. He was so inconsiderate and thoughtless, that he could never raise himself above a subordinate part, although, in capacity, he was superior to the whole of his party.

Condorcet never spoke in the tribune, and very little in conversation. He was nick-named the mad ram. He was not a party leader; for although his name gave great weight to the party, he appeared to me nothing more than a simple approver or defender of their measures. His *Chronique de Paris* was a well written paper. The court had no greater enemy than he; and his attacks were the more dangerous, because they were carried on in a tone of refinement, decorum, and calmness, which made a much stronger impression than the violent insults of Brissot and the jacobins. Champfort was brilliant and sarcastic, and his caustic bon-mots were in general circulation. His dread of the conspirators at the Tuileries, prevented him from sleeping. He always fancied himself upon a mine of gunpowder about to explode. Sieyes had generally the same fears; and during his dreams, saw his head rolling upon the ground.

All, from a sentiment of fear, were working in conjunction, at the overthrow of the monarchy; they wanted to get rid of a phantom, which kept them in a constant agony of alarm. However we may ridicule these imaginary terrors, they certainly brought

about the second revolution. The minds of men were not in their right tone; and if jealousy imparts an air of reality, to the most imperfect appearances, and finds evidence in mere suspicion,—party spirit has a similiar action upon the mind, and, like a fever which inflames the brain, and presents livid spectres and deformed monsters to the imagination, it creates sinister and appalling visions.

## CHAPTER XX.

I WAS taken to Roland's. This personage was simple in his manners, grave in his conversation, and somewhat pedantic about virtue. But such kind of moral ostentation, so strongly ridiculed in Necker, does not displease me in a public man. Not that I admire an individual who seems amazed at his own probity, and, like the Doge of Genoa, is in astonishment at finding himself existing in an age of corruption, but a minister who lays a degree of stress upon morality, seems to me calculated to brace up the relaxed morals of society. Such affectation does not indeed sit well upon every one, but many who appear to turn it into ridicule hold it secretly in dread.

To a very beautiful person, Madame Roland united great powers of intellect; her reputation stood very high, and her friends never spoke of her but with the most profound respect. In character she was a Cornelia, and had she been blessed with sons, would have educated them like the Gracchi. At

her house I saw several committees composed of ministers, and of the leading Girondists. A female appeared rather out of place at such meetings; but she took no part in the discussions. She was generally at her desk writing letters, and seemed not to notice what was going on,—of which, however, she did not lose a word. The simplicity of her dress did not detract from her natural grace and elegance, and though her pursuits were more adapted to the other sex, she adorned them with all the charms of her own. I reproach myself with not having personally known all her good qualities; but I had imbibed a prejudice against female politicians; and I found in her, besides, too much of that tendency to mistrust resulting from ignorance of the world.

Claviere and Roland, after seeing the king at the council, had abandoned their prejudices, and gave him credit for sincerity; but Madame Roland did not cease warning them against the illusions of the court; because she could not believe in the good faith of a prince educated with an opinion that he was superior to other men. She maintained that both were dupes, and the most satisfactory assurances were, in her judgment, only snares. Servan, who had a sombre temper, and the most splenetic pride, appeared to her energetic and incorruptible; she mistook his passions for elevation of mind, and his hatred of the court for republican virtue. Louvet,

who had the same prejudices, became her hero. He possessed, it is true, wit, courage, and vivacity ; but I am at a loss to conceive how a virtuous woman could ever mistake the libertine author of *Faublas* for a severe republican. Madame Roland overlooked every fault in those who declaimed against courtiers, and believed that virtue was confined to hovels. She exalted very mediocre personages, such as Lantenas and Pache, merely because they professed the same opinion. I confess that, in my estimation, all this was any thing but attractive ; and it prevented me from cultivating an intimacy which I should have sought with eagerness, had I then known her as well as I did after her death. Her personal memoirs are admirable. They are an imitation of Rousseau's *Confessions*, and often not unworthy of the original. She exposes her innermost thoughts, and describes herself with a power and truth not to be found in any other work of the same description. A more extensive knowledge of the world was wanting to her intellectual development, and, perhaps, a more intimate acquaintance with men of sounder judgment than her own. None of those who visited her were raised above vulgar prejudices ; and this encouraged her in a disbelief of the possibility of an alliance between monarchy and freedom. She looked upon a king with the same horror as Mrs Macauley, whom she considered as a being superior to her sex. Had

Madame Roland been able to communicate to her party her own intrepidity and energy of mind, royalty would have been overthrown, but the jacobins would not have triumphed.

Madame Roland's style was forcible and flowing, but she was too fond of writing, and was constantly urging her husband to do the same. Roland was the minister of writers. I have often fancied that factions who pamphletize much, generally weaken themselves in public estimation. Among such a multitude of writers, many are found who harass and irritate their opponents without serving their own cause; and in such paper warfare, the party leaders acquire a habit of talking instead of acting, of discussing measures when they ought to be carrying them into execution, and of sacrificing at the altar of vulgar error, when they ought to soar above prejudice. Besides, they who write to cultivate the opinion of the moment, give themselves a very capricious master. One good journal would have done more real service to the Girondists, than the host of scribblers paid by the minister of the interior to enlighten, as he said, the nation and fix public opinion.

The greatest reproach that can with justice be attached to Madame Roland, is, that she induced her husband to publish his confidential letter to the king, beginning thus: "Sir, the contents of this letter shall never be known but to you and me."—On his

dismissal from the ministry, he could not resist the pleasure of a disguised revenge, and he published his letter, containing prophetic menaces, without reflecting, perhaps, that these very menaces were likely to bring about a realization of his predictions, and that by pointing out publicly to the king all he had to fear from the people, he was suggesting to the latter what they ought to do against the king.

Claviere was appointed minister of public contributions,\* and I had the pleasure of seeing him at length attain to that point of elevation he had so long coveted, and for which he had struggled with such stubborn ambition. He was now at the summit of his wishes. During ten long years he had toiled to force his way into the government of France; for he had all his life felt an instinctive anticipation of one day becoming a minister of state. When M. Necker was called to the ministry, Claviere, then a merchant at Geneva, could not help betraying the secret ambition of his heart to some of his intimate friends. In 1780, he went with Duroverai to Paris, about the affairs of the representatives. Passing, one day, the hotel of the minister of finance, "My heart tells me," said he, "that I shall inhabit that hotel some day or other." He laughed himself at a prophecy so unlikely ever to

\* The same as minister of finance.

be realized, and Duroverai thought him a little deranged in intellect. Exiled by the king of France from the republic of Geneva, he went to Ireland with a view of establishing a Genevese colony there; but having failed, he settled at Paris. Now, there was very little probability that an individual, driven from his native country by the French ministry, should ever become a member of that ministry;—but men of ardent minds perceive means of success in those things which, to others, would seem impossibilities. Claviere could write upon all financial questions, and was the author of almost all Mirabeau's works on finance. The confusion and disorder in this branch of the administration showed him, in the distant horizon, an obscure perspective of calamity, which might, at no very distant period, render his services acceptable. His active imagination had already given birth to a grand project for America. It consisted in forming a company to purchase a large tract of land, and found a colony upon the most liberal principles. Brissot went and surveyed the country; and this voyage, of which he published a relation, by no means damped his ardour for liberty under republican forms. On his return, he found France in a state to induce him to renounce this project; for she seemed about to receive that freedom which he and Claviere had intended to seek on the other side of the Atlantic.



When the states-general were on the eve of assembling, Claviere published his work on keeping faith with the public creditor, which made him very popular with the holders of public stock. During the session of the national assembly, he connected himself with Mirabeau, whose influence he foresaw would be very great, and through whom he hoped to overthrow and succeed M. Necker. But he had made himself many enemies among the stock-jobbers and the directors of the *caisse d'escompte*. He was the inventor of assignats, and published on this subject so great a number of pamphlets, that they would form several volumes. Necker did not fall from his high eminence, but slid, as it were, down a rapid slope; and his departure was as clandestine as his return to office had been triumphant. But Mirabeau's power was not sufficient to create a minister, and Claviere remained in the crowd. It was Brissot—that Brissot whom Mirabeau had so much contemned—who raised his friend to the ministry. The king, who knew Claviere's history, and was conscious of having driven him from his country, could not at first see him without distrust. He did not, however, show this feeling, and for some time treated Claviere with very little attention; but this coldness wore off by degrees, and at length he seemed to transact business with his new minister, not only without repugnance but with pleasure.

At Geneva, Claviere had been one of the leaders of the popular party. Shrewd and penetrating, he obtained the credit of being also cunning and artful. He was a man of superior intellect. Deaf from his youth, and deprived, by this infirmity, of the pleasures of society, he had sought a compensation in study, and formed his education by associating politics and moral philosophy with trade. He was of a timid character and devoid of personal courage, and yet he found himself, all his life, in situations requiring physical intrepidity. It seemed as if his mind and constitution did not act in conjunction, for he always attacked arbitrary power, though he trembled at the danger which he thereby incurred. To him might be applied what Madame de Flahault said of Sieyès: that he was the most enterprising coward in the world. He was fond of being placed in difficult and uneasy situations, and yet was terrified at the consequences. He used to say, that if political disputes in a free state did harm, they did still more good, because they placed every one in a situation much more agreeable than the insipidity of repose. He could, when he chose, praise even anarchy, and find ingenious sophisms to defend it. His activity was prodigious. He rose in the middle of the night, wrote fifty pages, took an hour's repose, then followed his private affairs. His style was too diffuse; it denoted a want of literature and elementary education.

In spite of his republicanism, he was fond of luxury and display; and there was a singular contrast between his love of splendour and the severity of his principles; but he never satisfied this taste for sumptuous living at the expense of probity, and in money matters he was always irreproachable. His elevation to the ministry had an effect upon him which shows that his mind was cast in no common mould—he became more modest and affable, although he had never been haughty or presumptuous. His new dignity was perceptible only by an increase of simplicity and kindness; and in this he was very different from Brissot, whose attainment of the great influence he enjoyed, had turned his brain, and he no longer spoke but in oracles, and could not bear contradiction.

