

faults or inconveniences other parts of this system were chargeable with, the reduction of the exclusive privileges of peculiar provinces, and the laying them on one common level of law and government with the rest of the kingdom, was certainly a measure of no small public utility. Upon this division, above two thousand deputies of the provinces, cities, and boroughs which were affected, hurried straightway to Paris from every quarter of the kingdom, in order to maintain and establish their respective rights; and so many difficulties still remained to be surmounted, that it cost three months of the most laborious and painful application, before the final arrangement and division were completed. "Then"—says Rabaud—"the kingdom was consolidated, and the apprehension of a confederacy was done away<sup>32</sup>."

The Assembly, during this time, went through another task, which they considered of great import: this was the organization of the municipalities, or interior governments, throughout the kingdom. Though these, in their composition and construction, bore a close resemblance to the parish vestries in England, yet, from the extraordinary powers with which they were endued, or, at least, which they assumed, and which produced the same effect as if they legally possessed them, together with the infinity of their number, the ignorance and unsuitness of character in other respects, which too generally prevailed among their members, they became the immediate instruments of a most deplorable tyranny, which, being every where spread, nothing could escape or evade, and which the aggrieved could find no power any where to resist. "It seemed as if the new government, being founded upon untried principles in some instances, and in others run up hastily without any, as occasion and circumstances concurred in favouring the erection; so, among the numerous buttresses necessary to supply such glaring and dangerous deficiencies, this was not the least conspicuous, that one half of the people should be officially constituted spies upon, and consequently masters of, the other half."

The Assembly abolished *Lettres de Cachet*, a measure which, if not entirely needless, was certainly an act of patriotism on their side, as there was no power in the nation, except their own, by which they could be issued. They likewise published a number of regulations with respect to the taxes, most of which, as they were never paid, seemed no longer to exist. As if it had been to sanction and confirm that observation so often repeated, that their genius and disposition led more to destroy than to build up or repair, notwithstanding the failure of almost all the other taxes, excepting the partial new one upon estates, they totally suppressed the odious tax upon salt; a measure which the king, (as we have formerly shewn) in the days of hope, if not of happiness, so ar-

<sup>32</sup> History of the Revolution—English translation, p. 135.

dently wished to accomplish ; but which the continued opposition to his measures by the parliament of Paris, and the consequent impossibility of his finding a substitute to carry on the business of government, rendered him incapable of carrying into effect. They likewise abolished, at a subsequent period, the heavy tax on snuff, which was nearly considered as much a necessary of life as salt itself ; and which, in consequence of this regulation, was thrown into the common mass of articles of general commerce. Many other obnoxious taxes were also suppressed.

But abolition and suppression were not the precise means that were calculated to supply the growing deficiency in the revenue<sup>33</sup>; and the Assembly soon found themselves obliged to enter the labyrinth of finance, where they were to encounter a subject of which they were most deplorably ignorant. One grand object had occupied the mind of the Assembly ever since the establishment of sole and unlimited power in the hands of the Third Estate ; and had, probably, been much earlier a subject of frequent contemplation. This great scheme was to find a fund of so vast a magnitude, that it should not only suffice to discharge the whole national debt, enormous as it was, but leave such a surplus behind, as would be capable of providing for those new, and, as yet, unknown, contingencies, which the new change of affairs was liable to produce. One of the newly-promulgated doctrines was, that all things were to give way to the good of the public, or perhaps, more correctly, that the lives and property of individuals were no matters of consideration, in any question where they interfered with the benefit of the whole : in a word, that every thing belonged to the *nation*, indefinite as that term was, while the individuals who composed this great aggregate had no security in any thing : and the good of the whole, if the practice founded on it could be carried to the utmost extent of the principle, might lead to the dilapidation and ruin of all the parts separately.

The fund which was destined to answer these mighty purposes, required no creative genius, no depth of fiscal knowledge, no extent of combination or invention ; for it was already formed and moulded to the hands of the Assembly, who had nothing more to do than to pronounce a simple decree of *appropriation*.—This fund was no other than the great landed estates of the clergy : indeed, it was barely the foil, for they had already given up the royalties and exclusive privileges which had, from the foundation of the monarchy, been attached to, and considered as a part of, their estates. Though the immense benefits to be derived from this scheme were, by its *projectors* and supporters, deemed perfectly obvious to every body, yet it seemed as if some difficulties were likely to arise on the question of *justice*, with respect to the intended application of the fund. Some of these seemed more peculiarly to affect France than any other country. “ For, “ being the only people upon earth who had ever at once been transformed into a na-

<sup>33</sup> The Assembly augmented the pay of the troops, from four sols and a half a day to six sols and a half.



“tion of philosophers, it seemed incumbent upon them, at least for a time, to adhere  
 “closely to the rules and principles of that sublime science. Now as it happens that  
 “Cicero, who, without formally assuming the name, was deemed in his day no inconfi-  
 “derable philosopher, who was certainly extremely well versed in their history and doc-  
 “trines, and who could not possibly have laboured under any of the prejudices imputed  
 “by modern philosophers, to *Christianity*, does not, in his admirable treatise of the  
 “moral and relative duties of men in a state of society (which may be considered as  
 “such a compendium of the casuistry of the antient heathen world as could not other-  
 “wise at this time have existed) admit expedience or profit to afford any right what-  
 “ever for seizing the goods of others; and even carried this doctrine so far, as not to  
 “allow any thing to be profitable which was not honourable, nor any thing honourable  
 “which was not honest and just; these old-fashioned doctrines, which it might have  
 “been supposed would have vanished under the illumination of the present day, were,  
 “notwithstanding, troublesome impediments in the way of the grand design.”—The su-  
 “periority of the new philosophy, however, and the genius of its professors, soon tri-  
 “umphed over all obstacles; and the principle contained in the patriotic expression—  
 “*Every thing belongs to the nation*”—removed every difficulty.

This was a bold stroke in the extreme, because the people having just thrown off every degree of subordination, were grown so frantic by their easy success, that they could not think of any thing but farther innovations, and new revolutions, which they concluded might be purchased at as cheap a rate, and accomplished with as much ease, as the former. But along with this, the number of clergy in the kingdom was estimated at about one hundred and thirty thousand; and though this numerous body should be stripped of all the weight derived from rank and property, yet it was natural to suppose they would still retain some considerable influence over those people among whom they had passed their lives in habits of the greatest intimacy and friendship, besides being their teachers and directors in those Christian duties which at that time had been considered of the last importance to mankind. Now, though the professed and real philosophers had long since shaken off with disdain all the manacles of religion, yet it was apprehended, and, indeed, however it might be lamented, well known, that the bulk of the people had not yet been sufficiently illuminated, to enable them to get rid of their antient prejudices, or superstitions, as they were now called; for though, with respect to other matters, they were sufficiently irreligious, yet as that was not a philosophical irreligion, which is ever invincible, but was derived from idleness, wantonness, and those passions which are apt to predominate over mankind, so it was liable to receive a bias and take a direction very different from what might be wished.

It was farther to be considered, that the court of Rome, however degraded or fallen, had not yet lost all its influence; and that even the thunders of the Vatican, long as

they had remained dormant, might, in certain cases, and under certain circumstances, still produce some untoward effect, especially on those weak minds which continued to be encumbered with any religious scruples. Nor was it to be supposed that the Roman Catholic powers in general would behold with indifference so numerous, so ancient, and so eminent a body, as the members of the Gallican church had for a long succession of ages been, at once stripped of their dignities and property, without any legal forfeiture incurred, or even the charge or pretence of a crime laid to cover the violence and outrage. It was a great misfortune to the cause of philosophy, and indeed a great detriment to it, that the Protestant states still adhered firmly to the doctrines and principles of Christianity; it had happened likewise, from some peculiar disposition of mind which may not be easily accounted for, as it formed no exclusive or peculiar part of their system of morality, that many individuals among them had ever been much in the habit, even where they had no direct interest, of enquiring strictly into, and deciding promptly and categorically upon, so far as a publication of reason and opinion could be called a decision, all questions of right and wrong among men, without their being generally much swayed by the quality or power of any of the parties. This disposition of individuals seemed to operate no less upon the states of that persuasion, where they had power sufficient to carry the theory into practice; and they have accordingly been noted, in several instances, for repelling injury and injustice with respect to others, as well as to themselves. It was a farther misfortune, with respect to the Protestant states, that being all, even the smallest of them, more or less commercial, they paid a strict regard to the rights and security of property in all cases whatever, and, it was too much to be apprehended, would be stricken with horror, at the establishment of a precedent which went to shake and loosen the foundations of all the landed property in Europe. Besides, although the Protestants differed in many points of doctrine as well as discipline from the Romanists, yet considering them still as men, and consequently as brethren possessing the same common nature with themselves, that sympathy so natural to mankind, and so common to the greatest part of the species, could not fail to operate with great force, at seeing so numerous a body of men, many of them eminent for their parts, learning, and virtues, become, so suddenly and unexpectedly, the victims of injury and violence.

But all those difficulties and dangers appeared trivial to men whose eyes were so fascinated by the splendor of the object in view, that they could see nothing but the immense advantages, which, in their judgment, must result from it. In the first place, however necessary the phrenzy of liberty which intoxicated the people was to the accomplishment of the Revolution, it was seen to be totally incompatible with those sober, serious, and steady maxims of policy, which must of necessity be adopted, for the government and security of so great and extensive a kingdom; large armies and fleets must be provided for, and whoever the administrators might be, the civil expences must run very high; to say nothing of the interest of the national debt, and the support of such a number of fortresses.



treffes as was without example in any other country. How, then, were these prodigious expences to be provided for, by a people so drunk with their new liberty, that the bare name of a tax was in a high degree odious to them; and who, so far from being pleased or satisfied by the diminution of their burthens, which the abolition of the most heavy and obnoxious of the old ones produced, seemed, on the contrary, to grow more violent in their abhorrence of those which remained? Force, which has been so often used with effect in such cases, would here have been inevitably destructive; the dissolution of the new system, and of every thing appertaining to it, would be, at once, the consequence; and another revolution, the accidental birth of a moment, without form, order, object, or design, would take place, the final consequences of which no man living could foresee. Whereas, by the attainment of the desired object, they had not a doubt—though they were most egregiously deceived—that all these evils would be averted; that the golden age would seem to be renewed; that taxes, for a time, would not be heard of; that government would seem to support itself; and that nothing but peace and felicity would prevail during the reign of the present rulers. Nor was it, perhaps, forgotten, among so great a number of more important objects, that the attainment of this measure would free the Assembly from the necessity of entering deeply into that most difficult task of financiering.

The business was brought forward towards the end of October; and it is not one of the least extraordinary circumstances attending this extraordinary business, that the person who moved the decree was a prelate, M. Talleyrand Perigord, bishop of Autun. The debates were supported with much ingenuity and animation. The measure was justified, in the first instance, on a principle of state necessity, for, without this extraordinary aid, many advocates for the decree maintained, that such was the deranged state of the finances, a national bankruptcy must evidently ensue. This plea had great weight with many men of moderate principles, who, on no other consideration, could have been induced to lay violent hands on possessions which they had ever been taught to regard as sacred. But still, Why should the property of *ecclesiastics* be singled out as a just object of seizure, in preference to that of any other set of men?—was a question that naturally occurred. In answer to this, it was maintained, that the clergy had no right to the possessions which they held under law, usage, the decisions of courts, and the accumulated prescription of a thousand years; that the ecclesiastics were fictitious persons, creatures of the state, whom at pleasure they might destroy, and of course limit and modify in every particular; that the goods they possessed were not properly theirs, but belonged to the state which created the fiction; and that, therefore, what they might suffer in their natural feelings and natural persons, on account of what was done towards them in their constructive character, should not be an object of consideration.

On the other hand, it was insisted, that admitting the necessity of an extraordinary supply, the *partial* seizure of private property could by no means be justified; that, at

the meeting of the Assembly, distressing as the state of the finances might be, they still were not in that singular predicament, but that after establishing a system of economy on *just* and equitable principles, a fair division of burthens between all orders might have restored them<sup>34</sup>;—that the property said to be fictitious was solid and durable;—that it was originally acquired by lawful means;—that it had been lawfully preserved; and that its legality, the validity of its tenure, had never been questioned for upwards of a thousand years;—that the offer of the clergy, of a voluntary contribution of four hundred millions of livres<sup>35</sup>, was evidently and obviously more advantageous to the public creditor than any thing which could be rationally promised by the confiscation;—and finally, that the injustice of the seizure was more glaring, as it was not only inadequate to answer the purpose for which it was avowedly made, but, in consequence of the abolition of tythes, the debt of the clergy, and a variety of other incumbrances, the measure, far from affording relief, would prove an additional burthen to the state.

These arguments, however, proved of little avail; and, on the second of November, a decree was passed, by which the ecclesiastical estates were all declared to be at the disposal of the nation; subjected, however, to the following charges:—to the providing, in a proper manner, for the expence of celebrating public worship, for the maintenance of the ministers, and for the relief of the poor. For the second of these purposes, it was decreed, that no parish minister should have a less salary than twelve hundred livres a year (about fifty pounds sterling) exclusive of the house and garden hitherto annexed to the parsonage<sup>36</sup>. This decree, which was passed on the second, was published on the third of November, and received the sanction of the captive monarch on the fourth; a circumstance which clearly demonstrated the facility with which business of the greatest importance was conducted and concluded under the present order of things.

<sup>34</sup> If there were any truth in the assertions of M. Neckar, which the Assembly never attempted to invalidate, this was certainly the case; but the Assembly, after their meeting, instead of removing pecuniary embarrassments, seemed anxious to encrease them, in order to favour their attacks on the crown, and to encrease their own consequence and authority with the people.

<sup>35</sup> This very liberal offer of upwards of sixteen millions sterling was made by the clergy, on the representations of different members that some extraordinary means were requisite to save the state from the calamity of a national bankruptcy.

<sup>36</sup> The popular party took great merit to themselves for the provision here made for the parochial clergy; but the fact is, that the measure originated with the superior clergy themselves, who had, long before, adopted the resolution of augmenting the salaries of the former to twelve hundred livres; and had actually charged their agent, the abbé de Montefquieu, to communicate their determination to M. Neckar, since, on account of the engagements they had contracted for the king, it could not be put in execution without the concurrence of the minister of the finances. Whether from the multiplicity of objects which engaged the attention of the minister at that important crisis, or from some other cause, he had hitherto neglected the business, but the clergy had by no means departed from their resolution.—*Journal Politique*, &c. tom ii. p. 177. Note.



We have already observed, that the advocates for the decree asserted—*There was no other means of saving the state.* To this their opponents replied; it is proved, on the contrary, by the very confession of your own committees, that when the tythes which you have abolished are deducted, the remainder of the ecclesiastical revenues will not near suffice for the expences of public worship, the maintenance of the ministers of religion, the pensions of friars and nuns, the support of seminaries, the erection and repairs of churches, &c. &c. That a deficit will appear of fifty millions of livres—and even fifty-six, including the debt of the clergy—which must be supplied from the public treasury. Is the state then—said they—to be saved, by this augmentation of its burdens, which must necessarily fall upon the people? Besides, dare any one seriously affirm, that the safety of the state requires the subversion of those very principles which constitute its firmest support? Can what is unjust become useful? Can the transgression of that law which ensures to every individual the quiet possession of his property be ever deemed salutary? Is it not, on the contrary, attended with the most fatal consequences?