Claviere found his offices in excellent order. They had been formed on the new plan, and with the greatest care and trouble, by his predecessor, Tarbe, upon whom he bestowed such encomiums as almost seemed to hold him up to public regret. This is not the characteristic of a vulgar mind.\*

He possessed all the domestic virtues, and his intercourse with his friends became more easy and plea-

\* Claviere, seeing the immense expense of the services of the nobles, who were paid according to their rank and not their office, observed, "This is like getting potatoes cultivated by a Dutch florist instead of a common gardener."—*Note by Dumont.*

sant when he had arrived at the height of his ambition.

He was naturally of a warm temper, and not free from a species of bluntness; but this was entirely constitutional, and did not originate in pride. It was like the anger of a child, soon appeased and forgotten.

He was of opinion, after he became a member of the cabinet, and had opportunities of judging, that the king's intentions were pure, and he did not hesitate to say so. I have heard many disputes upon this point, and I recollect one in particular, which took place at Roland's in the presence of several Girondist deputies. Claviere was relating that the king had convicted him of being unacquainted with a particular clause in the constitution; that he had pulled out his book from his pocket, and said with a smile as he showed Claviere the passage, "There, M. Claviere, you see I am better acquainted with it than you." As Claviere continued to speak in praise of the king, Brissot became angry, and having begun with sarcasms soon came to imputations. A very angry discussion took place, and I once feared that it would end in a rupture. Claviere appealed to Roland, who was afraid either to confirm or contradict what he said. He feared, should he dare to be just towards the king, whose minister he was, to pass for a weak man who had suffered himself to be seduced. I approached Madame Roland, who was at her desk

and pretended to be writing. She was pale and trembling with agitation. I urged her to come forward and put an end to the quarrel. "Do you think I ought?" said she, hesitating; and then with much address and suavity of manner, she managed to change the conversation, and prolong it sufficiently to give the two friends time to become calm.

Madame Claviere would fain have become a second Madame Roland, but she possessed only in vanity that which Madame Roland had in talent and courage. In her I saw one of the miracles of royal power. When her husband was appointed to the ministry, she was in a dying state; a nervous fever left scarcely any hopes of saving her life;—but the physician said, "I can now answer for her cure, and in four days, you shall see her leave her bed to show off at the hotel of public contributions." This prediction was verified, and the joy and novelty of her situation operated with better effect than all the remedies that medical skill could devise.

Characters are easily drawn when you have to satisfy your readers only; but to the writer who submits them to the test of his own recollections, and is anxious to give a faithful account of the persons whom he best knew, nothing is more difficult. The human heart is such a medley of good and evil, motives are so hidden, and each individual so complicated, that there is always something incommunicable. A certain portion must escape observation; every

thing cannot be given an account of, and it is impossible to transmit the whole of what is felt.

I have now only general recollections; facts, speeches, anecdotes—a thousand singular details of this stormy period have gone from my memory. Had I kept a journal of this sojourn at Paris, placed as I was in the midst of a political party, and intimate with all the ministers, I should now have materials for an interesting work. I seldom went to the legislative assembly, whose members were more incoherent and prejudiced than those of the constituent assembly. There was no Mirabeau; but each party had distinguished speakers. Amongst the Girondists, Guadet was noticed for his talent of seizing a favourable opportunity, and his powers of sophistry; Gensonne for his acuteness and subtlety; Vergniaud, who appeared only on grand occasions, was roused from his habitual indolence, by the impassioned workings of his scorching and terrible eloquence.\*

\* The Girondists may be considered in two points of view. As avowed enemies of the king and constitution, they incurred the most merited reproaches; as enemies of Robespierre and the jacobins, their loss must be deplored, and their destruction involved France in the most dreadful misfortunes. As subjects of a monarchy they were highly criminal; as republicans they had honourable qualities; and if the historian blames their conduct prior to the 10th of August, he will comparatively esteem them after that period, and deplore both their elevation and their fall.—*Note by Dumont.*

## CHAPTER XXI.

I HAVE reserved for this chapter, the most important point, the only one indeed belonging to history ; I mean the declaration of war against Austria.

The memoirs of Dumouriez upon his own administration are generally very correct, and yet there are reticences in them. I much regret, on this account, not having kept notes.

Brissot had long been desirous of a rupture with Austria. His *Cabinet Autrichien* excited his imagination, and open hostility appeared to him preferable to that state of obscurity and intrigue which then existed. The court of Vienna scarcely condescended any longer to give pretences to its manœuvres, and yet was not determined to go to war. I am persuaded that a display of firmness, moderation and decorum with that court, would have averted the storm. The constitution was yet a species of *unknown*, a new being which created alarm ; tact and address were required to make it respected and insure its

pardon for the crime of innovation; but unfortunately it was always made formidable, and the violence of the jacobins rendered it odious. Had the Girondists shown themselves desirous of conciliating the good will of the king, they would have disarmed the whole of Europe, rendered the emigrants ridiculous, and maintained the peace of the country. There was so little unison between the other powers, and so little disposed were they to act in conjunction, that with some slight diplomatic manœuvring France would have had nothing to fear. Such was the opinion of the moderate party, and I am convinced they were right.

Brissot and Dumouriez thought otherwise. The former was so violent that I once heard him propose to disguise a body of French soldiers as Austrians and make them attack some French villages during the night; and that on receiving intelligence of this attack, a motion should be made in the legislative assembly and the question of war carried by a decree of *enthusiasm*. Had I not heard him make this proposal, I should not have believed it. Dumouriez was a less impetuous and more able statesman. He also wished for war; but he found in the conduct of Austria herself, a sufficient justification of hostilities, and an imprudent answer from the court of Vienna put into his hands a reasonable pretence for their commencement. I can affirm that his colleagues were



not of the same opinion. One day they had dined at the hotel of the war minister, and impatient of knowing their determination, I went there at six o'clock in the evening. Dumouriez was gone, but the table was covered with maps of the Netherlands. He had explained to them his plan of campaign. They looked serious and embarrassed. De Graves had a personal dread of the responsibility, and Roland and Claviere were neither of them warriors. The former gave the preference to negotiations which brought with them no risk ; the latter, who knew the state of the finances, was aware that they had neither money nor credit, that the taxes and imposts were considerably in arrears and their collection difficult. Brissot was radiant with joy, and said that war alone, by showing who were the friends and who the enemies of the constitution, could place liberty on a sure foundation and detect the perfidy of the court. De Graves anticipated danger from the army ; he feared the desertion of the superior officers, for the most of the military men of any talent had already emigrated. Neither, however, dared oppose Dumouriez, who by the ascendancy of his energetic mind, obtained all he wished. He saw abundant resources for carrying on the war, and represented, in the strongest light, the necessity of counteracting the plans of the House of Austria and other sovereigns of Europe, before they had time to concert the means of carrying them into

execution. Both parties in the council were equally active. I remember that in reply to the objection of the superior officers deserting, Duchatelet said that if so, they would be replaced by the subalterns, who were much better qualified. "There is the same difference between them," he said, "as between amateurs and artists; and if all the old officers left us, we should only derive benefit from it. There would be more emulation in the army, and we should find generals among our private soldiers."

From dining often at Claviere's, Roland's and De Graves's, where I had met Dumouriez, I had become intimate with him. These dinner parties were enlivened by that gay and brilliant wit, which the French, when assembled in convivial intercourse, retain even under the most difficult circumstances, and which was natural to men satisfied with themselves and flattered by their elevation to the highest offices in the state. The present hid the future from their sight; the cares of office were for a short time forgotten, and each was settled in his hotel as if he were destined to occupy it for ever. Madame Roland, in allusion to the magnificence of the apartments, observed, that in her eyes it was only the splendour of a public inn. Louvet and Dumouriez, by their wit, conversation, and talents, were the life and delight of these parties. I remember, one day, Dumouriez was giving an account of some deeds of

gallantry of which he was himself the hero, when Claviere said to him archly, "Take care what you say, general, you are making Baptiste smile." Baptiste was the *valet-de-chambre* whom Dumouriez has rendered so famous by the mention he makes of him in his memoirs. The general relished a joke and made himself very merry at the austerity of his colleagues. His vivacity was sometimes nearly allied to levity, and his age and office required a somewhat more serious turn. He found himself connected with pedants, and soon became disgusted with their republican morality. No confidence ever existed between him and his colleagues, but he managed to avoid discussion, and a smart repartee often put an end to, or prevented disputes. He had ready wit, a piercing look, and prompt decision. Whilst he was minister, his *bon-mots* were circulated and quoted. He heard all that was said in company; and guessed that which he did not hear; by which means he contrived to make his presence entertaining to the king, whilst that of his heavy colleagues was tedious and disgusting. But amid his jests and merry conceits in the council, he steadily pursued his plan and acquired a decided ascendancy.

One day he begged I would breakfast with him. He wanted to read over with me that famous report to the king in council, in which he set forth the wrongs of Austria towards France. This produc-

tion, which he had dictated to his secretary in great haste and amid constant interruption, was very incorrect in style, and he wished me, on that account, to go over it with him. In his frequent digressions, I perceived his enmity to the prince of Kaunitz, the pleasure he would derive from humiliating him, and his antipathy to the Austrian alliance. "Now," said he, after we had done reading the report, "the service I want you to do for me, is to write a speech for the king, for I am not an adept in the style of dignity and moderation." "Very willingly," I replied, "if the conclusion be not in favour of war; that is to say, if your object be simply to make the assembly authorize the king to declare war in the event of his being unable to obtain full satisfaction from the emperor."—"The conclusion," said Dumouriez, "can be settled only in the council. In the meantime, write the speech, point out the reasons of complaint we have against Austria, and we will then see about the rest." I mentioned the circumstance to Duroverai; the speech was written and a conclusion added to it, of which I have not kept a copy, but the substance of which was that the king, after exhibiting reasonable grounds of complaint, demanded the sanction of the assembly to declare war against the king of Bohemia and Hungary, unless the latter put an immediate stop to the assembling of large bodies of French emigrants with-

in his territories, and gave satisfactory explanations relative to certain official notes, &c. When I next saw Dumouriez, he informed me that the council had determined upon, not a conditional, but a positive and immediate war, and that the low countries were to be attacked before they could be put in a state of defence; that the speech I had written for the king had been read to him in council, but he had found it too long, and had composed one himself much more in unison with the result of their deliberation.

It is known how the legislative assembly, after having prudently deferred their decision in order to take time to consider so serious a proposal as the declaration of war, on a sudden, at a single evening sitting, and after only two or three deputies had spoken, voted a decree which plunged France and Europe into a gulf of misery.