*“The goods of the church are not its own.”*—Strange paradox! By what sophistical arts do you expect to destroy ideas, the justice of which is acknowledged by every nation in Europe?—*“The ecclesiastics are but usufructuaries.”*—Doubtless what the clergy, collectively, possess as a freehold, its members, individually, only enjoy as usufructs; but is not an usufruct classed with that species of property which has been declared inviolable? We are but usufructuaries of life; but is that a reason why we should be deprived of it?

*“The clergy have no property.”*—What is to be understood by that assertion? Can there exist in law any distinction between a possession lawfully acquired, and enjoyed for a long series of ages, and an absolute property? Are you in earnest, when you maintain, that possessions which have been legally given and transferred to the clergy by those to whom they belonged, which have been by them put into a state of cultivation, improved, and rendered worth a hundred times more than they originally were, and which have been confirmed to them by all the sovereigns of the kingdom<sup>37</sup>—Are you in earnest when you as-

<sup>37</sup> It has been shewn, in former parts of this History, that the original grants of lands to many of the convents were nothing less than a favour conferred by the granters on the grantees. In those early periods of the monarchy, the hands that could be devoted to the purposes of husbandry bore so small a proportion to the land which required cultivation, that the persons who would undertake to render it useful did essential service to the state, and not only required encouragement, but deserved gratitude. The monks, by the labour of their own hands, and by industry the most strict and persevering, cleared away the wood by which the lands that were granted to them were, in general, encumbered, thereby rendering the country more salubrious, and, removing every impediment to cultivation, extended the means of subsistence to the community, and enlarged the sources of relief to the poor.—It is scarcely possible to conceive a tenure more respectable and sacred than that which the monks, thus circumstanced, acquired to the property they possessed; and justice extorts the assertion, that the decree which tended to despoil them of that property, sanctioned rapine, and justified theft.

sert that they have no property in them? In whom, then, has the property vested during this immemorial possession?

“*In the nation.*”—That is to say in no one; for what belongs to every body belongs to nobody. The founders of, and benefactors to, convents gave their estates with a view to the public good; but they did not give them to the public; they devoted them to the service of religion and the relief of the poor. The only right possessed by the public is that of seeing that they are not misapplied; and if those acts by which the property of the clergy has been conveyed from age to age, after having been deemed inviolable by thousands of generations, could be suddenly annihilated by your will alone, can you deny that, in that case, the estates should return to the source whence they sprang, and be restored to the donors or their heirs? If they claimed them, what plea could you possibly oppose to their pretensions?

“*The state takes upon itself to see that the purposes for which the property was given are fulfilled. The possessions, therefore, devolve to the state.*”—Such was not the will of the founders. They did not think, like you, that, by consigning their wealth to the public treasury, the prior purpose for which it was destined would be as well-fulfilled, as if it were consigned to the church; and still less would they have thought like you, could they possibly have foreseen the systems and innovations which you wish to substitute for the principles and creed of our fathers.—Be that as it may, it is sufficient that they disposed of their property in a different manner, to prevent any kind of change from taking place without reviving the rights of their successors in preference to all others. First to dispossess, and then to confiscate, is to add injustice to injustice; it is an act of despotism more odious and absolute, than any exertion, however arbitrary, of the executive power. Besides, what an inconsistency is it to despoil the clergy of their possessions under pretext that a corporation cannot have any property, and then to bestow them upon the state, as if the state were not also a collective body!

“*The existence of an ecclesiastical corporation, possessed of an extensive revenue, is repugnant to those principles which we have established for the formation of a good constitution. To leave it in possession of that revenue, would be to expose ourselves to the danger of again bending beneath the yoke of despotism.*”—This then is the true motive of all your usurpations, of all your destructive operations. No longer seek to disguise it beneath the transparent gauze of subtle sophistry. Lay aside all these vain subterfuges, which are no longer sufficiently specious to impose on the most superficial minds; cease to employ the word *despotism*, which was never applied with so little justice as to the reign of Lewis the Sixteenth. According to you, *despotism* and *royalty* are synonymous terms; and *royalty* is the object of your persecutions; it is that no force may remain capable of defending that, that you think it necessary to annihilate all the great corporations; and that, after despoiling



despoiling them of their possessions, you no longer scruple to risk the destruction of the state, in order to promote a speedy sale, that, by being distributed among a number of purchasers, the usurpation may be confirmed<sup>38</sup>.

Your real object (you cannot deny it) is to deprive the clergy of all hope, and to effect its ruin; that must be the end which this dreadful operation is meant to answer; that must be the effect of it. But what interest can the people have in it? What advantage can they possibly derive from it? You are constantly making use of their name, but what do you do for them? NOTHING—positively NOTHING. On the contrary, your proceedings tend to that which must inevitably lead to the exaction of new imposts. You have refused, to their prejudice, an offer of four hundred millions, the acceptance of which might have contributed to their relief; and, in lieu of this resource, you have adopted an unjust and ruinous measure, which, according to your own confession<sup>39</sup>, burdens the public treasury, and, consequently, the people, with an additional annual expence of at least fifty millions, and with a debt of one hundred and fifty millions.

Such are the principal observations that have been made on this extraordinary measure, and from these the following inferences have been drawn.

The property of the clergy must be regarded as deriving its security from the same source which gives stability to all other possessions; and if, on the one hand, be considered the multitude of charters, of ancient records, and of authentic titles, which had successively and continually sanctioned the possessions of the church; and, on the other, the close connection which subsisted between the preservation of religion and the necessity of maintaining its ministers from a fund more solid than a salary liable to be affected by every shock to which the public treasury was exposed, it must be acknowledged, that there was no property better established in point of right, or more respectable from its application.

But the mere circumstance of its being a property was sufficient, according to the in-

<sup>38</sup> De l'Etat de la France, present et à venir; par M. de Calonne, p. 93, et suiv.

<sup>39</sup> The committee of finances supposed that the possessions of the clergy, which it called national domains, including the domains of the crown, would suffice to defray the expences of public worship, in their present reduced state; and it owned that it would cost the nation fifty millions a year more, for the pensions of ecclesiastics, friars, &c. &c. It also acknowledged the necessity of paying the debt of the clergy, which amounted to one hundred and forty-nine millions, four hundred and thirty-four thousand livres.—The report made by the committee of tythes, on the ninth of April, 1790, rated the expences still higher; and the bishop of Nancy proved at the time, that it had omitted several articles of indispensable necessity. Although the salaries of the prelates and other ministers of religion had experienced a diminution, excessive, and, it might be said, indecent, it was maintained, as a certainty, that the annual produce of the possessions of the clergy, deduction made of the losses they had sustained, and of the expence of administering, collecting, &c. which would be enormous, would not suffice to pay the expences of public worship.—De Calonne, p. 96.

instructions of their constituents, and according to the decree of the National Assembly, to exempt it from the danger of invasion; and it is impossible to entertain a serious doubt, that what belonged to the church, what it had acquired under the authority of the laws, what it had possessed for ages without dispute and without interruption, was a property duly vested in her, since property is defined to be—*a right enjoyed over possessions lawfully acquired.*

It has been shewn, that a moral and collective body, like the clergy, was competent to the possession of landed property. This is evident, too, from the subsequent sale of the patrimony of the church to the municipalities.

It has been proved, that the property of the church-lands was necessarily vested in the clergy, since it was vested in no other proprietor, and the public could only claim a right to see that it was not misapplied.

The pretence that the clergy could not be proprietors, because unable to *sell*, has been shewn to be frivolous and false; on the contrary, an interdiction to alienate supposes a property, which it must be the object of that interdiction to preserve.

Lastly, it has been shewn, that, even on the supposition that the patrimony of the church was a mere right of enjoyment vested in the clergy, the Assembly has been forced to acknowledge an usufructuary property, and that kind of property was comprehended in the inviolability which justice, which the instructions of their constituents, and the new constitution ensured to every species of property.

One other argument has been used—independent of the question of *property*—to demonstrate the injustice of the seizure. If, as has been asserted, there were a hundred and thirty thousand ecclesiastics in the kingdom, they were a hundred and thirty thousand persons who had devoted themselves to the church, in the persuasion—a persuasion founded on the laws—that the church had possessions, revenues and means of subsistence, to distribute among its ministers, who, in the hope of partaking of such distribution, had sacrificed their liberty, and all those social advantages which they had a right to expect, who, being entitled to regard the possession of a bishoprick, an abbey, or any other benefice, as a safe and lawful possession, had, in consequence, regulated their expences, their acts of charity, the assistance they could afford to their friends, and the improvements they could make in those lands, of which, by a concurrence of the spiritual and temporal powers, the usufruct was insured to them:—it has, therefore, been asked, whether, by forcibly taking from a body of one hundred and thirty thousand citizens the conditions annexed to the state they had embraced, and the compensation for the sacrifices they had made; by depriving them of that revenue on which they had formed all the arrangements of their lives, and by reducing them for the future to rely for their  
subsistence



subsistence on precarious salaries, some of them amounting to one half, others to a quarter, and others to a tenth or twentieth part of their former lawful possessions—the Assembly was not guilty of one hundred and thirty thousand acts of injustice, one hundred and thirty thousand violations of property, and one hundred and thirty thousand infractions of the public faith?

Had the property of the church been *proved* to be indispensably necessary to the salvation of the state, there was still a mode of proceeding which it was the duty of the Assembly to adopt, and which would have enabled them to avoid a great part of the injustice of which they were now guilty. They should first have accepted the four hundred millions offered by the clergy, and then have established a kind of sinking fund, to which all the benefices, vacated by death, should have been appropriated. This gradual extinction of superfluous benefices, if any such there were, would have ensured them a degree of credit and confidence which, by pursuing the system they had adopted, they were never able to obtain. “They thought themselves just,”—says a contemporary writer—“and they had nothing of justice but her *bandage*.”

The National Assembly having gained its point, in the seizure of the ecclesiastical property, displayed great prudence, management, and address, in its transactions with the court of Rome. The holy father was either cajoled, or pretended to be satisfied, by reiterated protestations of the strict union of the Assembly with the pope, as head of the Christian church, in all spiritual matters; as well as of their fidelity to the religion of their forefathers. The weakness of the court of Rome, the age of the pontiff, with a grievous sense of the humiliations which that see had of late years experienced, all concurred in giving a semblance of currency to these assurances; for it is not to be supposed, that the refinement of Italian policy was so totally exhausted, as that their purport was not thoroughly comprehended, and their real value duly estimated.

All the canons of the kingdom, as we learn from Rabaud, had entered into a combination, and almost every chapter had protested, against the decree; and, from the same authority, we derive the intelligence, that the press now took an entirely new direction, and that a prodigious manufacture was carried on of pamphlets and periodical publications against government: that, as it was well known that books had considerably assisted the Revolution, it was, therefore, imagined that the same instruments might be successfully employed in bringing about a counter-revolution: that the ecclesiastics expected to dazzle the people of France, by circulating ten times as many volumes against the National Assembly as there had been published in its favour; that a multitude of printing presses, both within and without the kingdom, were devoted to this pious merchandize; that all the different kinds of style were summoned to aid the holy cause; poems, songs, epigrams, satires, tragedies, were written against the National Assembly;

against its committees; against its most celebrated members; against the city of Paris; and against the national guards, who were mentioned as objects of supreme contempt. Pamphlets succeeded pamphlets with a rapidity proportioned to the age that engendered them<sup>40</sup>. If this account be true, it would seem that the royalists, who were ever too late in all their attempts, enterprizes, and designs, were now, when it was of no use, seized with a spirit of writing and publication, which, if it had operated in due time, might have produced the most beneficial effects to them and their cause.

But it must be observed that this account, given by Rabaud, but ill accords with those restraints which we know, from indisputable authority, had been imposed on the press. Both the abbé Sabatier and M. Mounier mention specific instances of the operation of those restraints, which personally affected themselves. The latter, too, in assigning his motives for the resignation of his seat, after enumerating the impediments which subsisted to the free communication of his opinions in the Assembly, says—"If I had attempted to publish my thoughts, the same obstacles, the same inconveniences presented themselves. No printer would have dared to work for me: or if any one had been rash enough to undertake it, it would have been impossible to circulate the work. All the copies would have been immediately seized and carried off; for men who reflect know very well what is to be understood by our modern LIBERTY OF THE PRESS: they know very well that it gives the privilege of calumniating and insulting with impunity those citizens whom the factious are desirous of ruining in the public opinion; of flattering and deceiving the multitude; of persuading them that every thing ought to give way to their caprice, and that they ought to acknowledge no other law than that of their own supreme will. This liberty of the press permits to offend, in infamous libels, morality, the altar, and the throne; and to disseminate principles the most false and dangerous; *but it does not permit a man to speak the truth, when by so doing he may displease the demagogues, disconcert their views, and affect their interests*."

The parliaments, who, without intending it, had contributed so materially to promote the Revolution, began now to shudder at the thoughts of impending dissolution, and

<sup>40</sup> History of the Revolution, by Rabaud de Saint Etienne, p. 137, 138.

<sup>41</sup> *Exposé de la Conduite de M. Mounier*, p. 35.—Another instance of the freedom established in France by the Revolution, is also adduced by Mounier. He says—"I saw no possibility of conveying my sentiments to my constituents, or of making the truth reach them in the midst of so many lies which had been industriously circulated through the provinces. Under the despotic system, the agents of authority were suspected of carrying their wickedness to such a pitch as to betray the public confidence by violating the secrets of letters. No certain proofs of this, however, subsisted: but, under the present reign of anarchy, nothing is sacred; virtue alone is forced to become circumspect, while crime, proud of the impunity it enjoys, will not even descend to the adoption of cautious measures. It is known that deputies have received letters open, on which were written the name of the district, which, in its profound wisdom, and in virtue of its absolute power, had thought proper to break the seals and read them."



wanted nothing but power to make a vigorous effort for averting the fate with which they were threatened. Those of Rouen, of Brittany, and of Metz, determined, however unfavourable the present state of affairs might be to such an attempt, not to perish without a struggle. They had, accordingly, the boldness to protest against a decree of the National Assembly, passed on the second of November, which suspended them from the exercise of their functions. But they soon experienced, to their sorrow, how different the power was with which they had now to contend from that which they were wont to insult under the name of the royal authority. They were forsaken and deserted by those towns and those people in whom they reposed the greatest confidence, and over whom they so lately held the most supreme ascendancy. Their fall, to which they submitted with a bad grace, was accelerated by this fruitless effort, and was embittered by those last and most galling curses of fallen ambition—contempt and derision. The parliament of Bourdeaux, which stood singly, held out much longer, and was much more troublesome than the other three: it was, indeed, accused of using every possible exertion to excite an insurrection in the South.