It may be said that Brissot and Dumouriez were merely the organs of the national will, as there were only seven or eight votes against war; but it appeared to me very certain at the time, that if they had adopted the opinion in favour of delay, they would have been supported by an absolute unanimity. People's minds were floating in uncertainty; and the opinion of every one was influenced by the decision of the council. I heard influential men, who, the day before, trembled at the idea of war,

declare it to be absolutely necessary. Condorcet disapproved of it, yet he voted for it; so did Claviere, and Roland, and de Graves and many others under the same feelings. The inconsistency between opinion and action, which so often occurs when a government decides, or when the leaders of a party have taken their determination, is inconceivable to those who have not closely studied the workings of popular passions.

But in making this recital, I had forgotten my fellow-travellers, to whom it is now time to return. Duroverai fell ill a few days after our arrival, and was confined to his room for nearly a month. M. de Talleyrand had resumed his former mode of life and I saw him but seldom. After Dumouriez had obtained the portfolio of foreign affairs, the Girondists pressed him to appoint an embassy to England and to select, as ambassador, a man who would inspire confidence; for it was expedient, by strengthening those ties of amity which had been somewhat relaxed by the events of the revolution, to prevent Great Britain from taking part in a continental war. Talleyrand appeared the man best qualified for the mission. It is true that the Girondists were prejudiced against him, but—and this was a full compensation—he was quite out of favour at court. Unfortunately the law did not allow of his accepting an appointment from the king, and this proved an

obstacle which there was some difficulty in overcoming. At length an expedient was hit upon; which was to appoint an ambassador who would be satisfied with the honour of the title and consent to be governed by Talleyrand. Chauvelin, who was very young and had plunged into the revolution with all the ardour of a boy, was proposed by Sieyes. The appointment was so far above his expectations that he immediately assented. The Girondists by an excess of precaution, wanted to get Duroverai appointed counsellor of legation, but there were difficulties which prevented the title from being conferred upon him. He had the advantage of being well acquainted with England, its customs and language, and such a choice must naturally prove agreeable to the English government, because Duroverai, naturalized in Ireland and in the receipt of a pension from the Irish government, might be considered as more attached to Great Britain by a permanent interest than to France by a precarious public appointment; and it would seem evident that he had accepted such appointment in the French legation, only in the persuasion that the mission was essentially of a pacific nature, and that its sole object was to strengthen the ties of friendship between the two nations.

It was this naturalization and this Irish pension which formed the obstacle against Duroverai's obtaining the title of counsellor of legation. The diffi-

culty was insurmountable and they were obliged to give him the office without the title. Talleyrand, who had already been able to appreciate the benefit of his counsels, ardently desired to have him as a coadjutor. In order that he might be accredited, at least indirectly, his name was mentioned in a letter to Lord Grenville, as well as in the *instructions* given to Chauvelin. All these arrangements occasioned much delay; and the slowness with which the embassy to England seemed to be formed, led to complaints out of doors. When at length all appeared terminated, a scruple of self-love seized upon Chauvelin. He perceived that a great title was conferred upon him, but that he was deprived of the real power; and he found himself just like a young man sent to a foreign court under the care of a couple of tutors. Such a thing appeared to him so humiliating that he refused to go. Talleyrand exhausted all his powers of persuasion in vain, but Duroverai was more successful. He opposed self-love to self-love. He represented to Chauvelin, that by such an appointment at his age, he was already raised to the highest diplomatic rank, to which, in the ordinary course of events, he certainly would not have attained for many years. In the midst of these delays, Dumouriez, who began to be out of patience, sent for me. "I do not understand," said he, "the conduct of your friends. The members of the embassy have



been appointed this fortnight past, and they do not yet think of going. M. de Talleyrand is amusing himself—M. Chauvelin is sulky—and M. Duroverai is driving a bargain. Do me the favour to tell them that if by to-morrow evening they are not on the road to England, another embassy shall be appointed and shall start the day after before noon. This is my *ultimatum*." I immediately ran to find the parties, and as they were somewhat dispersed, it was several hours before I could bring them together. They all knew that Dumouriez would keep his word; for he had a relative whom he was desirous of appointing to the English embassy, their nomination having been a mere friendly concession to Claviere and the Girondist party. These circumstances had their due weight, and the time of departure was definitively fixed.

Two days after, at four o'clock in the morning, the whole legation left Paris in two carriages. Besides the persons already named, we had Garat and Reinhart. We alternately changed carriages, and had thus the pleasure of giving variety to our journey, which passed very gaily. Chauvelin was very entertaining when his self-love was not in play. What a number of curious anecdotes did I hear, and how valuable would they have been, if I had taken the precaution of collecting them in writing! I thought only of enjoying the pleasant company I was in, the

fine weather and the conversation of Garat, in whom I found more candour, and true simplicity, and kindness of heart than I had expected from one who had spent his whole life in the very furnace of literary *bel-esprit*, which is, in general, so unfavourable to the qualities of the heart. Literature, so neglected at Paris for two or three years past, and so foreign to the taste of the society of that period, often formed the subject of our conversations. Garat was not a man of deep learning, but brilliant and amiable. He ~~narrated~~ narrated beautifully; and he now felt gay and happy, after having been so long and so closely confined to his literary labours at Paris, amid the lamentable scenes of the revolution. The delight of leisure and fresh air, together with the expectation of seeing that England which he did not know, but admired by anticipation, imparted an elastic and delightful brilliancy to his imagination. "He is a schoolboy going home for the holidays," said M. de Talleyrand. On our arrival at Dover, Garat got upon the coach-box, and I followed his example. Having adjusted his spectacles, he began to examine every thing with as eager a curiosity as if we had just arrived in the moon. The most trifling differences affected him to a singular degree. He uttered the most amusing exclamations on the small cottages, the little gardens, the cleanliness which every where existed, the beauty of the children, the modest appearance of the

country girls, and the clean and decent apparel of the inhabitants of the country villages; in a word, this appearance of ease and prosperity, which formed so strong a contrast with the poverty and rags of the peasants of Picardy, struck him forcibly. I was proud of doing the honours of the country, and I thought I was again looking at these things for the first time, so greatly did my seeing him admire them increase their impression upon me. "Ah! what a pity," said he, "what a pity, if ever this fine country should be revolutionized! When will France be as happy as England?" His enthusiasm was fed with every thing and increased spontaneously; but it was that kind of enthusiasm which evaporates in words and does not become concentrated.

Although I often saw Garat during his residence in England, and we lived on very familiar terms in our circle at the embassy, I never contracted any particular intimacy with him. There was something in our characters which prevented them from harmonizing with each other. He seemed to me a kind, easy, amiable man, full of good and philanthropic intentions. I sought him out for the pleasure of his conversation, and thought no more of him when he was gone. He amused but did not interest me. He had planned a history of the revolution, and he meditated upon this event solely as regarded the manner of relating it in his book. "What think

you Garat sees in the revolution of the 10th of August?" said M. de Talleyrand to me; "only a fine page for his history." When he became an actor in the scenes of the revolution, and played the part of minister of justice, in which he incurred such general censure, I am convinced that his heart bled at the evils with which he had associated himself. He wanted courage,—was weak and vain; and he was rash enough to undertake an office beyond his strength, which act of imprudence and vanity he was punished by the remorse of his whole life. If there be men who are detested for the ill they commit, there are others who ought to be pitied for the evil to which they lend themselves. What he can never justify, is his defence of the massacres of the 2nd of September, and no thoughtlessness or levity of character can palliate such an act of weakness. It was then thought that the sanguinary monsters would be softened by making them appear less ferocious than they really were; that absolution for the past conferred a right to give them lessons in humanity for the future. It was like saying to them, "give not way to the despair of ferocity. We are disposed to believe you innocent, in order that you may not be led to commit new crimes!"

If between Garat and me there existed no tendency to friendship, this was not the case with Gallois, who had accompanied M. de Talleyrand in his

first visit to London, and remained there during our excursion to Paris. The most intimate confidence was established between us, and we sought each other's society for the sole pleasure of being together. Gallois is the least accessible to vanity of any literary Frenchman I ever knew. He loves study for his own enjoyment, and not as a means of making a figure. He considers legislation and political economy as sciences which ought to be cultivated for the happiness of mankind, and has never appeared to look upon them as a road to fortune or fame. At least, fortune and fame are with him but secondary objects—mere quiet accessories which do not excite the passions. With an affectionate heart, and much mildness and elegance of manners, he is a man of strong mind and correct conduct. He says little in a numerous company, but becomes animated in a small circle of friends. I had made him acquainted with all my particular friends, who became his, and preserved the same feelings towards him after he had left England. Though he had taken no pains to make acquaintances, he had gained the esteem of many. I afterwards found him the self same being at Paris, wise for himself and irreproachable for the whole world, after he had safely weathered the storm of the revolution.

This embassy, whose sole object was to obtain a settled and permanent peace with England, was very

coldly received by the court, and almost with insult by the public. Chauvelin was libelled in several papers and accused of having worn the disguise of a *poissarde* in the famous affair at Versailles of the 6th of October. A circumstance which, at first, did him a great deal of harm, was the ill-judged zeal of Perry of the Morning Chronicle, who thought he was doing the French embassy a service by pompously enumerating the individuals of whom it was composed.

He saw, in the selection of its members, an extraordinary mark of attention on the part of the French government. First there was M. Chauvelin, then M. de Talleyrand, then M. Duroverai, next M. Garat a distinguished man of letters, M. Gallois, remarkable for talents and knowledge, M. Reynhart secretary of legation, and M. de Talleyrand's grand-vicar; and all these distinguished individuals formed a legation of writers and literary men such as was never before seen. The simple truth is, that M. de Talleyrand, fond of the society of men of talent, had contrived to get two or three to accompany him to England; and in procuring the appointments of Garat and Gallois, he had thought only of himself, and had no public object in view. But the number and talents of the persons whose nomination Perry mentioned as a compliment paid to England, raised the suspicion and mistrust of a great portion of the pub-

lic. It was imagined that the real object of all this was the propagation of revolutionary systems and opinions, and the members of this embassy were looked upon as missionaries come to make converts. Chauvelin had soon occasion to perceive the coolness of the court. One day, Pitt placed himself between the king and the French ambassador, and turned his back upon the latter in the most pointed manner. Chauvelin, annoyed at this, moved so as to turn wilfully upon Pitt's toes, and pressed so hard as to force the English minister to draw further back. Romilly, on being consulted about the numerous injurious paragraphs which appeared in the ministerial journals under all the forms which malignity could invent when they, who direct the politics of the paper, point out some object to hunt down and persecute, gave them the draft of a strong denial of every calumnious accusation, with a challenge to prove any of the revolutionary acts or intentions imputed to them, and a threat to prosecute the authors of the libels. But Lord L . . . . advised them to despise these attacks, which would only be consolidated and rendered of more importance by answering them. One imprudence which they committed, was to meet the advances of the opposition. They visited Mr Fox and Mr Sheridan, soon saw no other society than these eminent men and their friends, and this proved

a bar of separation between them and the ministerial party.