The newly-created municipalities began early to detract from the sanguine hopes which had been formed on their institution. This failure of design, or misfortune, was, as usual, ascribed entirely to the evil machinations of the aristocrats, who, it was pretended, seeing that this new authority was the first degree in the future administration, and the only popular power at that time existing, and always endeavouring, by diminution or division, to attain the power of destroying, used all their influence to get their own creatures elected into these authorities. We are afterwards told, very seriously, that whenever the electors had been thus led to make an improper choice, they became victims to the arts of their enemies, and that the massacres which took place in certain towns of the kingdom were occasioned by evil-minded municipalities<sup>42</sup>. Thus was a party ever at hand, on which to throw the odium of every misfortune, domestic or foreign, which could possibly befall the nation.

As it was necessary not only to keep the people awake, but in a state of absolute agitation, the most improbable stories of plots and conspiracies were circulated with incredible industry. One of the popular journals asserted, about this time, that a young lady of condition had raised an army of thirty-six thousand men, to bring about a counter-revolution, and that she exercised her troops in a very private apartment, on the fifth story, in the Rue Mazarine.—Another offered to prove one hundred and eleven conspiracies, all in existence, but at different degrees of maturity. All these journalists agreed in imputing the calamities and crimes of the times to the aristocrats; but the truth is—says the author from whom this intelligence is derived—that the nobles did nothing either good or

<sup>42</sup> Rabaud, p. 132.

bad, and that their nullity formed a perfect contrast with the ferocity of the Third Estate.<sup>43</sup> The fable of Vesoul was realized at Senlis, and the most atrocious crime of the age was committed by the hand of a Plebeian.<sup>44</sup>

The king's ministers were also deemed proper objects for exciting popular discontents. A violent outcry was, accordingly, raised, and a number of charges exhibited against them, though no attempt was made to bring them to the point of trial or impeachment. If some of these charges were so loose and indefinite, that they would as exactly suit any other body of men, as those against whom they were particularly directed, it is to be observed, that this was the current political language, both in writing and speaking, and the established fashion of the times; if others of them seemed incomprehensible or impossible, it should be remembered, that the people on whom they were intended to operate were much more likely to be fascinated by those things which were unintelligible or incomprehensible, than by those simple facts, narrated in plain language, which come home to every man's understanding.

The ministers were charged with serving the cause of the disaffected by their inaction; and it was urged, that, by retarding the transmission and the execution of the new laws, they thereby designedly prolonged the existence of anarchy; indulging themselves in the fond hope, that the people, disgusted with continual scenes of endless confusion, would call loudly for the old government, under which they had enjoyed a stupid tranquillity: that, at the same time, these foes to liberty had insidiously created a scarcity of grain; that they had likewise insidiously created a scarcity of specie; and that they had insidiously refused to give employment to the artificers, in the hope that, every class of men becoming dissatisfied, the people would, at length, grow weary of their own courage. These were among the principal charges preferred against the ministers: it must always be recollected, though it seems to have been totally forgotten by the framers of these accusations, that long since, and at the very commencement of the Revolution, all present and future administrations were rendered directly answerable and personally responsible to the National Assembly, for every part of their conduct, so that neither the king's name would afford a sanction, nor his express orders a justification, for their adoption of any measure contrary to the sentiments of that body; even supposing the king to be now a free agent, and capable of transacting any business.

The charges against the most considerable and active members of the two ruined orders were more abundant than those against the ministers. These malecontents were said

<sup>43</sup> Journal Politique, &c. tom. ii. p. 122—123.

<sup>44</sup> At Senlis, a soldier, who had been discharged from the national troops, fired on a procession of the citizens as they passed the door of the house in which he was. A number of persons immediately rushed in to seize the culprit, when the house blew up, and no less than sixty of them were killed, and a great number wounded by the explosion.



to be dispersed through every court in Europe, and were said to be seconded, in the greater part of them, by the French ambassadors, at those respective courts, their joint endeavours being calculated for the universal dissemination of their own invincible hatred against their native country: that in these courts they laid the foundation of a general confederacy of all the powers of Christendom against France: that their object was, to persuade the several monarchs, that their cause was the cause of kings, and that it behoved them all equally to unite their common strength, in order to restore the arbitrary authority of Lewis the Sixteenth<sup>45</sup>. Imprudent men!—exclaims Rabaud—who never perceived that they were, at the same time, teaching Europe, that this was also the cause of nations! The same writer proceeds to tell us, that two princes, who had taken refuge at Turin, assembled there some of the gentry, and threatened France with an invasion by the way of Nice, and by the way of Savoy; and had sent emissaries into Provence, to Nîmes, and to Lyons, while the king of Sardinia put his army in motion on the frontiers.—In opposition to this statement, however, it must be recollected, how totally unprovided for war, or even for any degree of defence, the king of Sardinia was long after, when his dominions were so violently invaded and over-run by the French; and when his most ancient dukedom of Savoy was, so far as a decree could give permanence to the wrong, for ever annexed to the majesty of the new Republic. The last charge was extremely well designed, and could scarcely fail to produce its intended effect. It was to this purpose—that it was then publicly declared, that Paris was no longer worthy of the presence of her king; and that Lyons deserved the honour of being the capital of the empire.

In the mean time the animosity between the democratical leaders and the nobles who still continued in the Assembly, were grown so violent and inveterate, that duels became frequent between the enraged parties; and as the last appeal is made to the sword in the great political disputes of nations, so here, the smaller political differences between parties and individuals were referred to the same arbitrary decision. And as it has been long and often observed, that a change of condition frequently produces a great change in the manners, and even, apparently, in the nature of men, so it seemed now, that as the democrates had already stripped the nobility of all power, intending to be their successors in every thing, they meant to deprive them of the only exclusive claim to distinction which was still left untouched, and which they had possessed unrivalled for so many ages—that of a decided superiority in all the hardy deeds of arms and chivalry.

To counterbalance all those dangers, real or supposed, with which France was said to be environed, we are informed, that the nation at large was unanimous in supporting the Assembly: that its table was covered with addresses from every town and city, expressive

<sup>45</sup> Rabaud, p. 139, 140.

of their affection, of their admiration, and of their gratitude; promising it *three millions* for the defence of the constitution, and encouraging it to persevere in its patriotism <sup>46</sup>.—It might easily have been imagined, that, with so much *unanimity*, and with so prodigious a mass of strength, which has in no degree been equalled since the days of Xerxes, they had little cause to be apprehensive of either foreign invasion or domestic conspiracy; and yet they seem to have been tremblingly alive to both.

The conduct and proceedings of that Assembly, in which was now vested the whole power of the empire, under these circumstances, are thus described by Rabaud, in his usual style:—"The National Assembly, occupied in parrying these attacks, was still advancing with great strides, trampling upon the ruins of despotism, combating every prejudice, discomfiting every error, making war on every abuse, destroying usurped rights, and re-establishing that precious equality, which renovates the youth of nations, and regenerates them, by restoring them to their primitive state of purity."—Some cavillers might be induced to ask, How that equality could be re-established, which never before subsisted? and might likewise perversely enquire, in what period of the golden age that primitive purity existed, to which the people were now so happily restored? But it might well be answered, that such men, who would wish to manacle eloquence, and to shackle flowery description, must be by nature adverse to the beauties of style, and graces of composition; and must likewise labour under some fatal prejudices, which would lead them to question the legitimacy of the new philosophy.

It is rather astonishing, that an Assembly who is thus represented as the model of virtue and patriotism, should not have paid so much regard to the distressed situation of the public revenue, and have displayed so much patriotic disinterestedness as to have refused to add to the embarrassments of the state, by an augmentation of the national expence. While were at Versailles they had come to a decision that every deputy should receive eighteen livres a day, as *wages*; and since their arrival at Paris they had increased their salary to four-and-twenty livres, besides being paid their travelling expences, at the rate of five livres per *post*; and by the same decree they authorised the minister of finances to pay each deputy six months' wages. Thus did the representatives impose on the nation a standing expence of seven hundred and fifty pounds a day, while, at the same time, they were continually enforcing the necessity of the strictest economy. Their proceedings, in this instance, forms a striking contrast with the conduct of the deputies assembled in 1614, who, as there is every reason to believe, did not receive one single farthing for their services<sup>47</sup>. The labours of the first year of the Revolution was closed by a decree,

<sup>46</sup> Rabaud, p. 141.

<sup>47</sup> Journal Politique, &c. tom. ii. p. 157. Note.—Though the members of the National Assembly had ever displayed the greatest anxiety to render all their proceedings as public as possible, by the indiscriminate admission of strangers into their hall, in this instance they preferred the secrecy of a committee, in which every thing relating to their own salaries was settled and arranged.—Does not this circumstance seem to indicate that they were ashamed of the business?



“that no member could accept of any place in the ministry;”—which was judiciously, though unsuccessfully, opposed by Mirabeau; and by the *irrevocable* union of the island of Corsica to the French nation, as a constituent part of the empire.

A. D. 1790.] The Assembly had now been convened eight months, and the few salutary regulations they had established were greatly overbalanced by the infinite confusion they had created, and the *love of anarchy* which they had been the means of disseminating throughout the kingdom. The pecuniary embarrassments they had been so strenuously urged to remove were increased in a considerable degree; peace, order, and justice, far from endeavouring to promote, they seem to have considered as fatal obstructions to the accomplishment of their plans; and, instead of commanding the admiration of surrounding states, by presenting to their view the noble spectacle of a truly philosophic assembly of legislators, deeply impressed with the love of their country, influenced by no pitiful considerations of party, and displaying a generous anxiety to settle the constitution on the broad basis of public good, they excited the contempt or indignation of every reflecting mind, of every *sincere* friend to rational freedom, by exhibiting the disgusting sight of a convention of frothy speculators and bungling state-mechanics, skilled only in the paltry vulgar arts of demolition, rejecting the solid wisdom of experience, and too frequently actuated by unworthy motives of vanity, interest, or ambition. The facility with which the minds of the people had been irritated and inflamed, to that degree as to render them fit instruments for the execution of any plan, however violent, encouraged such members of the Assembly as wished to promote disorders to have again recourse to that base and degrading measure. At this very period, when, according to Rabaud, the most signal virtue and patriotism were displayed by the National Assembly, the count de Marguerite asserted publicly at the duke de Liancourt's table, and in a numerous company, where near thirty members of the Assembly were present, that a revolt which had lately taken place at Toulon had been instigated or supported by members of that body, who acted therein upon the principle—“*That more insurrections were necessary*;” and this extraordinary charge was listened to by all the deputies present, without a single word in denial, refutation, or excuse, being offered by any of them<sup>48</sup>.

The king, whose title of king of France and Navarre, after his removal to Paris, had been changed by the National Assembly to that of KING OF THE FRENCH, had, with his family, been kept in a state of absolute confinement. Though, from the perusal of Rabaud and other democratical writers, it would not appear that the king had been at any time under the smallest degree whatever of restraint or distress, yet from the authority last quoted, the authenticity of which admits not of a doubt, we learn, that, at

<sup>48</sup> See Young's Tour, p. 276.

the beginning of this year, when, it being near three months after the procession from Versailles, it might be supposed the violence and suspicion of the people would be abated, a body of eight hundred men, with two pieces of cannon, mounted guard every morning at the Thuilleries: that, on the fourth of January, the writer beheld the extraordinary spectacle of the king of France walking in the gardens with six grenadiers of the city militia: that the doors of the gardens were kept shut while he walked in them, in order to exclude all persons but deputies, or those who procured admission-tickets, from entering: that when he re-entered the palace, the doors of the gardens were thrown open to all persons without distinction, although the queen<sup>49</sup>, with a lady of her court, was still walking in them: that she was likewise attended so closely by the Garde Bourgeoise, that she must have spoken very low not to be overheard by them: and that even the dauphin, who was at work, with a little hoe and rake, in a small garden, which had been railed off for his amusement, was not without a guard of two grenadiers upon him<sup>50</sup>.

The Assembly felt no small uneasiness at the ill effect which the confinement of their sovereign (however it was attempted to be denied or palliated) produced upon the public opinion, in other countries, as well as at home; and of the strong handle which it afforded to their enemies for calling in question the validity of those laws to which his sanction was extorted; under a state of restraint, which, depriving him of all free agency, rendered him, by the laws and consent of all nations, incapable of any legal act, or of any act that could be binding on himself, any longer than the compulsion which produced it continued to operate.

The removal of this difficulty was justly considered an object of the highest importance; and it was accordingly determined to neglect no means that could promote its at-

<sup>49</sup> The utmost pains had been taken to render the queen odious to the nation. All her errors and frailties were magnified into vices and crimes; and all the arts of malice were exerted in the invention of calumnies the most foul and atrocious, which were circulated throughout the provinces with wonderful industry. She was first charged with the impossible crime of having procured the construction of a well-charged mine under the hall of the National Assembly, in order to blow the states, without distinction, at once into the air. This ridiculous story was not only verbally propagated throughout the kingdom, but a letter, asserting the fact, and said to have been written by one of the deputies to the States, was, at about three hundred miles distance from Paris, publicly averred by several persons to have been seen and read by them. The fact was believed by all who heard it, which drew the following observation from Arthur Young, who was present at the recital, and the authority given—"Thus it is in 'revolutions, one rascal writes, and a hundred thousand fools believe.'"—The same writer was exposed to considerable danger from a suspicion that he, and an old woman, his guide, were combined with the queen in a conspiracy against the volcanic rocks and mountains of Auvergne, and that he was the acting agent for blowing up the town of Clermont: at another time, he was seized in bed at midnight by a party of armed militia, on the very serious and alarming charge, of his being a party in a conspiracy formed by the queen, the count d'Artois, and the count d'Entraignes, against the territory of the Vivarois.—These impudent lies were but the commencement of the infernal project which was systematically pursued, until its final accomplishment, in the assassination of that unhappy prince.

<sup>50</sup> Young's Tour, p. 264, 265.



tainment. It could only be accomplished by persuasion, and the facility of the king's disposition seemed to afford no small hope of success, in any thing that depended on that mode of proceeding. The design was to induce the sovereign to go suddenly, and, apparently, of his own mere motion, to the National Assembly, and there, in a set speech, to declare himself perfectly satisfied with all their proceedings; and likewise, that he considered himself as being at the head of the Revolution, in terms so explicit, as to take away all idea or pretence of his being in a state of coercion or confinement. La Fayette was either the framer of this plan, or one of those who was most sanguine in its pursuit, and who placed the greatest confidence in its success.

The Assembly had just displayed an unexpected act of liberality and attention with respect to the king's person, which could not but produce the greater effect from its being unexpected; and which could not fail to make a strong impression on a mind so very susceptible of gratitude as his was known to be. For, on the question being proposed, just at the opening of the year, what annual sum it would be proper to assign for the royal expences and support of the household, or what is usually called the civil list, the Assembly, instead of debating the subject, or forming any resolution on the question, adopted the liberal measure of sending a deputation to the sovereign, with an address, requesting that he would himself name the sum that would be sufficient for the purpose, and praying that, in so doing, he would consult less his spirit of economy, than a sense of that dignity which ought to surround the throne with a becoming splendor. The liberality of this conduct gained the Assembly great credit, and brought them abundant praise from all sorts of people; the most furious of the *enragés* would have been ashamed to condemn the generosity of the action; and the bitterest of their enemies among the royalists found it difficult to refrain from some commendation.

Yet, notwithstanding the apparent effect, with respect to other matters, which this attention shewn by the Assembly to the personal ease and dignity of the sovereign produced on his mind, he totally rejected, and continued with great firmness to reject, all the persuasions which were used, and all the inducements holden out, to bring about his much wished-for visit, and the delivery of his speech, to that body. This obstinacy, as it was termed, was, as usual in all cases, where his conduct did not exactly square with the wishes of the prevailing party, ascribed entirely to the machinations of the queen, who was thereby, if possible, rendered more odious than before.

Notwithstanding the great and numberless benefits which had been lavished upon the people; notwithstanding the remission of taxes, or, what was tantamount thereto, the refusal of paying those that were not remitted; and notwithstanding those innumerable and unspeakable blessings which were supposed to be included in the magical term of regeneration, yet such is the perverseness at certain times incident to the affairs of mankind, that

that every class of men in the kingdom was the direct reverse of being happy, prosperous, or contented. There were, at this time, above six thousand landed estates, a great number of them very considerable, publickly advertised for sale in France, and scarcely a purchaser to be found upon any terms. In the capital trading and manufacturing city of Lyons, so long the seat of industry and opulence, no less than twenty thousand persons were supported and fed by charity. Things were no better in Normandy, where the famous woollen-cloth manufactory at Louviers, which was scarcely equalled in Europe, and where the celebrated M. Decretot gained so much honour by the unparalleled beauty and excellence of his fabricks, was already tending fast to absolute ruin. A great cotton manufacture, at the same place, was still in a worse state than the woollen.

There were not many circumstances attending the Revolution more extraordinary, or which afforded a more striking instance of the degree of turpitude and atrocity, to which mankind, under the dominion of certain operating causes, that are not always obvious, nor easily traced to their source, is capable of arriving, than the conduct of the inhabitants of Versailles. That place had been indebted for its existence to the sovereign; and, being the residence, for more than a century, of the most magnificent, expensive, and munificent court in Christendom, as well as of all the first nobility in that vast kingdom, had, from an obscure and paltry village, risen to such a degree of consideration and opulence, as, with a population of sixty thousand persons, to be classed among the second-rate cities in the kingdom.

Yet this people, thus originating, growing, thriving, and arriving at maturity, who, for more than a century, had been constantly fed by the court, had, from the commencement of his troubles, been among the foremost of the present sovereign's most implacable enemies, extending their malevolence to every part of the royal family, and seeming emulous to exceed the Parisians in their animosity and malice<sup>51</sup>. Like them, too, they

<sup>51</sup> A contemporary writer thus accounts for "the mad and barbarous conduct of Versailles:" It was only an error and a false calculation on a point of interest. The dread of a bankruptcy had alarmed every body. It was considered as certain, by the numerous valets of Versailles, that the king was a worn-out being, an obsolete word, a mere cypher, and that nothing but the nation, that is to say, a novelty, could make the state young again, discharge the debt, and pay Versailles. This report had prevailed, and had fortified itself, by the idea that, without Paris, the National Assembly could do nothing; at all events, therefore, the capital must be pleased. The king, being ill-advised, it was necessary, they said, for his private good and for the general welfare, to exterminate his court, give him a Parisian guard, and give him up to the exclusive direction of the National Assembly. But Versailles only understood that Paris was to leave a guard over the king, and not that she was to carry him off, never more to return.—*Journal Politique*, &c. tom. ii. p. 248, 249.—The idea of the inhabitants of Versailles having been deceived by the Parisians is farther confirmed by M. Mounier, who tells us, that they were very much astonished at the procession of the sixth of October; and that they then began to discover that, after having fought for the Parisians, they were destined to pay all the expence of the war. "Tis true"—says he—"the Parisians told them to make themselves easy, for that the king would come back again."—*Faits relatifs à la dernière insurrection*, p. 31.—The barbarous



they had constituted themselves sole judges, dispensers and executors of the laws; so that the same men being judges, accusers, witnesses, and executioners, much time was saved in all criminal prosecutions. It remains, however, to be lamented, that this career of patriotism, in pursuit of summary justice, was, in Versailles, productive of some horrid murders, although the voice and approbation of the people gave them the sanction of legality; and these seemed the more unlucky as they occurred in private family cases, where no party or political causes could have any concern.

The felicity of the Versaillesians received a mortal blow by the removal of the court to Paris. By that they not only lost the constant butt and object of all their amusements, along with the delicious pleasure, so truly gratifying to vulgar minds, of insulting fallen majesty; but they also lost their established ground and pretext for riots and tumults, without which it was scarcely possible for them to exist. They likewise felt, with inexpressible mortification, that they had instantaneously lost all their past consequence; that, instead of being looked up to as competitors in all deeds of renown with the proud Parisians, they were now no longer either named or thought of; while the voracious capital, having robbed them of the king, would gorge itself with all the praise and fame appertaining to others.

In such a state of discontent, and with such inherent dispositions, they could never want pretences for riots and disorders; the dearness of bread, and scarcity of all kinds of provisions, independent of all the other grounds of complaint which ingenuity could be at no loss in devising, afforded an ample stock of combustible matter to feed the rage of an inflamed populace, who were, at the same time, peculiarly agitated by a hidden source of discontent which they could not avow, but which did not operate with the less force from its being concealed; this was the want and private distress they already sorely felt in their families, through the loss of those pecuniary and other reliefs they constantly drew from the court, which they could not endure, nor would suffer to exist among them, at the time that it was affording them all these benefits. From these, and other causes, Versailles continued in a state of the greatest insubordination and disorder from the time of the king's removal to Paris; but this state of things was so common, and it being besides a generally received doctrine, that tumults and disorders were the genuine effects of patriotism, and that their worst consequences, such as conflagrations and massacres, were the natural result and legitimate issue of revolutions; while such partial evils were not worth consideration, when opposed to that immense mass of benefits by which they were produced; under all these circumstances and considerations, to-

barbarous acts of which the Versaillesians were afterwards guilty, were, perhaps, committed with a view to convince the Parisians that they were worthy to be entrusted with the care of the royal family.

gether with a sense of their past services, and a full confidence in the purity of their intentions, however mistaken or unguarded they might be in the mode of expression, the exorbitances of the Versaillesians passed for a long time without any particular notice.

It happened, however, in process of time, that the National Assembly became seriously apprehensive, that these people, whom they had considered only as noisy and riotous friends, were, after all their intemperance and violence on the other side of the question, become secret and dangerous enemies. In fine, they became to be considered as no better than a generation of plotters and conspirators, and were strongly suspected of a criminality, which, in any other season, and with respect to any other nation, would have appeared incredible,—that of leaguings with the aristocrats for the overthrow of the new constitution, and the establishment of a counter-revolution. About the season of Christmas these suspicions and charges ran so high, that nothing was talked of but Versaillesian plots and conspiracies; and the alarm became very general. One of the ridiculous stories then believed and circulated was, that a body of men was in readiness to march from Versailles to Paris, in order to murder La Fayette, Bailly, Neckar, and some other popular characters. This improbable tale, deficient in every circumstance which could give it the most distant appearance of credibility, produced, however, the effect of occasioning some considerable increase of the guards in Paris, as well as some alterations in their arrangement. Another much more probable story was, that a great number of the rabble of Versailles had intermixed with their brethren at Paris, in order to excite them to disorders and tumults. All these plots, like so many hundred others which were hourly disseminated, came, however, at length, to nothing; and it was not long before Versailles and its inhabitants were sunk in a state of utter oblivion.

The ingratitude of this people met with its just reward. From the state of population, rank, and opulence which we have described, in less than four years from the removal of the court, Versailles was so miserably reduced, that a more wretched and beggarly town was scarcely to be found in the whole kingdom of France; while want and distress, operating upon a proper disposition of mind, rendered the inhabitants so notorious for sharpening and imposition, that their lodgings, which might have afforded them some tolerable means of support, generally, through this cause, remained unoccupied, although the purity of the air, the excellency of the situation, the quiet and silence which reigned there, along with that pensive pleasure which most men derive from contemplating the ruins of fallen greatness, would otherwise have rendered it, both to natives and foreigners, one of the most delightful places of retirement that could any where be found.

The populace of Paris, notwithstanding the severity of the late law against riots, and the terrors to be apprehended from the display of the bloody flag, began to give strong indications



indications of their disposition to renew their usual course of tumults, about the very time that their neighbours of Versailles were so sedulously forcing themselves into notice, and had excited so much suspicion and trouble. Whether a real scarcity now began to prevail in the metropolis, or whether those who *deemed more insurrections necessary* had again recourse to the creation of an artificial famine, which had already proved but too successful in the promotion of tumults, the price of bread was one of the assigned causes for these movements among the Parisians, who insisted that this essential article of life, without any regard to the price of grain, or to any other of those circumstances which have a necessary influence over the markets, should be unalterably fixed at Paris, at the very low rate of two sous per pound. The reasonableness of this demand cannot but appear very striking, when it is known, that the Parisians were, at this time, supplied with bread at a rate which would, *ceteris paribus*, prove an expence or loss to the nation of two and twenty millions of livres a year.

But the Parisians felt another cause of discontent, which operated much more grievously upon their imaginations than the price of bread, however grievous that might appear. The proceedings of the court of Châtelet had given the greatest offence to the body of the populace. That court, having been constituted by the National Assembly a temporary judicature, for the trial and punishment of all treasons against the nation, had, accordingly, proceeded through what, in England, would be called a course of state trials. They began their process with the baron de Bezenval, the commander of the Swiss, whose life, as has been before shewn, was with so much difficulty saved from the fury of the Parisians. They accordingly watched the issue of this trial with the same kind of anxiety as hungry wolves experience when waiting for their prey; still flattering themselves that the court would not dare to acquit a man whom *they* had so long and so often condemned; and warmly hoping, that so long and painful a cessation from action and amusement as they had now endured, would be closed by a sportive holiday, on which the baron's mangled carcase, dragged in procession through the streets, and his head exalted on a pike, would renew a pleasing remembrance of all their past triumphs.

During his trial, the baron displayed a degree of composure, firmness, and resolution, which astonished the beholders; and repelled the accusations preferred against him with such judgment and spirit, that the court could not, either with regard to justice, or to their own character, possibly avoid acquitting him; at the same time, that the supreme contempt which he shewed for any danger that might accrue from a due discharge of his military duties, seemed to over-awe even his enemies. It is, however, to be observed, that the Swiss cantons took so spirited a part in behalf of their persecuted commander, that it was thought the National Assembly did not wish matters to be carried to extremity against him; so that the violence of the mob was possibly the greatest danger which he had to apprehend.

Although the court had not yet pronounced sentence, yet every body being now convinced of his acquittal, nothing could exceed the rage and indignation of the disappointed populace, who considered the boasted benefits of the Revolution as nothing but deceptions, if the majesty of the people were to be thus flagrantly insulted, and their authority grossly invaded, by attempting to strip them of their inherent right of summary and executive justice. They, accordingly, determined to force the prison in which Bezenval was confined by the Châtelet, and to exhibit in his person a memorable and bloody instance to mankind of that inexorable justice by which they were guided, the execution of which should not be prevented nor diverted by any laws or by any authority.

The twelfth of January was the day fixed upon for the accomplishment of this glorious design; and the expectations and cruel hopes of the rabble were risen to the highest point at which they were capable of arriving. But they had lost many of those advantages which had contributed to their success in their past conflicts with the court, and were now watched with a degree of vigilance that almost precluded the possibility of surprize. Bailly, La Fayette, the National Assembly, and, in a word, every part of government, became masters of the whole design, before it could be carried into execution; and all adopted such measures as seemed best calculated for its prevention or defeat. La Fayette acted, upon this occasion, with great vigour, diligence, and effect; but one circumstance in his conduct excited great surprize, and afforded no small room for speculation: this was his placing the security of Paris, and the preservation of her tranquillity, in the hands of that very militia who had before refused to repel the violence of their *fellow-citizens*, the mob; instead of entrusting them to the regular standing forces, who received constant pay, and of whom the late French guards formed so conspicuous a part. Nothing could be more flattering to the militia than this distinction and mark of unlimited confidence, in a case of so much supposed danger; they accordingly acted their part inimitably well; but nothing could be a more galling affront to the regular troops than this preference given to men whom they despised.

Though the immediate designs of the populace were thus overthrown, yet the capital continued in a state of ferment and disorder for two or three days. Cabals and meetings were continually taking place, and all the past indications of mischief were renewed, and seemed to appear in stronger colours than usual. The Versaillesians were again supposed formidable, and thousands of them were said to be mixed with the Parisians. Mischiefs of every kind, and accompanied with every degree of horror and ruin, were generally expected; and even those who were best informed, conceived some great and dreadful event to be near at hand. The aristocrates were, as usual, charged with being the authors of this evil, in their endeavours to carry off the king, and to bring about a counter-revolution. It would only have exposed a stranger to mockery or suspicion, if he had attempted to shew the glaring improbability of a coalition or alliance so monstrous and



and unnatural, as that supposed to have been formed between the royalists and the rabble of Paris or Versailles, who seemed, by some inherent instinct, destined to be their mortal and implacable enemies. At the same time, it was openly said on all sides, that the king's life would be the immediate sacrifice to any attempt to rescue his person; and that the whole royal family would probably perish at the same instant. All foreigners, who had any knowledge of the former, and even very late, character of the people, were astonished at the coolness and indifference with which the immolation of the sovereign, in such a circumstance, was publicly talked of in all companies, from the highest to the lowest, as an act which of course must take place.

In the mean time, La Fayette and his militia, by a well-timed exertion of vigour, extinguished the combustion in Paris. He suddenly surrounded at night, a body of eleven hundred of the mutineers, who were assembled in the *Champs Elysées*, two hundred of whom he made prisoners, and so terrified the rest that they seemed to think themselves fortunate in escaping with their lives. On searching the prisoners, they were found to be well provided with powder and ball, made up into cartridges, but not a single musket was to be seen in the whole party. This put a stop for the present to nocturnal meetings, as well as to riots by day. Yet such was the genius of the time for the fabrication of plots, for the discovery of mysteries in the most common and obvious occurrences, and for the belief of the most incredible fables, that this was still insisted upon, and that by men neither destitute of knowledge nor information in other respects, to be the beginning of a grand aristocratical plot, deeply laid for the subversion of the constitution and present government. A troublesome question, however, still remained to be solved, who those immediate instruments of the plot, those actual riotors, were? With the evidence of two hundred prisoners before them, this seemed a question easily answered; but it would be too much to suppose the patriotic Parisians the authors of such a crime; and as to the Versaillesians, besides that they had borne their full share of reproach already, they were too near neighbours to bear the whole burden of infamy. In this difficulty, the term of *Brigands*, which had already answered so excellent a purpose, in destroying the seats of the nobility, luckily occurred; but, as if questions multiplied in proportion as they were resolved, it still remained to be answered, who these Brigands were? If they were men, like others, and not totally imaginary beings, their existence might surely be identified with ease. The only solution that could be found to this question, was the supposition that they were composed of Germans and other foreigners, who had come to Paris for the purpose of exciting tumults, in order to facilitate the execution of this incomprehensible plot.