'I remember that, soon after their arrival in London, during the fine weather, when Ranelagh was in high fashion and much frequented, I dined one day at Chauvelin's, when it was proposed to finish the evening at this place of fashionable resort. It is a large round hall surrounded with open closets, like the boxes of a theatre, with an orchestra in the centre. The company walk all round, and enter the closets or boxes for refreshments. On our arrival, a buzz of voices repeated, "there is the French embassy." Looks of curiosity, certainly not of a benevolent kind, were directed from all sides upon our battalion, consisting of eight or ten individuals; and we soon found that we should have the place entirely to ourselves, for all withdrew on our approach, as if they feared contagion even in the atmosphere which surrounded us. Our battalion became the more remarkable because it stood in a vacuum which it increased as it moved forward. One or two bold individuals came and spoke to M. Chauvelin and M. de Talleyrand. A moment after, we saw a man shunned from another cause; this was the Duke of Orleans, whom every one seemed to avoid with the most sedulous care. Annoyed and disgusted at being the object of this unpleasant attention, we separated



for a short time, and I got into the crowd, where I heard several persons giving, in their own way, an account of this French embassy. We withdrew shortly after, M. de Talleyrand no way moved at what had occurred, but M. Chauvelin much affected.

## CHAPTER XXII.

It is not my intention to give an account of the diplomatic occurrences connected with M. Chauvelin's mission. All that I know concerning them is the result of confidential communication; and were I even base enough to betray such confidence, I should find it difficult to give a connected narrative. But I can positively state that the nature of the mission was wholly pacific; its object was to draw the ties of amity closer betwixt the two nations. Such were the instructions given to the members of the embassy, and great injustice was done to the latter in imputing to them secret views and base intrigues with the malcontents. I lived so constantly with Duroverai, dined so often with M. de Talleyrand and M. Chauvelin, and was so confidentially intimate with both, that nothing could have been done without my perceiving it, and I have the most positive certainty that nothing which could give the least ground of alarm was going on in secret. The embassy were much

alarmed at the reserve of the English ministers and the formal coldness of the cabinet. All that my memory has retained of this period is the recollection of a delightful society, some very pleasant dinner parties, and the happiness of finding myself in France and England at the same time—that is to say, enjoying alternately a select party of either nation.

Garat was not entirely idle in England; he wrote a refutation of a manifesto against France by the government of the Low Countries. In this work of Garat's, the French revolution was justified and the violence by which it was attended lamented as a deplorable misfortune.

In France, meanwhile, the animosity of the different factions against the court became more virulent every day; the Girondists made their attacks insidiously, the Jacobins by open force. The first events of the war with Austria were unfortunate, and this was imputed to the treachery of the executive power. On the 13th of June, Roland, Claviere and Servan were dismissed from office; on the 20th, the invasion of the Tuileries took place, and the king was threatened and insulted in his palace; and twenty days after, namely, on the 10th of August, this same palace was stormed by the *Marseillais*.

The invasion of the 10th of August was another of those striking occasions on which the king, by suddenly changing his character and assuming firm-

ness, might have recovered his throne. The mass of the French people were weary of the excesses of the Jacobins, and the outrage of the 20th of June roused the general indignation. Had he acted with vigour, used force against force, and then taken advantage of the first moments of the victory he must have gained, to treat the Jacobins and Girondists as enemies—for they having, in a thousand instances, violated the constitution, could no longer have appealed to it in their defence;—had he ordered the clubs of the Jacobins and Cordeliers to be shut up, dissolved the assembly, and seized upon the factious, that day had restored his authority. But this weak prince, unmindful that the safety of his kingdom depended upon the preservation of his own authority, chose rather to expose himself to certain death than give orders for his defence.

When this event took place, M. de Talleyrand was at Paris. He had quitted London some weeks previous, and had asked me to accompany him; but this time I was prudent enough to decline a journey which, being without a personal object, would have given me the appearance of dabbling in politics and state intrigue; for I was so well known that I could no longer indulge in my curiosity and roving propensities without giving rise to such inferences. I had good reason to congratulate myself upon this act of prudence, when, in my peaceful abode, I reflected

upon the horrors in the midst of which I should have found myself, and the unfavourable surmises to which my conduct might have led, among my friends in England. M. de Talleyrand required all his dexterity and means of persuasion to obtain from Danton a passport to return to London, after the events of the 10th of August. Had he remained a few days longer at Paris, he would have been comprised in the destruction of the constitutionalists, who, in an almost incredibly short space of time, fell under the axe of the guillotine.

In the month of November of the same year, 1792, I was called to Paris by an object of duty. This was no idle, wandering journey, but a service demanded by the magistrates of Geneva; and I undertook it without hesitation.

Savoy was threatened with an invasion by France, and a French army was on the frontiers of that state. Geneva had taken the precaution, adopted in time of war, of applying to the canton of Berne, as was the custom, for a reinforcement of troops. The Bernese had sent several regiments to strengthen the weak garrison of Geneva, and enable it to support the double fatigue of service necessary in a fortified city surrounded by the troops of foreign belligerent powers. The government of France, then conducted by Roland, Claviere, Servan and a committee of the legislative assembly, had affected

to take the alarm at this call for Swiss troops. They pretended to perceive hostility to France in a precaution only intended by Geneva to make its neutrality respected; and, without considering that the Swiss were themselves allies of France, and that their co-operating in the protection of Geneva, could not therefore tend to any act of hostility, became loud in their complaints, and instructed their general, M. de Montesquiou, to call upon the Genevese magistrates to send back these troops, and, in the event of a refusal, to lay siege to Geneva. In the first moment of alarm, the Scyndics of Geneva wrote to M. Tronchin, the accredited agent of the republic, to engage Duroverai and me to proceed to Paris, and endeavour to arrange matters with the French ministry, with whom our connection was known. Duroverai being obliged to attend to his duties at the French embassy, I determined to go to Paris alone, but had the prudence to take precautions against improper surmises, by making the English government acquainted with the object of my journey. M. Tronchin laid the letter from the Scyndics before Lord Grenville, and easily obtained for me the permission I requested. He likewise demanded that a passport might be delivered to me, which would contribute to my safety in France; but not having been naturalized in England, this passport was refused.

One of my fellow travellers in the stage coach from London, was a quaker, whose name I have forgotten. Though of a more communicative temper than most of his brethern, he did not make me acquainted with the object of his journey to Paris. I discovered it at the municipality of Calais. We went there together, and he pulled out a passport, which had been sent to him in Ireland, from France. It was in Roland's own hand writing, and contained a particular injunction to aid and assist the bearer, whose journey to France was connected with the object of beneficence and humanity. The quaker then hinted to me that he came in the name of his brethren, who had deemed the juncture favourable for making proselytes in France. I know not whether a quaker can diverge from truth, and did so in the present instance, in order to conceal some other political object which he dared not mention; but I knew Roland's enthusiasm sufficiently well, to think that he might have deemed republican France worthy of adopting quaker simplicity, and I was also aware that Brissot was in raptures at a doctrine which represented true equality and all the primitive virtues.

On my arrival at Paris, I found that Genevese affairs bore rather a favourable aspect. Montesquieu felt ashamed of attacking a free city, which had only used its right of self-preservation; and in his correspondence with the ministers, had defended the re-

public, although he publicly used towards it threats which he did not mean to carry into execution. He had inspired the government of Geneva with confidence, and was himself their counsel. The negotiations were open, and conducted with much candour on both sides. He represented to the magistrates the necessity of sending away the Swiss troops as a first concession, without which he could do nothing for them; but, at the same time, he would give them every possible guarantee, establish their independence in the strongest manner, and publicly admit that there was nothing in their conduct hostile to France. The first treaty to which this led them, was not ratified at Paris, because it appeared too favourable to the republic; and Montesquiou had been instructed to make the most unreasonable demands. When I arrived at Paris, a second treaty was then waiting for ratification. Claviere, who had incurred the bitterest reproaches, as the supposed author of these measures against his native country, seemed anxious to clear himself to me. He told me that he had not concurred in the decree hostile to the Syndics of Geneva, as on the day it was determined upon, he had been prevented by ill health from attending the council. I seemed willingly to listen to his excuses, and observed that a favourable opportunity now presented itself, of sheltering himself from all future reproach, by obtaining a ratifi-



cation of the treaty. I also succeeded in bringing Brissot to the same way of thinking, although he had, in his *Patriote Francais*, been very violent against the Lilliputian republic, as he termed it. I represented to Vergniaud, Guadet, Gensonne, and Condorcet, the indignation felt in England at this attack made by republicans upon the weakest of republics; and one which had done the greatest honour to freedom. Others also contributed to soften the ministers and their party, and some consideration was still shown towards the Swiss. A few days after, the treaty was proposed at the legislative assembly, ratified without a dissenting voice, and the independence of the Genevese republic acknowledged by the most formal act.

The person who, during this crisis, rendered the greatest services to Geneva, was M. Reybaz, who had succeeded M. Tronchin as minister of the republic. Every thing in the council and the convention, was done so abruptly, that measures were adopted and decrees passed, before he was aware of their being in contemplation; and it was much more difficult to repair an evil than it would have been to anticipate it. His connexion with Claviere gave him some influence, but the Girondists fancied that he did not display a proper zeal in the cause of freedom, because, when he voted with them, he had often blamed their measures. On the present occa-



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sion, he showed great activity in finding out what passed in the diplomatic committee, in forming a party there, and in getting votes. I regret having forgotten, or rather not sufficiently recollecting many particulars which I had from him, and which sufficiently depicted the character, ignorance, and wicked folly of the convention. He informed me that the true secret of the affectation of anger towards Geneva, displayed by the council, was their wanting a pretence for seizing the city and arsenal, in order to have a strong hold, which they could use against Savoy, and against the Swiss, whom they wished to intimidate. The prudent delays of Montesquiou, had counteracted the perfidious designs of these ministers, who wanted to obtain possession of Geneva, without the disgrace of having ordered such a measure, and who could have wished that their general had taken it by a *coup-de-main*, even though they should disavow his act, and dismiss him from their service. But they would have retained their conquest. Such was the nature of the acts of vigour which the French government of that period expected from its generals. There was at Geneva a party of discontented citizens who inveighed bitterly against the aristocracy and the government, and Montesquiou would only have had to second this party, present himself as the supporter of the true democrats; and as an excuse to his government for

this act, he had only to write a flaming letter to state, that as the avenger of freedom, he had destroyed a nest of aristocrats at Geneva.

During the negociation, the Genevese council sent to Paris a citizen named Gasc, formerly very intimate with Claviere, and who, as a warm admirer of the French revolution, could insinuate himself more easily into the good graces of the members of the French government. Gasc was a man of talent; a most expert arguer, with great *sang-froid*. His heart was never troubled by the operations of his head. I was at a loss to conceive how this precise mathematician, so devoid of warmth and sensibility, could have imbibed so ardent an enthusiasm in favour of French republicanism. Claviere related to me a scene at his house, in which Gasc proved himself a first-rate actor. His being an agent of the Genevese government was sufficient to stamp him as an aristocrat, and the success of his mission required his getting rid of such an imputation. One day at a grand dinner given by Claviere to the Girondists, Lebrun the poet recited an ode to liberty with such lyric transport, that he produced a similar excitement in his auditors, and each strophe was received with cries of admiration. Gasc, upon whose mind the finest poetry had no effect, and who like Terrasson would have said—*what does that prove?*—most probably felt the greatest contempt for this enthusiasm.

His phlegmatic calmness was soon remarked, and it gave the company a very unfavourable opinion of him. He remained silent and motionless in his arm-chair until, at the conclusion of the poem, he seemed suddenly roused from his apathy, and as if carried away by a feeling he could not control, threw himself into the poet's arms and, his voice trembling with emotion and tears in his eyes, appeared a thousand times more affected than any one present. The company were struck with astonishment at a sensibility, compared to which their own transports seemed but as a transient ebullition of the moment. On leaving Claviere's hospitable board, the Girondists present, who were members of the diplomatic committee, took him with them, listened to him with the greatest confidence, and disposed other members in his favour. He knew how to combine the interests of the lesser republic with those of the greater; and they were so struck with the wisdom of his conversation, and the perspicuity of his reasoning, that after he had obtained his audience, they invited him to remain and discuss the affairs of Europe with them. This occurred to him three or four days following; nor was it the first instance I saw in France of such communicative disposition, such exuberant confidence. I recollect, during the existence of the first assembly, having, one day, attended the constitution-committee with Duroverai—

I mean the committee who drew up the constitutional laws for the assembly ;—after having explained our business, which related to the guarantee of France for the execution of the Genevese treaty, the members politely begged that we would remain and discuss with them the subject of their labours, observing that the presence of enlightened men was always an advantage to them, and that there were no secrets in their deliberations.

The business which called me to Paris being settled, I prepared to return to London, and dining one day with Claviere, I informed him of my intended departure. Having, after dinner, remained talking to Gensonne, a member of the diplomatic committee, the latter asked me if I could give him any information concerning one Grenus, a native of Geneva, who had come to Paris upon a mission diametrically opposed to mine, and had several times attended the committee to demand, in the name of a numerous party of Genevese, a union of Geneva with France. “You think,” said he, “that the treaty just ratified is conclusive, but I must warn you that there is a counter-plot going on, and our government does not yet despair of incorporating your republic with that of France. Grenus has pointed out the mode of effecting it. There will be a rising of the natives who call themselves *egalitiens*, or *tiers-etat*. These will be assisted by the peasantry, who are more nu-

merous than the citizens. The latter will, no doubt, defend the magistrates; and during the conflict, the natives will claim the assistance of the French troops, who will appear at the gates of the city as if for the purpose of preventing bloodshed. The gates will then be opened to the French, who will immediately make themselves masters of the city, and proclaim the union of Geneva with France. Such," continued Gensonne, "is the plan which Grenus has proposed. It has been neither refused nor accepted. For my own part, I prefer that your republic should remain as it is; for I do not know what we should gain by this union, and I can well understand what you would lose. Do not betray my name, but make use of this secret, which I thought it my duty to reveal to you, as you deem most advisable for the interests of your country. We have hitherto considered Grenus as one of those adventurers with whom it is dangerous to make arrangements; but he will be allowed to act, and if he succeeds and we once become masters of Geneva, we shall affect to think that we were called thither by the whole body of the citizens, and you may easily imagine that no attention will be paid to the claims of such a man.

In possession of this alarming secret, I went to M. Reybaz to concert with him on the means of averting the threatened evil. The first step to be taken was to acquaint the government of Geneva



with the plot of Grenus and his associates. It appeared to M. Reybaz expedient that I should proceed thither. I had formerly been popular with the natives, and had rendered them services more than adequate to counterbalance, at least, the influence of Grenus over the honest and well-intentioned members of this class of the people.

Having determined upon my immediate departure, I called upon M. Gasc, to whom I communicated my intention and secret. He told me that as he left the diplomatic committee, he saw Grenus enter it, and that he suspected this individual of having come to Paris for the purpose of traversing his negotiation.—Grenus, who had an estate in the country of Gex and was mayor of Great Sacconex, about a league from Geneva, had an evident interest in bringing his country under the French domination. He could not fail by such a service to obtain the confidence of the French government, and with it the mayoralty of the city he had delivered into their hands. But his true motive was to humiliate the Genevese, particularly the upper classes, of which he was a member by birth, but from which his character and conduct had alienated him. In politics as in religion, no enemies are more bitter than apostates. Grenus was the demagogue of the rabble, and derived continual amusement from the alarm which he inflicted upon the Genevese government, and the

aristocrats, among whom were his own cordially hated relations. He took no pains to conceal the atrocity of his mind, no less intense from its being combined with pleasantry. A sardonic laugh played upon his features each time he succeeded in causing an insurrection among the peasants, and the days of alarm and terror in the republic were to him days of rejoicing. Surrounded by his low and crapulous associates, he exulted in the disorders he caused, and never failed to attend the great council of the two hundred, of which he was a member, to enjoy the fright attendant upon the tumult he had raised. Gasc, better acquainted than I with this *Crispin-Catalina*, had no difficulty in believing Gensonne's communication, and thought, with M. Reybaz, that my immediate presence at Geneva was necessary to counteract the influence of Grenus over the natives, and induce the magistrates and citizens to adopt such measures as might be deemed most expedient under existing circumstances.

THE END.



## APPENDIX.

### No. I.

ADDRESS TO THE KING FOR THE REMOVAL OF THE TROOPS.

SIRE,

By calling upon the assembly to testify their confidence in your majesty, you have anticipated their most anxious desire.

We are come, sire, with respectful humility to acquaint your majesty with the alarms which agitate us. They regard not ourselves, sire ;—but had we even the weakness to fear on our own account, we are certain that your royal indulgence would still induce you to encourage and console us ; and further, that in blaming us for doubting your good intentions, you would, at the same time, listen to our complaints, remove their cause, and place the national assembly upon a sure and unequivocal footing.

Sire, we implore not your protection ;—it would be an offence to your justice. We have become a prey to fears which—and we say it with confidence—have their source in the purest patriotism, the interests of our constituents, the public tranquillity, and the happiness of a beloved

monarch, who, in smoothing for us the path to felicity, deserves himself to walk in it without obstacle.

The impulses of your own heart, sire, form the safeguard of your people ; and when we perceive troops approaching on all sides—when we see camps formed around us, and the metropolis surrounded by soldiers, we exclaim in astonishment :—Does our sovereign suspect the fidelity of his people? If so, would he not make known his doubts to us their representatives? What mean these menacing preparatives? Where are the enemies of the state and king—where the rebels and leaguers against whom this formidable array is brought? . . . The unanimous voice of the metropolis and the whole kingdom answers :—*We cherish our king, and we bless heaven for the gift of his affection!*

Sire! your majesty's confidence has been imposed upon, under pretence of the public weal.

If they who counselled our king had confidence enough in their principles to expose them before us,—it would lead to the most noble manifestation of truth.

The state has nothing to fear but from false principles, which lay siege even to the throne itself, and respect not the confidence of the purest and most virtuous of princes. And by what base means, sire, have you been brought to doubt the love and affection of your subjects? Have you been prodigal of their blood? Are you cruel or implacable? Have you prostituted the name of justice? Do the people impute to you their misfortunes?—is your name ever associated with their calamities? Have you

been told that the people are impatient of your yoke,—that they are tired of the sceptre of the Bourbons?—No! No! You cannot have been told so;—calumny is not so absurd—she colours her atrocities with a semblance of probability.

Your majesty has been able to perceive, of late, the greatness of your influence over your faithful subjects. Subordination has been restored in your lately agitated metropolis;—the prisoners, liberated by the multitude, have voluntarily resumed their chains;—and public order, which, had force been employed, might have deluged the city with blood, was restored by a single word of your mouth. But that word was one of peace:—it was the expression of your own sentiments, which it is the glory of your subjects never to resist. How noble is the exercise of such influence,—which was that of Louis IX, Louis XII, and Henry IV, and is the only influence worthy of your majesty.

We should deceive you, sire, did we not add, as the present state of the kingdom imperiously calls upon us to do, that this kind of ascendancy is now the only one possible to be exercised in France. The French people will never suffer the best of kings to be deceived, and, for sinister purposes, advised to deviate from the noble line of conduct which he himself has traced. You have called upon us, sire, to concur with your majesty in framing our constitution, and thereby operating the regeneration of the kingdom; and the national assembly now approach your throne solemnly to declare that your wishes shall be

accomplished, and the promises you have held out to the nation fulfilled—nor shall snares, difficulties, or terrors, delay our progress or intimidate our courage.

Our enemies may affect to say: "But what danger is there in having troops? . . . What mean these complaints, when the deputies declare they are not accessible to discouragement?" . . .