Bezenval being acquitted, and departed in safety from Paris, the Châtelet now ventured upon a task which before would have seemed pregnant with infinite danger—the trial of the prince of Lambesc, the marechal Broglio, and some others of those principal fugitives

fugitives who had long been accused of that supposed plot, for the destruction of the city of Paris, and of the National Assembly, for governing the kingdom entirely by the sword, and placing the monarch in a state of more unlimited despotism, than even the worst of his predecessors had possessed or attempted, and which had laid the basis of the Revolution in the preceding month of July, as well as of all its subsequent consequences, to the present day. As the event of these trials seemed to include, in no small degree, the grand question on the necessity, justness, or fitness of the Revolution, which derived its birth from this pretended plot, so no cause could be more interesting, or tend to raise public expectation to a greater height; and the several parts of it had been so long, so often, and so peremptorily repeated and asserted, that it was supposed such a body of evidence as nothing could resist or controvert, would now be adduced in its support. But, to the inexpressible astonishment of every body, excepting, perhaps, those who were in the immediate secret of things, no evidence beyond conjecture, inference, vague reports, and hearsay conversations, appeared on the side of the prosecution; so that the plot was still involved in its original obscurity, and Broglie, with the other fugitives, were, of course, to the great discontent of the Parisians, acquitted of the crime of *lèse-nation*.

To reconcile or account for the various contradictions and inconsistencies which appear in the conduct and actions of men, will ever be found, in many cases, a matter of extreme difficulty. Although this business undoubtedly stood foremost in point of importance of all those which had been prescribed to the cognizance of the Châtelet, yet has it been surmized, and that not on weak grounds, that the principal rulers were extremely averse from having it brought forward; indeed they could not but wish, that the weakness which now appeared in so essential a point, through the total failure of all evidence in its support, should not have been thus exposed to all the world. It was, probably, imagined, that this was an affair which bore such strong appearance of danger, on whatever side it was examined, that the Châtelet would not venture to meddle with it; and it was possibly intended, that no great apology should be required to justify the omission. Be that as it may, the Châtelet soon became an object of constant abuse with the democratical writers, and was treated with a coldness and indifference by the Assembly, which strongly indicated that its new powers were not likely to be lasting.

It would seem as if this state of things produced, in one instance, a disposition to temporize, and accommodate matters to the occasion, in that court, which ill-accorded with the high character of honour and inflexible integrity, which, through a long course of past years, it had, in defiance of power, so justly merited, and so often nobly sustained. This was in the case of the marquis de Favras, who was accused of having formed a plot for assassinating some of the leading patriots, with a view to facilitate the accomplishment of a scheme for promoting a counter-revolution, and carrying off the king. The evidence against him was so weak and defective, that it has been compared with that  
which



which has heretofore been received, and brought so much disgrace upon the course of legal justice in England, in those unfortunate periods of her history, when Titus Oates and similar villains were allowed to flourish, and such men as Jefferies were the dispensers of our laws. Favras was condemned and executed; and this unfortunate man was generally considered as a victim destined to be a peace-offering to the Parisians; in the vain hope of reconciling them to the loss of those others, on which their desire was much more strongly fixed.

Monsieur, the king's brother, to whose household Favras had formerly belonged, finding himself publicly accused, by the populace of Paris, of being concerned in the plot; and the editor of a democratic paper having had the audacity to assert that a loan had been actually negotiated in his name, for the purpose of raising money towards the execution of the conspiracy, thought it necessary to repair to the Assembly of the representatives of the commons at the Hotel de Ville, where he addressed them in a speech, in which, after noticing the audacious calumnies that had been advanced to his prejudice, he said, that he thought it his duty, as a citizen of Paris, to come into the midst of his fellow-citizens, in order to explain the nature of his connection with the marquis de Favras. He then told them, that having occasion for a sum of money to defray the expence of his household, Favras had offered to procure him two million (about eighty-three thousand pounds sterling) from the Dutch bankers; which offer he accepted, and signed bonds to that amount. He expressed his conviction, that it would not be expected he should justify himself from any participation in an enterprize so infamous as the conspiracy in question; that his public conduct, and his well-known sentiments, would place him above all such suspicions; he had always maintained that the authority of the king ought to be the basis of national liberty, as national liberty was the firmest support of the king's authority.—He next wrote to the Assembly, to apprize them of the step he had deemed it necessary to take; when it was proposed to refer the matter, for immediate consideration, to the Committee of Research; but this proposal was over-ruled, on the suggestion that it would be more respectful to regard the honour of the king's brother as incapable of being injured by the breath of calumny. The matter was, therefore, dismissed.

It was a curious circumstance, and worthy of notice, that the conduct of the Châtelet, in the condemnation of Favras, instead of answering the end proposed, was equally reprobated and condemned by both parties; and that that court was overwhelmed with such torrents of reproach, rushing from all quarters, as it had never before experienced, in the course of its existence. Convinced, as they undoubtedly were, of its justice, the judges did not sink under the weight of the reproach, but seemed desirous of retrieving their character by the vigour with which they prosecuted the enquiry after the authors of the plot, murders, and intended massacre of the sixth of October; being those

worthy.

worthy citizens, who had been represented by the democratical writers as totally innocent of all crime, and as acting purely in their own defence. Not content, however, with this instance of independence and spirit, as if it were to afford a demonstration that the love of justice was the only operative motive of their actions, they entered deeply and with the utmost earnestness into that, evidently, most critical and dangerous business, an enquiry into the conduct, designs, and proceedings, of the duke of Orleans, and of Mirabeau, who acting apparently as his instrument, was in fact the framer of every thing that shewed genius in his plans, and that went beyond cunning in his projects. It required no inspiration, nor even much sagacity, to have seen, that whether these enquiries came within the letter of their instructions or not, they could not at all accord with their spirit and design<sup>52</sup>; and were widely different from the purposes to which that court owed its temporary institution. They were, however, permitted to proceed to a certain decent and considerable length in this important investigation; until, at length, becoming too troublesome, bringing matters to light which it was the interest of the factious demagogues to involve in darkness, and the preservation of those appearances which had operated to their institution being no longer necessary, their powers were suddenly withdrawn, their enquiries left unfinished, and the Châtelet was forever laid by.

In the mean time, the king's firmness in rejecting the proposed visit and coalition, was, through means or motives which have not been made public, at length overcome. It is not to be supposed that he could be totally indifferent to the menaces against his life which were continually thrown out in case of any attempt to rescue his person, (an event that might possibly take place, without his knowledge or concurrence, in the present state of temper and discontent which prevailed through so great a part of the nation); and considering his remarkable affection for the queen and his children, whose lives, he knew, hung by the same thread with his own, it is not to be supposed but he was as deeply affected on their account as his own. Perhaps the representations that were made to

<sup>52</sup> A contemporary writer observes—"This trial is not *dans le sens de la Revolution*; the king is the only Frenchman in his dominions who cannot hope to have justice done him." M. Mirabeau pretended that it was the object of the Châtelet to make use of his name, in order to bring the Revolution to trial; (*à faire le proces à la Revolution*).—Mirabeau termed the official information filed against him by the attorney-general a *libel*.—The same writer says—"It will be found that this trial begun by the Châtelet was nothing more than a bugbear (*épouvantail*) employed by La Fayette as a check upon the Lameths, the Barnaves, the d'Aiguillons, the Mirabeaus, and all the Orleans' faction. A great number of proofs and depositions has therefore been sacrificed to them; but they will one day re-appear, when the hour of vengeance shall have arrived. I must also remark, that the species of monster, called *Coupe-Tete* incessantly paraded the streets and public places of Paris, during the trial. He publicly declared that *he ran no risk, so long as Mirabeau remained in the Assembly*."—Indeed Mirabeau was so well convinced of his ability to render the proceedings of the Châtelet ineffectual, that he boldly asserted in the National Assembly, that the witnesses would fly sooner than the parties accused.—*Journal Politique*, &c. tom. iii. p. 92, 93, 94.



him, of the good consequences it would have, as to the general welfare and tranquillity of the kingdom, might have operated as another powerful motive.

Whatever were his motives, the king appeared suddenly at the National Assembly, on the fourth of February, where he complained of the attempts which were made to shake the basis of the new constitution, and declared it to be his desire, that it should be universally known, that the monarch and the representatives of the nation were united; that their wishes were the same; that he would defend that constitutional liberty, the principles of which the general wish, in concert with his own, had consecrated; and that, conjointly with the queen, he would early form the heart and the sentiments of his son, for that new order of things, which the circumstances of the empire had introduced and sanctified<sup>53</sup>.

As soon as the king was withdrawn, the Assembly voted an address of thanks to him; and perceiving at once the deep dismay and consternation with which this unexpected measure seemed nearly to overwhelm the minority, they instantly determined to take advantage of their confusion and astonishment, and immediately issued a decree, which, in that state, none had the courage to oppose, and by which every member was obliged to take the new-devised civic oath, under the penalty of being excluded from giving his vote on any occasion. This test was of such a nature, that they had reason for conceiving it would prove effectual in purging the Assembly of most, if not all of those, whose names or countenance they no longer wanted, and whose company they no farther wished to be troubled with. The Assembly then decreed a general address to the provinces, reminding them of all it had done for the sake of public liberty, laying before them what it proposed farther to do, and holding out proper reasons and arguments to prepossess them "against those unfavourable impressions which evil-minded persons were endeavouring to create amongst them<sup>54</sup>."

By this extraordinary proceeding, which certainly betrayed an extreme facility of disposition, and a most ardent desire to promote the re-establishment of tranquillity and order, the king, without gaining one new friend, lost many of the old, and much of the confidence and consideration which he held with all. The Assembly had lately passed a decree, by which all persons, of whatever religion, were declared eligible to all offices and employments of the state; and by another decree they abolished that feudal principle, which attached infamy to the descendants of persons executed for crimes; a principle originally founded on excellent motives, the hope and expectation of preventing, by the influence of honour and family-affection, the commission of crimes, but daily be-

<sup>53</sup> Rabaud, p. 141.

<sup>54</sup> Idem, p. 142.

coming more inefficient as the times became more corrupt, and therefore highly proper to be abrogated, as it made the innocent suffer for the vices of the guilty, without any adequate return for such a departure from the common rules of justice.

The spirit of anarchy and violence, which still prevailed in the provinces, and which was evinced in the execution of summary justice, so highly gratifying to the mob, in various places, and in the plunder and destruction of many of the remaining seats of the nobility, induced the Assembly, in addition to the riot act before noticed, to pass a decree, which made the municipalities responsible for every damage which might come from riotous assemblies of the people in any part of the kingdom.

The Assembly next resumed the affairs of the clergy, a business which they justly considered of the highest importance, as their estates and property were to supply that pledge and security which were to be offered to the nation for the discharge of their debts, as well as to make good the current deficiencies which arose from the failure of payment of the remaining taxes, and the total loss of the most productive, which had been generally repealed.

On the thirteenth of February they suppressed all monastic establishments for ever, and confiscated all their lands, allowing, however, the present friars and nuns to continue in the observance of their monastic vows, granting them a small stipend for their subsistence; and to the nuns the privilege of not being removed from the convents they occupied, without their own consent and free choice.—We are far from standing forward as advocates for a monastic life, fully sensible of the abuses to which such institutions are exposed, and of the inconveniences which must necessarily result from them, we should have been the first to commend any rational attempt at improvement, or even suppression. But to attack, by force, those rooted prejudices, which were imbibed from education, and confirmed by habit; to tear the hoary recluse from his long-loved shades of retirement, and throw him on the busy theatre of life, where the constant pursuit of far different occupations had disabled him from playing his part; to take him from a situation, in which he was exempted, by an ample revenue, from the necessity of directing his attention to sublunary concerns, unless for the purpose of relieving his fellow-creatures, (with the means for which it supplied him), in order to place him in one where the pififul subsistence allowed him by his plunderers must necessarily impel him to study all the little arts of economy, and to shut his ears against those sorrows which he was no longer able to soothe by his charity—to do this, and to expose him likewise to the continual temptations which the world holds out to violate those solemn oaths from which *their* efforts to absolve him were impious and vain, was to exert a species of authority as unwarrantable and atrocious as any the annals of despotism exhibit.



Had the National Assembly, in this instance, been swayed by motives of state policy—and very powerful motives does state policy afford to the *discouragement* of monastic institutions—they would have proceeded in a very different manner; they would not have begun by the subversion of laws which long prescription had rendered respectable; they would not have dared to *abolish* those fabrics which the piety—*mistaken* piety indeed!—of their ancestors had raised; they would have acted with a moderation and prudence more suitable to the motives by which they were influenced. It might probably have been wise to prevent the reception of any new noviciates, and perhaps to have left it to the option of every monk, either to pursue that course of life to which he was accustomed, or to quit his convent, and mingle with the world, with a pension adequate to secure his perfect independence. In that case, at the death of a friar, his portion of the monastic revenue might have been applied to the use of the state—provided no heirs of the original benefactors to the convent appeared to claim it—and thus in the course of a few years, without violence, without cruelty, and without injustice, every rational purpose of improvement would have had its full effect; and the monasteries, at length, have been totally suppressed. But the National Assembly did not even profess to be guided by any such motives: relying solely on the authority they had usurped, in express contradiction to the instructions of those from whom they derived their political existence, they boldly avowed their rapacious intentions; and only attempted to justify this violent seizure of property over which they had no legal controul, by the necessity of removing incumbrances which they themselves had contributed to augment.

By this arbitrary and unjust proceeding, they drew down upon themselves the maledictions of thousands, whose blessings they might easily have secured; not only the immediate objects of their persecution must have imprecated vengeance on their heads, but the numerous beings who, from their vicinity to the suppressed monasteries, experienced their beneficial influence;—friends to the poor, the monks dispensed their charity with a liberal hand; the best of landlords, their loss must be bitterly deplored by their weeping tenants, who have, doubtless, felt, and severely too, their change of masters; for a community can never have so many motives to oppression as individuals; and the *monied men*, into whose hands the greatest part of the ecclesiastical property was most likely to fall, are, of all descriptions of men, the most disposed to avarice, tyranny, and extortion.