The danger, sire, is pressing, universal, and beyond all the calculations of human prudence.

There is danger for the inhabitants of the provinces: When once alarmed for our freedom, we know of nothing that could check this danger. Distance alone magnifies and exaggerates every thing, increases the public uneasiness, misrepresents, and gives an envenomed character to facts.

There is danger for the metropolis. With what feelings would a populace, struggling against poverty and the cruel pangs of hunger, see the remains of their scanty food disputed by a fierce soldiery? The presence of troops will excite the populace, lead to riots, and produce a general ferment, whilst the very first act of violence exercised on the people, under pretence of maintaining the public peace, may be the commencement of a horrible series of misfortunes.

There is danger for the troops themselves. French soldiers, so near the focus of discontent, and naturally participating in the passions and interests of the people, may perchance forget that an engagement has made them soldiers, and remember only that nature made them men.

The danger, sire, threatens that work which it is our first duty to make perfect, and which will not be fully successful or really permanent, until the people are convinced that it is the offspring of freedom. There is, moreover, contagion in the effects of passion.—We are but men;—a want of confidence in ourselves, or the dread of evincing weakness, may carry us far beyond our mark—we may be beset with violent and desperate counsels; and reason and wisdom deliver not their oracles in the midst of tumult, disorder, and bloodshed.

The danger, sire, is more dreadful still; and you may judge of its extent, by the fears which have brought us to the foot of your throne. Great revolutions have resulted from causes of much less importance; and the overthrow of more nations than one has been announced by signs less ominous and less formidable.

We beseech you, sire, not to give credence to those who speak contemptuously of the nation, and represent the people to your majesty, as it suits their purpose,—sometimes as rebellious, insolent and seditious—at others, as submissive, docile under the yoke and ready to bow their heads to receive it. Both are equally at variance with truth.

We are ever ready, sire, to obey your commands, because you issue them in the name of the law; and our fidelity is as unbounded as it is above suspicion.

We are equally ready to resist the arbitrary commands of those who make an undue use of your majesty's name, because they are enemies to the law. This resistance is



imposed upon us by our fidelity alone, and we shall always be proud of the reproaches cast upon us for our firmness in this our line of duty.

We conjure you then, sire, in the name of our country—in the name of your own happiness and future fame, to send back these soldiers to the quarters whence your majesty's advisers induced you to call them. Remove, sire, we beseech you, this artillery intended for the defence of your frontiers ;—and, above all, send away those foreign troops—those allies whom we pay to defend and not to oppress us. Your majesty does not require such troops. Why should a monarch adored by twenty-five millions of Frenchmen, surround his throne, at great expense, with a few thousand foreigners ?

Let the affection of your subjects, sire, be your best and only guard. The deputies of the nation are called upon to consecrate with you the high attributes of royalty, upon the *immutable basis of popular freedom*. But in fulfilling their duty—in following the dictates of their reason and their feelings, would you expose them to the suspicion of having yielded to fear ? Ah ! the authority with which every heart spontaneously invests you, is alone pure and unmoveable ; it is a just return for your benefactions, and is the immortal heritage of princes like your majesty.

## No. II.

DRAFT OF AN ADDRESS PROPOSED TO BE MADE BY THE  
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO THEIR CONSTITUENTS.

GENTLEMEN,

Your deputies to the states-general, too long kept in painful inaction, but from motives which you approved, were about to commence their proceedings by the only means which seemed to them compatible with your rights and interests.

The majority of the clergy had declared in favour of the union ; a respectable minority of the nobles evinced the same desire, and every thing seemed to announce the happy day which was to give birth to the constitution and freedom of France.

Events with which you are acquainted, have deferred this union, and the aristocracy have again the courage to persist in a separation, of the danger of which they will but too soon be convinced.

Alarm has been spread but too rapidly among us ; the metropolis has been thrown into consternation, and even the place in which we are now assembled has experienced a commotion, against whose effects we have seen precautions taken which, if they be considered necessary, are not the less alarming. All this renders it incumbent upon us to guard against the misfortune and disturbances

to which, under such extraordinary circumstances, the general uneasiness may give rise.

*The revival of the states-general, after so long an interval, the agitation by which it was preceded, the object of this convocation, so different from the motives which called your ancestors together ;\** the pretensions of the nobles, their adherence to gothic and barbarous laws,—but above all, the truly extraordinary means adopted to obtain the king's interference, have excited a powerful feeling throughout the nation ; and the whole kingdom is in such a state of effervescence that those who would fain use violence, when prudence and conciliation are becoming every day more necessary, are not only *unworthy of being considered as Frenchmen,†* but deserve to be treated as incendiaries.

From these motives, gentlemen, we consider it our duty to present you with a faithful picture of our real situation, in order to caution you against the fears and exaggerations by which injudicious zeal or criminal intentions might seek to increase your alarm.

On the day when, with a pomp rather threatening than imposing, we were called upon to appear before an absolute and severe monarch, instead of the supreme chief of the state, escorted, as we could have wished, by his virtues alone,—on that very day, we had from his own lips the noblest evidence of his vast designs in our favour,

\* The words in Italics are extracted from the king's speech.

† From the king's speech.

and of his truly generous and magnanimous intentions. Even the forms least adapted to conciliate our minds, shall not make us insensible of the real sentiments of our king. However we may lament his erroneous opinion of us, we shall never have to reproach ourselves with injustice. Woe to those who would represent us as dangerous! We might become so on the day of retribution, but it would be to them alone.

And how could the king's sentiments excite our fears? We are, it is true, but little acquainted with his designs, but have we not confidence in his wisdom, and is not his own interest at stake? Are not these our securities? Do the aristocracy ever cease to be the real enemies of the throne? Is it not their sole ambition to reduce the public authority to fractions? Are they not endeavouring, by bad laws, to cement their prerogatives, their privileges and their usurpations? And is it not an acknowledged truth, that the people require but justice, and the great alone seek power? The aristocracy have inflicted the greatest of evils upon a long succession of sovereigns, whose very virtues they have often rendered doubtful, but truth has at length arrived at the foot of the throne, and the king, who has declared himself the father of his people, will disseminate his benefactions over the whole community. He will not uphold the titles of spoliation which have been but too long respected. It is to prejudice, obsession, the respect perhaps which even the strongest minds sometimes entertain for old customs, and the hope of bringing about the union more promptly,

that we must attribute the declarations in favour of the separation of the orders, of their *veto*, of feudal rights,—those remnants of barbarous ages—and of those ruins of feudality which would impair the solidity, beauty and proportions of the edifice we are called upon to raise.

The history of all ages, and particularly that of our own nation, shows us that whatever is true, just, and necessary, cannot be long withheld on the plea of being illegal, false or dangerous. Prejudices wear out, and are ultimately destroyed by discussion. Our confidence is therefore firm and tranquil. You will share in it, gentlemen, and you will never believe that the persevering claims of a great people can be overruled by a few particular illusions, adopted by a small number becoming daily smaller. You will feel that the triumph of public order, when expected to result from measures of wisdom and prudence, ought not to be risked by inconsiderate agitation. It is for you, gentlemen, to assist us with your knowledge and counsels, in the necessary task we have undertaken. You will every where preserve calmness and moderation ; you will be the promoters of order, subordination, and respect for the law and its ministers ; you will repose the plenitude of your confidence in the unshaken fidelity of your representatives, and you will afford them the most effective assistance.

It is amongst a corrupt and venal class of the community that our enemies will endeavour to excite tumult and insurrection, which would only embarrass and delay the settlement of the great question. “Behold the

fruits of liberty ! behold the effects of democracy !” will they not cease repeating, who are not ashamed to represent the people as a furious herd, dangerous when unfettered ;—who feign not to know that this same people, always calm and measured when they are truly free, are never violent and unruly, except in constitutions which degrade in order to render them despicable. How unfortunately numerous are those cruel men, who, indifferent to the fate of the people, whom they always make the victims of their rashness, create events whose infallible consequence is to strengthen the hands of authority, which, when preceded by terror, is always followed by servitude ! Alas ! how fatal to liberty are the acts of those who endeavour to maintain it by agitation and revolt ! Do they not perceive that they increase the precautions from which the fetters of the people are forged ? that they arm calumny with a pretence at least—terrify pusillanimous minds, and bring into action those incendiaries, who, having nothing to lose, become auxiliaries but to prove themselves dangerous enemies ?

The number of our enemies, gentlemen, is greatly exaggerated. Many who are not of our way of thinking, deserve not this odious title. Facts often follow words, and enmity too readily imputed gives rise to real hostility. We have fellow-citizens, who, like us, are seeking the public good, but expect to find it in a different road from that which we follow. These individuals, borne away upon the stream of inveterate prejudice, arising from education and early habits, have not strength of

mind enough to strive against the current which carries them along. Seeing us in a new situation, they fancy that our pretensions will become exaggerated ; impressed as they are with the idea that liberty is only a pretence for licentiousness, they are in alarm for the safety of their property. Let us treat all these men with respect and kindness ; pity some, give others time to discover their error, undeceive all, and not change into the quarrels of self-love or the war of factions, those differences of opinion inseparable from the weakness of the human mind, and from the multitude of aspects presented by questions so complicated, whose very diversity is useful to the public weal, inasmuch as it leads to discussion and minute investigation.

Already, by peaceable means, have we made many valuable converts. There passes not a day which brings not into our ranks some one who had before kept from us. There passes not a day on which the horizon of truth does not widen, and the dawn of reason break upon the minds of some who have hitherto been dazzled rather than enlightened by its strong glare. What would have been the consequence, if, in despair of the power of truth, we had cast off for ever those whom in vain we called upon to join us. We should have destroyed even the friends we possess among the two first orders of our fellow-citizens ; and should perhaps have raised an insuperable bar to a union so advantageous to France, as that which is now the object of our contemplation. But our present being a pledge of our future

moderation, they must come to the conclusion that our acts are guided by justice ; and it is in their name as well as our own that we recommend to you that moderation of which we have already reaped the fruits.