As the business of the clergy was now brought nearly to a conclusion, at least with respect to fact, though not entirely as to time, we shall pursue it to the end. In the succeeding month of April, the Assembly completed their plan. They voted away, in pursuance of their prior resolution of November, all the territorial possessions of the church, destining them, in general, but not specific, terms, to the payment of the public debt. They assigned to the ecclesiastics, in return, certain fixed pensions, barely sufficient for their existence; although not in any degree suitable to their past habits, condition, or

modes of living, many of them being of the first families in the kingdom, and long accustomed to affluence. The Assembly, likewise, at this time, began to issue to the creditors of the state a new kind of paper-money, under the name of assignations, that is *Assignats*, on the confiscated lands of the church, which were to be the general security for all the paper thus issued. Hence originated that inundation of *Assignats* which have since deluged France and the neighbouring countries; and which have excited the astonishment of Europe, through the extraordinary exertions which they have enabled her to make.

This paper currency was issued, chiefly, to satisfy, in the first instance, the demands made upon them by the *Caisse d'Escompte*. The spoil of the church was now become the only resource of all their operations in finance; the vital principle of all their politics. It was necessary by all, even the most violent, means, to put every individual on the same bottom, and to bind the nation in one guilty interest to uphold this act, and the authority of those by whom it was done. In order to force the most reluctant into a participation of their pillage, they rendered their paper circulation compulsory in all payments. The general tendency of their schemes to this one object, as a centre, and a centre from which afterwards all their measures radiate, is a circumstance that deserves the minutest attention. All the inconveniences arising from the sudden introduction of a paper currency—soon swelled to the enormous amount of fifty millions sterling—may be easily imagined, and have, indeed, been ably depicted by men highly competent to judge of its effects. Neckar exerted his utmost influence to prevent the adoption of a measure which he considered as equally destructive of public credit and public convenience. But the plan was too deeply laid to be easily frustrated: to facilitate the sale of ecclesiastical plunder, was a matter of great importance to those rash demagogues, whose pernicious measures required the most extensive support. Every purchaser of church property must naturally deem his tenure precarious, and must know that the only security he could possess must be derived from the National Assembly, whose decrees, therefore, he became interested to support. Hence numbers of new partizans was ensured, and “a system of tyranny upheld by a system of plunder.”

Mirabeau stiled this robbery of the church, and the consequent sale of its property, for the promotion of which the new paper currency was created, *un instrument sur et actif de la Revolution*; judging it essential to the safety of the new government, that the members of those corporate bodies who had been deprived of their offices, and plundered of their wealth, should be “*depouillées aussi du moindre rayon d'esperance*”<sup>55</sup>.—It is worthy of remark, that this man, who had so lately published a severe Philippic against the emperor, Joseph the Second, for the injustice of his claim on the Scheldt, and in which he

<sup>55</sup> Discours de M. Mirabeau, pp. 13 et 16.



particularly reprobated his conduct with respect to the plunder of the monasteries and convents in the Low Countries, had now, in so short a period of time, so totally departed from the sentiments which he then avowed, that, through the whole progress of the present business, he was, on every occasion, the strongest and most determined leader in, or supporter of, all the violent proceedings carried on against the French clergy. The following quotation from the treatise above mentioned will serve to illustrate this conduct, as well as to justify the observation:—"The internal revolutions which the emperor has effected in his dominions have been greatly applauded; but what a number of objections might be brought against these eulogiums! at least, the panegyrist of Joseph the Second ought to tell us what justice they find in driving a citizen from the profession which he has embraced under the sanction of the laws. I will tell them plainly, that *there is as much injustice in expelling a friar or a nun from their retreat, as in turning a private individual out of his house.* Despise the friars as much as you will, but do not persecute them; but above all, do not rob them; for we ought neither to persecute nor rob any man, from the avowed atheist down to the most credulous captain<sup>50</sup>."—So much do men's sentiments vary with circumstances, even in questions of right or wrong, of justice or injustice! questions which it might be supposed did not admit of any change of opinion.

Notwithstanding the immediate dismay produced by the late act of the king, in approving of all the proceedings of the National Assembly, and in disclaiming and reprobating all measures pursued in his favour, the ruined privileged orders soon recollected themselves, and instead of sinking under that unexpected blow, seemed in a little time to acquire fresh activity and new vigour, from a check which had at first thrown them into such visible consternation. For though, in order to strengthen both, they wished to make their own cause common with that of the crown, in every attempt for the recovery of what was lost, or the preservation of what remained of their natural rights, yet they considered their own distinct interests as being of too great a magnitude, and too immediate an importance, to be sacrificed to the weakness, errors, or fears, of their harassed imprisoned sovereign.

In this state they naturally directed their attention, in the first instance, to their own refugee princes at the court of Turin, with whom they maintained a close correspondence, particularly from the Southern provinces; but these ruined princes, who were beholden to strangers for shelter and subsistence, could afford no other means of support or assistance than the little which might possibly be derived merely from their names and rank; while this source, weak and confined as it would have been at best, was still farther narrowed, and reduced almost to nothing, by the peculiar unpopularity in which the rash

<sup>50</sup> See Mirabeau's "Doubts concerning the free Navigation of the Scheldt." English Translation, note to p. 160.

ness and imprudence of the count d'Artois had very unfortunately involved that prince. The alarmed and distressed nobility, however, did not rest here; they are said to have been incessant in their applications to all the neighbouring continental powers for their interference in delivering their king, and in assisting to establish in their wretched country some just and equitable form of government, which, under the sanction of a limited and well-regulated monarchy, might put an end to the present horrid scene of confusion and anarchy, while it afforded liberty of person and security of property to every order and class of the people.

But it happened unfortunately, with respect to the cause of the distressed, that Europe seldom has been, through a long course of years, in a state less capable of affording the succour now demanded, or in which the minds of the people, or the dispositions of the sovereigns, were less calculated for undertaking any enterprize, than at the present. The mad ambition of the emperor Joseph, under the influence of the everlasting power and vast designs of Russia, to which he became so wretched a dupe, besides the ruin and spirit of revolt which it spread through his own extensive dominions, had, in no small degree, deranged the general system of European politics; for, while several states were watching with apprehension and dismay, the dreaded evils, which the farther progress and success of the dangerous combination between these two mighty empires were capable of producing; while all spirit of adventure was thus effectually restrained in the centre and North of Europe; the court of Spain, so closely united in blood and alliance with the king and government of France, was, at this critical season, when the existence of the great and parent stock of the Bourbon line was more than at stake, most industriously involving herself in a ridiculous squabble with England, and was wantonly and blindly rushing into a contest which she was totally incapable of sustaining. On the other side of the Mediterranean, the king of Sardinia, besides his being by nature a peaceable prince totally indisposed to war, was not, from the state of his finances, of his army, of his fortresses, or of any of the leading requisites to such a decision, in any condition to hazard the experiment, even supposing that his own disposition had prompted him ever so strongly to the measure.

Under these circumstances it so happened, that, scarcely in any age, ancient or modern, whether among refined or half-civilized nations, any similar body of men, so suddenly involved in the most pitiable state of degradation and ruin, ever excited so little sympathy, or ever met with so cold and forbidding a reception, as the French nobility experienced, upon this occasion, in all the neighbouring countries. They were, almost without exception, every where beheld with a prejudiced and malignant, rather than a kind and benevolent, eye; and, even while they yet possessed money, found it difficult to procure shelter.



But the overweening confidence, the haughty and imperious language, with the precipitate determinations of the National Assembly, were fully competent to the creation of enemies abroad as well as at home, who might otherwise have been friends, or at least, indifferent spectators. In their rage for the total overthrow and abolition of the feudal system, they had paid as little regard to the rights and interests of foreigners, as they had done in all cases with respect to those of their own nobility and clergy. The duke of Wirtemberg, the prince of Deuxponts, with many other German princes, both secular and ecclesiastical, held great possessions in Alsace, and other provinces, which France had heretofore wrested from the empire in the days of its troubles and distress, and which these princes held by the same original tenure that they did their other estates more immediately at home. These several districts, with all the ancient rights appertaining thereto, were, in the year 1648, after the forcible transfer of paramount dominion by arms had already taken place, farther secured, confirmed, and guaranteed to the possessors, in the strongest manner, by the treaty of Westphalia, to which France herself was a contracting party, and from which alone she could derive any legal title or claim to the provinces in question, of which these smaller fiefs composed a considerable part. Yet these rights, so authentically confirmed and guaranteed, had been, without the smallest explanation or ceremony, totally set aside and subverted, by the simple decree of a new body of men, who had arrogated to themselves the most unlimited power of destruction, while a captive king, in violation of treaties by which he was personally, and his country through him directly bound, and in direct contradiction to his own opinion and advice publicly communicated to that body, was compelled, most unwillingly, to give his sanction to this violation and wrong.

It has already been shewn what indignation was excited in the National Assembly, just before the king's removal from Versailles, upon receiving his letter, in which he had ventured to expostulate, in the most gentle terms, upon the impolicy and danger, as well as the flagrant injustice, of this, and of some others of their acts, which had been then hastily decreed; it has likewise been shewn, that at ten o'clock at night, in the midst of that dreadful tumult, in which his life was exposed to danger the most imminent and immediate, he was obliged, without comment, explanation, or reserve, to give his sanction to this decree, as well as to that which established and confirmed the Revolution, and to all others which were then in readiness: upon this, as well as upon every occasion in which the subject was at all mentioned, the National Assembly affected to treat the rights and claims, as well as the persons and condition, of the foreign princes, with the most insufferable contempt; nor did their great bond of right and security, the treaty of Westphalia, which is considered as the Magna Charta of the Germanic empire, and holden by the Germans as little less than sacred, meet with any greater respect.

This occasioned a general outcry against the French, and particularly against the conduct of their Assembly, in Germany; while the injured princes, no less irritated per-

haps, by the injurious treatment they had received, than by their immediate losses, were incessant in their applications, both individually and collectively, to the Diet of the empire for protection and redress. The Diet took up the business with great spirit; and though the untoward state of public affairs did not yet afford leisure to the great powers of the empire to take such an active share in the business as might give immediate efficacy to its proceedings and intentions, it was by no means the less sensible of the injury, and of the insult thereby offered to the whole Germanic body. Indeed the Diet could not fail to view, with an eye of jealousy and suspicion, the new French government, which had begun its career by a flagrant violation of public faith, of the most sacred treaties; by setting the general opinions and laws of mankind at defiance; and by betraying a disposition to dissolve or overthrow all those compacts between nations, which had been constructed as mounds for the preservation of their mutual peace and security.

Thus from the habit of giving a loose and unbounded scope to haughty, contemptuous, and arrogant language; of turning all matters, however serious, to ridicule, which did not entirely correspond with their own ideas, or directly suit their liking; and by a dictatorial and peremptory mode of proceeding, in all points corresponding with the language and manner, were the seeds of a bloody and extensive war, pregnant with events and consequences that mock all human calculation, most industriously sown by the National Assembly in that vast and powerful empire. Whereas, if a due attention had been at first paid to propriety of language and conduct; if the semblance of justice and equity had been observed, by duly examining and considering the rights of the princes, and the obligations of treaties; and if the result of this enquiry had been, the proposal of a fair compensation to the former for the surrender of their feudal rights, there is not the smallest room for doubting, that this troublesome business would have been easily accommodated: and if the princes had even, in some degree, over-rated their demands, political prudence would have shewn, that it was more eligible to submit to some small present pecuniary extortion, and thereby get quit of a claim which could never be renewed, than to suffer, particularly in so critical a season as the present, such a bone of endless discord to continue constantly in view.

When it was too late, the Assembly seemed in some degree to become sensible of its error, or at least to be alarmed at the effect which it was already producing; and several months after the abolition of the feudal rights, it carelessly voted an indemnification to the German princes. But the season for conciliatory accommodation was now past: injury, sharpened by insult, had naturally roused the keenest resentment; and in this temper they refused to sell or to barter their birth-rights. The Assembly shewed a stoical indifference, which they seemed to think consonant with the stern and inflexible dignity of republicans, upon this refusal. They, however, ordered the offer of indemnification to be repeated, and left the matter after to take its ordinary course.





*J. Jones fecit*

M: BARNAVE,

*Publish'd as the Act Directs by C. Lowndes, N<sup>o</sup> 66 Drury Lane May 7<sup>th</sup> 1794*



Nor was the National Assembly more fortunate with respect to the government of the French colonies in the West Indies, than it was in its transactions with foreigners; though it must be confessed that their failure in this point was more owing to the precipitancy of its resolutions, and its want of caution, and of attention to local circumstances, in carrying them into effect, than to any error in principle, or defect of justice in the premises on which they were founded. The abolition of the slave trade was originally intended to form the basis of their proceedings in their colonial arrangements; and it cannot be too much lamented that a measure so truly consonant with every principle of justice and humanity should have been so precipitately and injudiciously conducted as to produce consequences fatal to the prosperity and welfare of the colonies. In the debates on this subject, M. Barnave, one of the most able leaders and supporters of the Revolution, who went all lengths with the ruling party, observed, "That, unfortunately, the rights of men could not apply to the West-Indies; that if they endeavoured to make the application, they would lose their colonies, impoverish their trading and manufacturing towns, until the common people, grown desperate by the disappointment of their hopes, would be ready to sell themselves to the enemies of the Revolution."—It must, indeed be acknowledged, that, considered merely as a subject of state policy, without any reference to philosophy, or the milder feelings of humanity, the general declaration of the rights of man, without any distinction of country or colour, by a nation possessing great and extensive colonies cultivated by slaves, and still determined to retain those colonies, under a full intention of reaping all the customary advantages from them, *without providing any substitutes for the slaves, or any indemnification for their owners, for the loss sustained by the emancipation of those slaves*, must ever be deemed a rash as well as a hasty and improvident measure; but neither these considerations, nor the eloquent admonitions of Barnave, could produce that spirit of prudence and circumspection without which the most just and upright measures are frequently productive of very pernicious effects.

A society had for some time subsisted in France, under the title of *L'Ami de Noir*, or the Friends of the Negroes, which owed its origin to the societies formed in England upon the same principle, and like them issued several publications in favour of the oppressed Africans, which being injudiciously circulated in the West-India islands, tended to disseminate confusion and discontent. The planters had made a complaint to the king, long before the commencement of his troubles, of the dangers to which they were already exposed, and of the greater to which they were liable, through the proceedings of this society; but they were grievously disappointed upon receiving for answer, "That he was glad to hear there was such a society, and that some of his subjects had humanity enough to concern themselves about the fate of the poor negroes;"—an answer which sufficiently testified the goodness of his heart and the integrity of his mind. His ministers, however, held very different sentiments from the king upon this subject.



Calonne had decreed considerable bounties to encourage and encrease the slave trade; and Neckar, who has been called the avowed child of sentiment, philanthropy, and morality, not only continued those bounties, but in a treatise, abounding otherwise with precepts and sentiments of the greatest humanity, laid it down as an incontrovertible axiom—"That the nation which sets the example of abolishing the slave trade, will become the dupe of its own generosity"<sup>57</sup>.

The exertions of the friends of the negroes, whether at home or abroad, seemed, however, to have lost all consideration, and even remembrance, as soon as the account of the Revolution at home reached the islands, and the doctrines of universal liberty and equality were promulgated among the colonists. The beautiful island of Saint Domingo, the finest parts of which were covered with a number of the most flourishing, rich, and happy colonies, perhaps, in the World, was the first, the greatest, the most lasting, and the most deplorable victim to the ensuing calamities. Though a contempt of all government and subordination soon became general among all orders and degrees of men, yet the troops seem to have been among the first who afforded a practical example of the enjoyment of their new liberty. This was displayed by the regiment of Port au Prince, in the murder of their colonel, a brave and distinguished officer; who, in open day, was slaughtered at the head of his regiment. Single enormities, however striking in themselves, were soon lost in the general glare of the greater which were to succeed. The colonists, like the people in France, were divided into two great parties, the royalists and the republicans, each of which appeared at different times to predominate; but the great pressure of domestic troubles and dangers excited by the new state of things too immediately affected the planters, to admit of their yet massacring each other about the politics of Europe.

For the present occasion called forth and brought into a state of great notoriety, a new race of men, who had hitherto been little known or heard of, at least on this side the Atlantic. These were the Mulattoes, a numerous, bold, hardy, and daring race; who, being derived from the promiscuous intercourse between white men and negro women, were, by a strange perversion of language, distinguished by the appellation of people of colour. The much greater part of these were by birth in the condition of freemen, with respect to person and property, but were secluded by law from any share in the civil government, and consequently from giving their votes in the election of magistrates or de-

<sup>57</sup> Notwithstanding the prediction of M. Neckar, we sincerely hope that England will set that example; rather than to belong to a nation, which, by consecrating the principles of justice and humanity, shall acquire the appellation of generous dupes, than to be member of a state, which, by encouraging a traffic founded in blood and nourished by oppression, deserves to be distinguished by a denomination far more severe and disgraceful.

puties. These now insisted upon a full participation of all the rights and privileges of free citizens, without any regard to the distinctions of birth or colour, which, they said, had been formed in the days of despotism, darkness, and ignorance. In this claim, which, according to some, they supported with moderation and temper, but, according to others, with arrogance and intemperance, they were strenuously opposed by the Whites.

Both parties sent deputies to the National Assembly; jarring, contradictory, and inexplicit decrees, were sent out: some of them were said not to be understood, some impracticable, and others would not be obeyed. The Colonial assembly was suspected by the National of aiming at independency; and it was said, that the planters talked publicly of calling in the English, and surrendering the island to them. Some of the decrees were understood by the Mulattoes to confer rights on them which the Whites would not allow them to possess, and which the others prepared to wrest from them by force; and, until this attempt was made, the animosity and mutual abhorrence of the parties was increased to a degree seldom equalled. In process of time, commissioners were repeatedly sent from France; but these carrying out with them the violent political prejudices which they had imbibed at home, and being generally devoid of principle, if not of abilities, instead of attempting to heal differences, they, upon their arrival, depending upon the chances, which length of time, distance, and the uncertain state of government in the mother country, might produce in their favour, only endeavoured to procure immediate power and consequence, by placing themselves at the head of some of the contending factions; and thus rushing, at once, as principals, into all the rage and fury of civil discord, increased, to its utmost pitch, that confusion and mischief which they were intended to remedy.

It would far exceed the bounds of a general history to give even a brief narrative of the troubles which ensued in the French islands; of the continual disputes which arose, and the short intermissions of seeming conciliation which took place between the Whites and the Mulattoes; the masters and their slaves; the governors and the colonial assemblies, and between the National Assembly at home and the two last: without taking into the account the political factions which raged, and increased the general confusion and fury; while every arrival from France was pregnant with new sources of discord. In Saint Domingo alone, three different colonial assemblies were chosen in three different parts of the island, who, all sitting at the same time, were only distinguished by their endless contention.

While the colonies were thus commencing, or already in the course of their disastrous career, and plots, conspiracies, and insurrections, were the constant topics of discourse at home, the state of the army, which had in a great measure thrown off all subordination.



subordination and discipline, was a source of much uneasiness to the National Assembly. The troops had been guilty of great outrages in different parts of the kingdom; but tumult and outrage were things now so common, that these might have passed without much notice, if it had not been for the uncertainty from what spirit they proceeded, and of the political sentiments which operated on the soldiers. Proper means were used to found the principles both of officers and private men, and the result of the enquiry was said to be, that the former were very generally aristocrats, that is, true to their oaths and the principles of monarchy; but that the soldiers were so generally well disposed to the Revolution, to which they conceived themselves indebted for an augmentation of pay, and an exemption from those restraints which constitute the soul of military discipline, and might without much difficulty be firmly secured to it. This object being accordingly attained with ease, the army became, like the nation, divided into two great parties. But the means they used for gaining or securing the soldiers, however necessary it might have been on the present occasion, had the ill effect of destroying all remains of subordination in the army; the soldiers, swelling with the importance which they found they possessed, and thereby secure of support and protection in all cases, now added contempt and party animosity to that dislike, arising only from aversion from command, which they had before entertained for their officers. Such an army was little calculated for public defence, or contention with a foreign enemy, however it might, through the very excess of its faultiness, exceed all others in the peculiar service of over-awing and controlling the disaffected at home; especially in a state of things, where the end was generally allowed to justify the means; and acts of violence and outrage were seldom enquired into, if they were committed on the right side of the question, or under the influence, as it was termed, of true patriotism.

A change which now took place, or which had rather been gradually growing in the disposition and sentiments of the people since the commencement of the Revolution, however dangerous or fatal it might prove in its future operation or consequences, afforded, for the present, the greatest strength and security to the new system, which it could possibly obtain. This was the violent passion for sovereignty, which easily superseded the weaker desire of liberty, whose possession appeared as nothing, when placed in comparison with the charms of that seducing enchantress. This passion was not confined to any particular order or class of men, but spread like a contagion through all ranks of the populace in every part of the kingdom, and rendered them as zealous patriots, in the common acceptation of that term at the time, that is, as anxious and as violent supporters of the present system, as the National Assembly themselves.

From the beginning of the troubles, this supreme authority had been continually exercised without scruple or ceremony, not only by those smaller or greater communities who carried the appearance of acting in a public capacity, but very generally by mere individuals,

individuals, or by any accidental collection of them, whether brought together in the pursuit of private revenge, or prompted by the general desire of plunder. In a word, the exercise of this uncontrouled authority was holden to be not only the criterion but the essence of freedom; and, by degrees, its continual practice had led not only the larger districts, but even smaller communities, in a great measure to consider themselves, and to act, without any formal assumption of the name, as distinct republics, though connected by some sort of federal union, the nature of which they took no trouble to enquire into. They, however, considered the National Assembly as a necessary legislative and executive head, for the purposes of preventing discord among the numberless parts, of conducting the public business, including the management of the revenue, and of concentrating and directing the public force; while, with all these high powers, they held that body to be ultimately subject to their general and supreme controul. Upon the same principle, and under the same impression, every active citizen, if not every one at large, now stood high in his own estimation, as being one of the many millions of joint sovereigns who ruled a great empire.

This general passion for rule in the people, and opinion of its being a right, so subversive of all government, and not less incompatible with the principles of a republic than a monarchy, having been brought into being and act by circumstance and occasion, was nourished and fostered, not only by the new doctrines promulgated by the National Assembly, but, perhaps, still more by the new and strange language which it became fashionable to use in that body; the majesty of the people, their supreme authority, their uncontroulable power, to which all things must bend, and even the principles of law, justice, and right give way, being the usual flowers of speech which adorned every harangue, that pretended to any merit, or aspired to any praise. The effect of such language continually resounding in the ears of a people already maddened by the very doctrines which it conveyed and confirmed, may be much more easily imagined than expressed. In fact, popularity being the idol to which the writers and orators, not only of the Assembly, but throughout the kingdom, paid their constant and most fervent devotion, all their writings, and all their speeches, were directed to flatter the populace, and consequently tended to cherish and increase this dangerous phrenzy.

As the desire of rule and sovereignty is inherent in the human breast, and among the strongest of all the passions that infest it, it cannot be wondered at, that the petty but numerous possessors of new and unexpected power, should determine, at all events, to preserve so invaluable a treasure, and should tremble at every apprehension of its loss. This coalesced the apparent bulk of the nation, or at least the acting part of it, to a man, in one common interest and bond of union, which, however fragile all other ties might prove, carried in its nature the appearance of indissolubility, and the causes which produced it could never cease to operate. The most uninformed of those, who were thus  
suddenly



suddenly curst, or, as they deemed it, *blest*, with the possession of power, could scarcely avoid perceiving, that no other system of government upon earth than the present, could or would have endued them with such an authority; and every man accordingly found himself immediately bound, by the most captivating and irresistible motives, to support and defend, at all risks, and in defiance of all perils, that state of things which procured him such unspeakable happiness.

The real or pretended plots and conspiracies, as well as the foreign dangers which were unceasingly holden out, along with the real, vague, and futile industry of the restless and ruined royalists, who were eagerly grasping at every shadow, which seemed to indicate, in the weakest degree, the most delusive hopes of recovering their rights, excited the greatest possible alarm among those people, who were now in possession of all the smaller division of power and authority, and who determined to maintain what they possessed. The province of Brittany was the first that set the example of associating, arming, and forming large bodies of men, in military array, with an assumption of government and appearance of armies, for the defence of the new constitution against all its enemies, foreign or domestic. This example was speedily followed by its neighbours, particularly the provinces on the Southern side, and in a little time became general throughout the kingdom.

Thus was produced that extraordinary display of the might and greatness of France, the glories of which even Rabaud, with all his eloquence, his redundancy of expressions, and his almost inexhaustible stock of new-coined words, drawn from the Revolution-mint, seems at some loss to describe in terms sufficiently splendid;—although he tells us, “That the earth seemed to bring forth armies;” that “nothing was to be seen  
“any where but battalions of citizens, who, assembled in thousands, were swearing to  
“live free, or to perish: the clang of arms, the military music, the banners floating in  
“the wind, the delightful sentiments of brotherhood, which bound so great a multitude  
“to one and the same cause, all awakened in their hearts the enthusiasm of liberty;” and that “France beheld four millions of men in arms upon her plains; millions, conscious of their strength, and well acquainted with their rights<sup>58</sup>.”

And yet, notwithstanding this terrific muster-roll, which seemed to hold out defiance to the united force of mankind, there are the strongest grounds for believing that the number of the disaffected throughout the kingdom was at least equal to that of the supporters of the new system; so that the supposed four millions of men in arms must have been a gross exaggeration, as the general population must otherwise have far exceeded any rational estimate that ever was or could be made of it; without observing, what has

<sup>58</sup> Rabaud's History of the Revolution, p. 148.

since evidently appeared, that the kingdom did not possess arms sufficient for one fourth of the number assigned. For besides the two great bodies of the nobility and clergy, whose discontent was avowed, all the late parliaments and magistrates throughout the kingdom, with all the retainers and harbingers of law and justice, in all their various degrees, (whose members in France were so prodigious, that a true estimate of them, if it could be made, would appear incredible) were to a man, excepting between one or two hundred country lawyers, who sat in the National Assembly, totally adverse and hostile to the new government. This body was deemed so formidable, that Rabaud seems to consider the men of the law—the appellation by which he classed them in the gross—among the most dangerous enemies of the new constitution. To these were to be added the working manufacturers throughout the kingdom, whose number was very considerable, and whose distresses were now great and general; nor, perhaps, was the number of laborious poor in the provinces much less, whose families could scarcely have existed in any manner, but for the fostering benevolence and bounty of their lords, who were now either ruined or absent; and of the clergy, who were in a still worse state. To all these might be added an immense number of others, under various descriptions, whose losses or disappointments had rendered them unhappy, and consequently dissatisfied with the present state of affairs.

The unexpected dispute between Spain and England, on the Nootka-Sound business, which was a matter of surprize, as well from its suddenness as the insignificance of the cause, to all Europe, interrupted, in some degree, the proceedings of the National Assembly in the regulation of domestic affairs and government. The court of Madrid having, upon this occasion, claimed the assistance which France was bound by the Family Compact to afford, in case of a war, the king sent a message to the Assembly, on the thirteenth of May, informing them of the dispute, the claim, and of the great naval preparations made by the English; at the same time requiring their assistance, for the equipment of a fleet of fourteen sail of the line, to be in readiness to assist in fulfilling the engagements that mutually subsisted between the two nations. Though the answer to this message was civil enough, but guarded against at all entering into the subject, it immediately gave rise to a very interesting debate on a most important subject:—this was the grand question. In whose hands ought the power of making peace and war to be lodged?—The debate was supported with great warmth for several days; the democratic party insisting, of course, that the power in question ought to be vested in the Assembly, while their opponents maintained the necessity of suffering it to continue where it had remained since the first foundation of the monarchy.—One of the latter gave a great turn to the debate, by telling the Assembly, “That if they took this power to themselves, a battle would soon be fought in the middle of their hall between Spanish piastres and English guineas.”—This stroke had great effect, and contributed to a kind of compromise between the parties; which at length, on the second of May, produced a decree, by which it was determined, That the right of making peace and war was vested in the



nation:—That war should not be resolved upon, but by a decree of the National Assembly, which decree should be made on the explicit notification of the king, and be afterwards sanctioned by his majesty:—That the care of guarding the kingdom from external attacks, of maintaining its rights and possessions, was delegated to the king, by the constitution; to him also were entrusted the maintenance of political connections abroad, the conduct of negotiations, the appointment of ambassadors, the power of raising armaments and making preparations for war, in proportion to those made by neighbouring states; the power of distributing the sea and land forces, as he might judge proper, and of directing their operations in time of war:—That, in case of hostility impending or actually begun, an ally to support, or a right to preserve by force of arms, the king should be bound to give notification thereof, without delay, to the legislative body, and to make known the causes and motives thereof; and, if the legislative body were not sitting at the time, it should immediately assemble:—That every declaration of war should be made by the king of the French, and in the name of the nation.

There were some other clauses included in the decree, one, indeed, of great importance, which, in the name of the French nation, renounced for ever all conquests, and consequently all wars leading to that object. If this excellent resolution had been adhered to, it would have produced a most happy effect, through the favourable impression which it would have made upon the sentiments of mankind, and particularly on the neighbouring states, with respect to the wisdom, moderation, justice, and peaceable disposition which predominated in the new government; which all Europe would then find itself interested in supporting, and which the most remote nations could not avoid regarding with respect and admiration.

In support of the decree by which the right of making peace and war was taken from the executive power, and vested in the legislative body, it was observed, that to involve nations in war without their consent, by the exercise of prerogative, was one of the greatest absurdities that the annals of despotism could exhibit; that the generality of wars were produced by the resentment of an individual, the caprice of a king, or the influence of a minister; that where a war was to be supported by the lives and property of the people, it was equally consistent with justice, reason, and humanity, that the people should alone be allowed to judge when it was proper and necessary to commence hostilities; that the adoption of a contrary system would encourage tyranny and sanction injustice; and, finally, that a reference to the history of the different wars that have been waged in all monarchies, ancient and modern, would demonstrate the truth of these assertions, and consequently establish the wisdom of the decree.