How glorious will it be for us and the country, if this great revolution cost humanity neither crime nor tears ! How often have the smallest states been unable to acquire even the shadow of liberty, except by sacrificing the blood of their most valuable citizens ? A neighbouring nation, too vain of its constitution, and despising the defects of ours, suffered from convulsions and civil wars during more than a century, before her laws were consolidated. America herself, whose tutelary genius seems now to reward us for the freedom which she owes to us, did not enjoy this inestimable blessing until she had encountered dreadful reverses and doubtful and bloody contests. But we, gentlemen, shall see a similar revolution brought about among us by the concurrence only of wisdom with patriotism ! Our contests are simple discussions, our enemies excusable prejudices, our victories not cruel, and our triumphs shall call forth the blessings of those who are at last subjugated. History but too often records human actions, more suited to the ferocity of wild beasts than to man ; and here and there she notices a hero ; but we may be allowed to hope that we are beginning an era in the history of mankind, as brothers, born for the mutual happiness of each other, who agree even in their differences ; for their object is the same, and their means only of pursuing it, different.



Woe to him who would recklessly corrupt so pure a revolution, and trust the fate of France to the chance of uncertain events, when its destinies are not doubtful—if we suffer ourselves to be guided by justice and reason.

When we consider the happiness which twenty-five millions of human beings must derive from a legal constitution, substituted for ministerial caprice, from unanimity of will, wisdom in legislation, reform of abuses, decrease of taxation, economy in finances, moderation in punishments, consistency in the courts of justice, the abolition of a host of feudal rights which cramp industry and mutilate the human faculties ; from that great system of liberty, in short, which reposing upon the municipalities open to free election, gradually raises itself to the provincial governments, and ultimately receives its perfection from the annual return of the states-general ;—when we consider all the happy consequences of the restoration of this vast empire, we cannot but feel that it would be the blackest of crimes against humanity, to oppose the destinies of our nation, to push it back into the abyss and keep it down with the weight of the chains which it wore for so many ages. Such a misfortune could not occur except from those calamities always attendant upon the tumult, licentiousness, crimes and abominations of civil war. Our fate depends upon prudence ; and violence alone could throw doubt upon, or perhaps annihilate that freedom which reason has promised us.

Such are our sentiments, gentlemen ; it was our duty to make them known to you, that we might be honoured

by their conformity with yours. It was important to convince you that in pursuing our great patriotic object, we did not deviate from the right path.

Such as you knew us when you entrusted your best interests to our keeping, such shall we ever remain, strengthened in the resolution of co-operating with our monarch, not in measures of only transient advantage, but in framing the constitution of the kingdom. We are determined that each of our fellow-citizens, to whatever class he belongs, shall enjoy the innumerable benefits of nature and freedom ; that the suffering inhabitants of the country shall be relieved, a remedy applied to the discouragement by which poverty stifles virtue and industry, and our laws, the same for all ranks and orders, made our common safeguard and protection. We shall show ourselves to be not less inaccessible to the projects of personal ambition than to the debasement of fear. We ardently wish for concord, but will never purchase it with the rights of the people. The only reward we ask for our labours, is to see all the children of this immense country unite in the same sentiments, happy in the general happiness, and cherishing their common father, whose reign is destined to be the era of the regeneration of France.

## No. III.

## ADDRESS TO THE CONSTITUENTS.

**THE** deputies who from the national assembly, suspend, for awhile, their proceedings, in order to make known the wants of the state to their constituents, and, in the name of the country in danger, call upon them for their patriotic co-operation.

We should betray the interests you have confided to us, did we conceal from you that the nation is now on the eve of either rising to a glorious destiny or sinking into an abyss of misery.

A great revolution, which, a few months since, appeared chimerical, has just been effected in the midst of us all ; but its progress having been accelerated by events upon which no human foresight could calculate, it has, by its impetuosity, dragged down with it the whole fabric of the ancient system of government, and without giving us time to prop up those parts which it might have been advantageous to preserve, or replacing those which it was right to destroy, it has suddenly surrounded us with a huge heap of ruins.

In vain have our exertions supported the government. It has become completely powerless. The public revenue has disappeared, and credit cannot raise its head at a

period when there is perhaps more to fear than to hope. In letting itself down, this main-spring of social strength has relaxed all around it; men and things, resolution, courage, and even virtue. If your assistance restore not rapidly the body politic to life, this most admirable revolution will be lost ere it be complete; it will return to chaos, whence so many noble works have brought it forth, and they who must ever preserve the invincible love of freedom, will not even leave to bad citizens the degrading consolation of a return to slavery.

Ever since your deputies have, by a just and necessary union, destroyed all rivalry and clashing of interests, the national assembly has not ceased its exertions in framing a code of laws applicable to all classes and conditions, and the safeguard of all. It has repaired grievous errors, broken the bonds of feudal servitude which degraded humanity, diffused joy and hope through the hearts of our husbandmen—those creditors of the soil and of nature so long discouraged and branded with shame—re-established that equality between Frenchmen, so long disavowed—consisting in a common right to serve the state, enjoy its protection, and deserve its favours; in short, it is gradually raising upon the unchangeable basis of the imprescriptible rights of man, a constitution mild as nature, lasting as justice, and whose imperfections, arising from the inexperience of its authors, may be easily amended.

We have had to contend against the inveterate prejudices of ages, and much uncertainty always attends great

political changes. Our successors will be enlightened by our experience, for we have been obliged to tread in a new path with only a glimmering light of the principles which were to guide us. They will proceed peaceably, for we shall have borne the brunt of the tempest. They will know their rights and the limits of every power in the state; for we shall have recovered the one and fixed the other. They will consolidate our work, and surpass us;—this will be our reward. Who now would dare assign a term to the greatness of France? Who would not, on the contrary, elevate its prospects, and glory in being one of its citizens?

Nevertheless, the state of our finances is such that our social edifice threatens to fall before we can consolidate it. The failure of the revenue has diminished the currency of the realm; a host of circumstances has drained the kingdom of the precious metals, and all sources of credit are dried up;—the general circulation is on the eve of stoppage, and if your patriotism assist not the government in its finances—which embraces every thing, army, navy, subsistence, arts, commerce, agriculture and national debts—France will be rapidly precipitated towards a horrible catastrophe, and will receive no laws save from disorder and anarchy! . . . .

Freedom will have shone upon us but an instant, to disappear forever, leaving us the bitter consciousness that we are unworthy of her! To our own eternal shame, and to the conviction of the whole universe, we shall owe our evils solely to ourselves. With so fertile

a soil, so fruitful an industry, so flourishing a trade, and such extensive means of prosperity, the embarrassments in our finances are comparatively trifling. The whole of our present wants would scarcely cover the expenses of a war campaign ; and is not our liberty much more precious than those mad struggles in which even our victories have been fatal ?

The present crisis once past, it will be easy to better the condition of the people ; and no more burthens need be imposed upon them. Reductions which will not reach luxury and opulence, reforms which will not affect the fortunes of any, easy conversions of imposts, and an equal distribution of taxes, will, by the equilibrium of receipts and disbursements, establish a permanent order of things ; and this consolatory prospect is formed upon exact calculations—upon real and well-known objects. On this occasion hope is susceptible of demonstration, because the imagination is rendered subservient to arithmetic.

But to meet our actual wants, restore motion to the machinery of government, and cover for this year and the next, the 160,000,000 of extraordinary expenditure—the minister of finance proposes, as a means which, in this emergency, may save the monarchy, a contribution proportionate to the income of each citizen.

Pressed between the necessity of providing immediately for the wants of the state, and the impossibility of deeply investigating the plan proposed by the minister, in so limited a time, we have refrained from long and doubtful discussions—and seeing nothing in the minis-

ter's proposal derogatory from our duty, we have confidently adopted it, in the persuasion that you would do the same. The general affection of the nation towards the author of this plan, seems to us the pledge of its success, and we have trusted to the minister's long experience as a surer guide than new speculations.

The fixation of the amount of their several incomes is left to the conscience of the citizens themselves ; thus, the success of the measure depends solely upon their patriotism, and we are therefore warranted in entertaining no doubt of such success.

When a nation ascends from the depths of servitude to the glorious regions of freedom—when policy is about to concur with nature in the immense development of its high destinies ;—shall vile passions oppose its grandeur— or egotism arrest its flight ? Is the safety of the state of less weight than a personal contribution ?

No, such an error cannot exist ;—the passions themselves yield not to such base calculations. If the revolution, which has given us a country, has left some Frenchmen indifferent, it will be their interest, to maintain at all events, the tranquillity of the kingdom, as the only pledge of their personal safety. For it is certainly not in a general tumult—in the degradation of public authority—when thousands of indigent citizens driven from their work, and their means of subsistence, shall claim the sterile commiseration of their brethren—when armies shall be dissolved into wandering bands armed with swords and irritated by hunger ;—when property shall be threatened,

lives no longer safe, and grief and terror upon the threshold of every door;—it is not in such a state of society that the egotist can enjoy the mite he has refused to contribute for the wants of his country. The only difference in his fate, in the common calamity, from that of his fellow citizens, would be deserved opprobrium; and in his bosom, unavailing remorse.

What recent proofs have we not had of that public spirit which places success beyond a doubt. With what rapidity was that national militia, were those legions of armed citizens formed, for the defence of the states, the preservation of public peace, and due execution of the laws! A generous emulation pervaded the whole kingdom. Towns, cities, provinces, all considered their privileges as odious distinctions; and aspired to the honour of sacrificing them to enrich their country. You well know, that there was not time to draw up a separate decree for each sacrifice, which a truly pure and patriotic sentiment dictated to all classes of citizens, who voluntarily restored to the great family, that which was exclusively enjoyed by the few to the prejudice of the many.

Patriotic gifts have been singularly multiplied during the present crisis in the finances. The most noble examples have emanated from the throne, whose majesty is elevated by the virtue of the prince who sits upon it. O, prince, so justly beloved by your people! King, honest man, and good citizen! You glanced at the magnificence which surrounded you, and the riches of ostentation were forthwith converted into national resources! By fore-



going the embellishments of luxury, your royal dignity received new splendour ; and while the affection of your people makes them murmur at your privations, their sensibility applauds your noble courage, and their generosity will return your benefactions, as you wish them to be returned, by imitating your virtue and affording you the delight of having guided them through the difficult paths of public sacrifice.

How vast is the wealth which ostentation and vanity have made their prey, and which might become the active agent of prosperity! To what an extent might individual economy concur with the most noble views, in restoring happiness to the kingdom! The immense riches accumulated by the piety of our forefathers for the service of the altar, would not change their religious destination, by being brought from their obscurity, and devoted to the public service! "These are the hoards which I collected in the days of prosperity," says our holy religion ; "I add them to the general mass in the present times of public calamity. I required them not ; no borrowed splendour can add to my greatness. It was for you, and for the state, that I levied this tribute upon the piety of your ancestors."

Oh! who would reject such examples as these? How favourable is the present moment for the development of our resources, and for claiming assistance from all parts of the empire! Let us prevent the opprobrium of violating our most sacred engagements, which would prove a foul blot upon the infancy of our freedom. Let us pre-

vent those dreadful shocks which, by overthrowing the most solid institutions, would affect far and near, the fortune of all classes of citizens, and present, throughout the kingdom, the sad spectacle of a disgraceful ruin. How do they deceive themselves who, at a distance from the metropolis, consider not the public faith, either in its inseparable connexion with the national prosperity, or as the primary condition of our social compact! Do they who pronounce the infamous word BANKRUPTCY, desire that we should form a community of wild beasts, instead of equitable and free men? What Frenchman would dare look upon one of his unfortunate brethren, if his conscience should whisper to him that he *had contributed his share towards poisoning the existence of millions of his fellow creatures?* Should we be any longer that nation whose very enemies grant us the pride of honour, if foreigners could degrade us with the title of BANKRUPT NATION, and accuse us of having assumed our freedom and our strength, only to commit crimes at which even despotism herself would shudder?

Our protesting that our execrable crime was not premeditated, would avail us nothing. The cries of our victims, disseminated all over Europe, would be a louder, and a more effective protestation than ours. We must act without loss of time;—prompt, efficacious, and certain measures must be adopted; and that cloud must disappear, which has been so long suspended over our heads, and, from one end of Europe to the other, has thrown consternation into the minds of the creditors of France;—for it

may, at length, become more fatal to our national resources, than the dreadful scourge which has ravaged our provinces.

What courage would the adoption of this plan give us in the functions you have confided to our zeal! And how could we proceed with safety, in the constitution of a state whose very existence is in danger? We promised, nay, we solemnly swore to save the country; judge then of our anguish, when we fear that it will perish in our hands. A momentary sacrifice is all that is required; but it must be frankly made to the public good, and not to the deprivations of cupidity. And is this slight expiation of the faults and errors of the period marked by our political servitude, beyond our courage? God forbid! Let us remember the price paid for freedom, by every people who have showed themselves worthy of it. Torrents of blood, lengthened misfortunes, and dreadful civil wars, have every where marked her birth. She only requires of us a pecuniary sacrifice; and this vulgar offering is not a gift that will impoverish us;—for she will return to enrich us, and shine upon our cities and our fields to increase their glory and prosperity.

## No. IV.

THANKS OF AN ARTISAN TO THE COUNT DE MIRABEAU,  
*on his motion against the eligibility of insolvent  
 debtors to the legislative assembly, and that of their  
 children, unless the latter pay the virile portion of  
 their father's debts.*

MONSIEUR LE COMTE,

I HAVE neither great wit nor a fine style. All that is very common with you, and you will easily dispense with it in a poor artisan. But I have some judgment,—at least I think so—a feeling of pure patriotism, and a lively and grateful heart. These are my claims to your attention, and I am sure they will be admitted by so good a citizen.

Ah! Monsieur le Comte, what an excellent law you have proposed! What a wise decree you have obtained from the national assembly! It is the rallying of honest men against rogues. May Heaven bless you, gentlemen! You are the defenders of duped and confiding men, the scourge of insolvent dishonesty, and the restorers of integrity, honour and filial piety.

Though this effusion is excited in my mind by gratitude, the latter may, perhaps, be attended with a little resentment. And how can I help it? I was ruined by a gentleman;—I had worked for him several years, paid

workmen to serve him, and even made advances to procure him other works in the line of my calling. I wanted to set up my son, and portion my daughter; and I depended upon this sum, so justly due to me, for the settlement of my children, and the payment of a small stock in trade, which I had bought. On the eve of receiving this money, as I thought, I found that my debtor had become insolvent, and fled; and I thus lost, in an instant, the advances I had made, and the fruit of my long labour.

Alas! Sir; what brought on the disaster of this senseless man, was precisely that which deceived me as to his opulence. He had a *hotel* in town, a house in the country, fine clothes, footmen and lackeys;—I was dazzled at this, and my confidence was without bounds. A numerous and elegant family seemed to answer for the prudence of its chief; but I knew not that the children and valets were the masters. After the reverse, nothing was talked of but robbery, dissipation, imprudence, debts contracted by the children, and paid off several times to usurers who made a noise;—whilst poor locksmiths, and joiners, and tailors, did not presume to go and claim the fruit of their labour. It is a very lamentable thing for a creditor, Monsieur le Comte, to want bread, because his debtor has squandered millions; but there is something still more disgusting to an honest man—it is to see impudence the companion of knavery, and to encounter the disdain of despicable persons.

One of the sons of this gentleman who dragged me with

him into ruin, is returned to Paris. He is married and cuts a figure; the means by which he does so, may easily be guessed. On being told of this, I experienced greater indignation than hope; and I was right. I gained admittance to his anti-chamber; but his people knew not what I meant; my claims seemed to be upon their master's father and not upon him. As for the gentleman himself, he did not choose to see or hear me, nor would he honour his name by the least attention to a domestic debt. After this, his door was shut against me. I presented myself at it one day just as he was going out, and encountered the most dastardly glance that ever audacious scoundrel repulsed an honest man with.

Your pardon, Monsieur le Comte, for giving you all these particulars; you see my drift; but I must repeat it again, for it relieves me. Ah! what an excellent decree, what a consolatory law does the nation owe you! Thus is my gentleman, in spite of his noble birth, fallen below his locksmith, because the latter pays his debts, and the gentleman does not. And here is his worthy son reduced, in spite of his ostentation and insolence, to the same level with his unhappy father, whose ruin he hastened. Both are less than citizens, because they have forfeited the privileges of citizens; consequently they are less than I whom they have despoiled. I hope to assist at the *primary assemblies*; my children will perhaps become electors, and whilst we are performing such patriotic duties, it will be the turn of these magnificent debtors to respect us.

The law, it is true, gives me no action against the son of my debtor ; but the tribunal of public opinion brings the action for me. This is a new security for debts, which are thus placed under the safe-guard of public honour.

You cannot, Monsieur le Comte, fully appreciate the good you have done. Have you been ruined like me, by a haughty and pitiless debtor ? Do you enjoy the pleasure of revenge by means so unforeseen, so sure, and so terrible ? Are you aware of the proud stateliness of certain lords when they condescend to get into a poor devil's debt ? Have you an idea of the disgust and rebuffs they make him suffer before he can obtain the charity of a little justice ?

Well, sir, your law will remedy all this. The frightful disgrace attached to insolvency, by giving a greater importance to order and economy, will bring the debtor and creditor closer together, make each sensible of his engagements, prevent any difficulties in their fulfilment, and, by placing the honour of the insolvent debtor in the hands of his creditors, make him behave to them beforehand with rectitude and honesty.

Is not that too common habit of not paying one's debts, a species of voluntary bankruptcy ;—that constant putting off, to a future day, of shopkeepers, workmen, and bearers of bills—or having them thrust out of doore by porters, or valets ; and placing them in the cruel alternative either of losing their customer if they press for payment, or of being never paid if they do not press.

I think, sir, that as the loss of certain political rights will cast a stigma upon an insolvent debtor, even in the person of his children, it will no longer be an honour not to pay one's debts. All that petty inattention to promises which happens every day, will soon be included in the moral effect of the new law against bankrupts.

And besides, Monsieur le Comte, (pardon me, if I go out of my depth in penetrating the consequences of your decree ; but since the national assembly exists, we have acquired a new sense—the moral and political taste), and besides, it will be a powerful corrector of popular opinion. The functions of citizens will be confided, not to birth, title, intrigue and ambition ; but to faithful industry, honest foresight and propriety of conduct. The obscure honest man will enjoy the privileges which the titled man will have lost, if he breaks his faith.

And public offices, Monsieur le Comte ; and the appointments in the municipality and magistracy ; and the different gradations by which an individual raises himself from a simple citizen to be a representative of the nation ! what a noble and true lustre will not each of these gradations of rank acquire in addition ? when integrity and good faith stand sentinel at the entrance of the political temple, to repulse all who violate their precepts, to be an honest man will become a primary object of ambition ; and the first pride of the greater and lesser magistracy will be to have no members but honest men.

Your ideas, on this subject, have doubtless anticipated mine. We can appreciate the judgment, by the judge—



the law, by the legislator. The best way to be well governed is to make virtue a title of eligibility for your governors; for by perfecting the instrument, you render the work more perfect;—and a public man is the more attached to his functions, and studies the more to make them useful and respectable, when they are conferred upon him as the reward of good morals and propriety of conduct.

Perhaps, Monsieur le Comte, you may think me an enthusiast. Pray excuse this soft delirium of a patriotic citizen. I think that every thing is connected in morality and legislation, as in nature. Evil produces evil, and good is the source of good; therefore the latter must be done for the sake not only of itself, but of all the advantages to which it leads. I can fancy, in this decree, by which I am so much delighted, a regenerating principle of the national morals. When a law takes into consideration the honesty of a citizen—obliges him to make his first progress in his political career, by a profession of purity, and sows early in his heart the goodly seeds of virtue, and the noble ambition of public esteem—there are no good effects to which it may not lead. You were right, sir, in asserting that it is a law which does honour to the nation; but the nation also renders the honour due to the founders of such a law.

Let us now hope, sir, that every citizen will be penetrated with that public spirit which animates our legislators, and has produced so celebrated a statute. In our immense cities, every thing is fugitive, and without cha-

racter ; there is no lasting impression, and the strongest laws leave no mark ;—but in our provinces, in our small municipalities—where each individual is under the eye of the whole community, and where the moral feeling is extremely excitable, and that of honour very irritable—your law will do wonders. There it is that its good effects will serve as edifying examples to our cities. Fewer ruined nobles will be there seen, in future, insulting the misery they have caused ; poor artisans will be able to pay for their little stock in trade, to set up their sons, and to portion off their daughters. They will be more fortunate than I ; but they will not feel greater admiration for their illustrious fellow-citizen, whose exertions for our happiness and prosperity are unbounded.

I am, with respect,

Monsieur le Comte,

Your very humble servant,

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