On the other hand, that the right of making war should exclusively vest in the executive power had, till this period, been allowed by all; our own philosopher, Locke, in his

his treatise on governments<sup>69</sup>, has clearly demonstrated the wisdom of this right; and whoever maturely reflects on the fundamental principles of monarchical states, must acknowledge, that it is essential to their welfare, if not to their existence. The advocates for this doctrine in France observed, that it was the duty of the Assembly to be guided by the will of their constituents, else they could no longer be deemed a *National Assembly*; that when their constituents declared, in their instructions to their different deputies, that the government should continue to be *monarchical*, and *purely monarchical*, they certainly meant that the king should reserve the right of making peace and war.—But the instructions were not confined to such general terms: many of them particularly adverted to the present question. Those of the nobility of Arras contained the following passage—“The States-General shall declare, that *to the king belongs the exclusive right of making peace or war*, and the disposal and discipline of the army<sup>70</sup>.”—Those from Bas Vivarais said—“The king, assisted by a council of war, shall dispose of the troops, *at his pleasure*, for the purpose of *external defence*<sup>71</sup>.”—The instructions from Evreux observed—“The plenitude of the executive power comprehends the *right of making peace or war*, and all treaties relative thereto, together with the disposal of the public forces for the defence of the nation, and the support of the laws<sup>72</sup>.”—“Let it be decreed by the States-General”—said those from the commons of Rouen<sup>73</sup>—“that in case a war shall occur during an adjournment, prorogation, or dissolution of the States,” (which sufficiently proves that they did not mean the right of making war should vest in the States) “the taxes shall be raised one or two *sols* in the *livre*, which augmentation shall be denominated the war-tax.”—The same terms are employed in those of the Third-Estate, or commons, of the Cotentin<sup>74</sup>.—But the electors of Paris, the very seat of democracy, and the very source of democratical principles, were still more expressive and precise, as well with regard to defensive as to offensive war. They said—“In case of a defensive war, of invasion, or hostile attacks, the king, as the depositary of the executive power, will adopt the most decisive measures for the public protection; and, in this case, as in that of *offensive war declared by the king*, the States-General shall meet again in two months<sup>75</sup>.”

If the other instructions took no formal notice of this monarchical prerogative, which the kings of France had enjoyed, without interruption, for fourteen centuries, it was because they did not imagine it could become an object of doubt or contestation, and it was therefore never discussed by any of those electors. But since the justice of the principle was acknowledged by all such as adverted to it, it has been deemed fair to consider the silence of the rest as an acquiescence in the determination of their fellow-citizens.

<sup>69</sup> Chap. ii. “Of the legislative, executive, and federative power.”

<sup>70</sup> Arras, *Cahiers de la Noblesse*, p. 7.

<sup>71</sup> Item, Bas-Vivarois, fol. 11.

<sup>72</sup> Item, Evreux, p. 6.

<sup>73</sup> *Cahiers du Tiers-Etat de Rouen*, art. 55.

<sup>74</sup> *Cahiers du Tiers-Etat du Cotentin*, manuscrits.

<sup>75</sup> *Cahiers du Tiers-Etat de Paris extra muros*, p. 24.



The enemies to the decree in question farther observed, that the justice of this principle was, at first, acknowledged by the Assembly itself, and that at the moment when it declared, that the French government was monarchical—that the supreme executive power was placed, exclusively, in the hands of the king—that he had the command of all the sea and land forces—that the care of watching over the external safety of the kingdom, and of maintaining its rights and possessions, was delegated to him: when it declared this, it in fact decreed, that if the safety of the state, or the defence of its rights, should require a declaration of war, it was the king's duty to make that declaration; that if any treaties should be requisite either for the prevention or termination of a war, it was his place to conclude them; that the army, of which he was the *supreme head*, being destined to preserve the kingdom from all external attacks, it was his duty to employ it for that purpose the moment it should become necessary, and to decide *when* it would be proper to exert the supremacy of the executive power, which was entrusted to him, that the state might receive no injury.

These consequences, it was affirmed, were so natural, and so intimately connected with the first decrees of the Assembly, that by separating them they destroyed with one hand what they had created with the other. In what—it has been asked—does the executive power consist, if not in the right of exerting and directing the public strength? Does not war consist in acts of force and violence? and can the legislative body have any thing to do with acts of that description? To say that it was the king's place to carry on a war, but that the power of deciding whether it should be carried on was vested in the legislative body, was to separate the act from the will, in a case where there could be no interval between them, and which required that they should both proceed from the same principle. When the nation gave itself a chief, when it entrusted him with the disposal of its forces to be employed in its defence, it certainly did not mean that others should have the direction of those forces! It charged him with the care of watching over the public safety; it therefore delegated to him every power that was necessary to enable him to discharge the duty that was imposed on him; and it would be absurd to suppose that when it put arms in his hands, it bound up his will, and fettered his motions.

But ideas thus simple were insufficient to guide the conduct of those, who, finding themselves, for the first time in their lives, entrusted with the power of giving rules to an empire, preferred the most abstract notions, made a point of analysing every thing, dissected all the principles that were submitted to their consideration, and often mistook the different parts of one undivided *whole* for so many distinct objects, to each of which they then laboured to assign a separate class<sup>76</sup>. Thus, in their dissertations on

<sup>76</sup> De Calonne, p. 174.

the subject of war, they described four different rights; viz.—that of deciding on its propriety—that of preparing for it—that of declaring it—and that of carrying it on,—and these rights, according to their system, would admit of being divided between the delegated representatives, whose province it was only to deliberate, and the supreme delegate, who was destined to act. But in reality, and according to the custom of all nations, in case of hostilities, these four pretended rights are all consolidated into one—the war and the declaration of war are confounded together, and even, generally, the former precedes the latter.

The Assembly, then, could not escape, by means of any metaphysical subtlety or distinction whatever, the censure they deserved, for having acted in contradiction to the will of their constituents, and to their own principles, when, after acknowledging that France was governed by a monarch invested with the plenitude of the executive power, they deprived him of the right of making peace or war.

But independent of these objections, the decree itself has been attacked as being replete with inconsistencies, in its context; and incompatible with the safety of the state; in its effects. It has been maintained, that that part of it which delegates to the king the care of guarding the kingdom from external attacks, of maintaining its rights and possessions, as well as its political connections abroad, and the power of distributing the forces, and directing their operations, would lead any one to conclude, that it secured to the king his right of making peace and war. For what is meant by *guarding a state from external attacks*, if it does not mean to repel every attack that is made on it, and even to avert any impending danger? How is it possible *to maintain the rights and possessions of a kingdom*, without going to war with whoever threatens or invades them? How is it possible *to conduct political negotiations* without the ability to foresee or declare what must result from their failure or success? When they authorized the king *to make preparations for war, and distribute the sea and land forces, as he might judge proper*—did not they urge him to quit the peaceful station assigned to him, and to enter the lists of war?—and, when there, would not the distinction between the one and the other be reduced to a thread, which might, in an instant, be broken, without leaving time for any previous deliberation?

The particular inconvenience of obliging the king to give notice to the legislative body, before he could support an ally, or pursue hostile measures, has been successfully exposed. What a glorious state of safety must have been that of a vast kingdom, by whose institution it was decreed, that, *in case of hostilities impending or actually begun*, the king, before he was at liberty to adopt any means of defence, must convene the National Assembly, if not sitting at the time, and quietly wait until its members—dispersed over an extent of territory of four-and-twenty thousand square leagues—should arrive.



arrive at the capital! until its orators should have displayed their erudite-eloquence! and until a legislative decree should, finally, after mature deliberation, have been issued, well and duly sanctioned, in order to decide on the propriety of fighting!!!—What potentate would accept, as an ally, that shadow of a monarch, who, when the assistance stipulated should, in a case the most urgent and pressing, be claimed from him, must reply—  
 “The delegates of the nation are dispersed over every part of it; without them I know  
 “not what I can do, either to assist you or to defend myself: but have patience; it will  
 “not require more than six weeks to collect around me a numerous assembly of curates,  
 “advocates, physicians, men of letters, astronomers, men of words, honest husbandmen,  
 “and presumptuous youths, who all together, without the smallest knowledge of political connections, the cognizance whereof is confined to myself, will soon have determined, at a single sitting, I hope, unless *the previous question* interfere, whether *the rights of man* permit us to go to war or not?”

It has been contended, that, ridiculous as this may appear, it is the necessary consequence of the decree; which there is no possibility of justifying, by alledging that, in case of attack, the king should repel force by force, and defend the state from invasions which either threaten or endanger it; it is, on the contrary, in the very case of hostilities, impending or begun, that the king is bound to consult the National Assembly; it is on the notification he must give to it of those hostilities, that the legislative body has reserved to itself the power of deciding whether a declaration of war is to take place or not. The fifth and sixth articles of the decree settle this point beyond the possibility of a dispute. The fifth declares—“That upon such notification being made by the king,  
 “if the legislative body are of opinion that the commencement of hostilities was owing  
 “to any misconduct of ministers, or other agents of the executive power, the author of  
 “such aggression shall be prosecuted for the crime of LEZE-NATION.” Hence it is evident that the decree could have no allusion to offensive hostilities on the part of the French government; and that those which were ordered to be notified by the king to the Assembly, were hostilities against the kingdom.

But—says article the sixth—“If upon such notification” (of an attack actual or impending, “the legislative body shall resolve that war ought not to be declared, the executive power shall be bound to take the necessary measures for stopping or preventing  
 “all kind of hostility.” What measures can be alluded to? It is clear they are not violent measures, since they are prescribed for the purpose of avoiding war; they must necessarily, therefore, be measures of non-resistance, measures which passively tend to resign to the enemy the object of contestation. If, then, the monarch had begun by resisting, by defending the possession attacked, and by repelling the invasion, he would have taken up-

on himself to employ measures directly contrary to the decision of the Assembly; and the ministers, who would answer with their lives for such conduct, would assuredly be very careful how they advised him to run the risk. The opposers of the decree, therefore, thought themselves justified in declaring, that, according to the tenor of the decree, the king must remain a passive spectator of hostilities, *impending* or *begun* against his people, till the Assembly should have time to meet, to deliberate, and to decide.

They maintained, that however absurd this might appear, it was the literal sense, nay the *only* sense in which the decree in question could be taken. Here—say they—is another proof of it. The Assembly declares, that the nation renounces all ideas of engaging in any war with a view to conquest, and will never employ its forces against the liberties of any people. Every body understood by this declaration, that the nation announced to the world its intention of never more waging an offensive war;<sup>78</sup> and there is reason to believe it was the intention of the Assembly to have it received in this light; without which, and if it had only pretended to renounce all ideas of conquering and subduing other nations, it would have been a vain and ridiculous boast, at a time when France was rather in circumstances to request that other powers would not take an advantage of her situation, than to promise that she herself would not employ her arms to a bad purpose.

Since, then, there was to be no more offensive war, the right of making war, which the legislative body took away from the king and arrogated to itself, could only be the right of making *defensive* war; and if the king might still exert that privilege without the participation of the legislative body; if he could employ the forces of the state in defending the frontiers, or in assisting his allies when attacked, before the legislative body had decided on the propriety of so doing, he would possess all the right of making war which could now be possessed in France; consequently the famous decree would be wholly insignificant and useless. To give it any signification, it is absolutely requisite that its effects should be—agreeable to the terms of the decree—to prevent the executive power from acting, “even in case of hostilities impending or begun,” before the Assembly have deliberated on the subject. Thus, were an enemy to effect a landing in any part of the kingdom, and the commandant of a neighbouring town were to repel his attack, and drive

<sup>78</sup> However real the distinction may be between an offensive and a defensive war, there are so many means of disguising the distinguishing characteristics of each, and it is so usual a thing to transpose them, in an arbitrary manner, in the manifestoes of belligerent powers, that what the National Assembly here says in the name of the French nation may appear to be of no greater consequence than all those protestations of the same nature which are invariably employed by powers at war, in order to prove, that it is with extreme regret they have commenced hostilities, and merely for the defence of their people. All offensive war being unjust, were a monarch to acknowledge himself the aggressor, he would thereby load his arms with a varnish of injustice that must prove prejudicial to their success. For this reason, such an acknowledgment is not to be found in any declaration of war, and it is always easy to avoid.—DE CALONNE, p. 181.



him off the coast, he would be guilty of a criminal anticipation of the will of the Assembly; the minister who should direct such a mode of proceeding, and the general and all other agents of the executive power who should assist in putting it in execution, would become *state-criminals*, for having opposed force to force, and consequently for having made war without any previous explanation, without a notification of the motives which led to it, without the sanction and authority of the legislative body.

The Assembly was called upon, in case it should disavow these consequences, either to disavow the decree from whence they evidently result, or else to explain in what manner the executive power could be at once active and confined; how, with its hands tied by the prohibition to commit any act of hostility, without the previous consent of a deliberative body, it could defend the kingdom at a moment when its frontiers were attacked or threatened; and how ministers could be rendered responsible for the ravages caused by an invasion against which they had not immediately employed the military forces, when, by the terms of the new constitution, they were not permitted to employ them, even on the most urgent occasions, till after they had explained the necessity of so doing to the representatives of the nation, and till after those representatives had assembled to judge of their motives, and had acknowledged the validity thereof?

The form of declaring war, *in the name of the nation*, has also been attacked; in the first place it was needless, because all mankind must know that every king acts in the name of the nation; in the next place it betrayed, on the part of the Assembly, a gross inconsistency of language and conduct. They had before applauded the king for declaring that he and the nation were one; and now they distinguished the king from the nation, when engaged in combating its enemies. It is evident that this affectation of changing the *very idiom* which universally appertains to royalty, was intended to degrade the monarch, not only in the eyes of his subjects, whom they wished to wean by degrees from considering themselves as such, but even in the eyes of those foreign powers with whom he might form treaties. Does the abasement of its chief, then, lead to the exaltation of the nation? What a preposterous and mistaken policy was it, to wish that the king, who governed them, might not be equal, even in external dignity, to the other monarchs of Europe! If their philosophic legislators were ignorant of the value of the respect and consideration of empires, they at least ought to have known, what one of their own members told them, "That the royal dignity is to be regarded as a part of the national property"<sup>79</sup>—and by what right did they assume the authority of dispossessing the nation of that property?

By another article of the decree, it was declared that, during the whole course of the war, the legislative body should have the power of requiring the executive power to ne-

<sup>79</sup> See Mirabeau's speech, on the 20th of May, 1790.

gociate a peace, and the executive power should be bound to comply with such request. Here, again, the same singularity of style and inconsistency of matter are observable. "There is something"—says M. de Calonne<sup>80</sup>—"extremely offensive, in observing, even in the decrees which are destined to form the French constitution, an artful, though ridiculous affectation of rejecting the word KING, and substituting *executive power* in its place." Here the legislative body speaks to the executive power; requires the executive power to negotiate; regulates the conduct of the executive power: there we have seen grenadiers addressing complaints to the legislative body against the executive power: were not mirth superseded by indignation, those fantastical arrangements—this modern French frippery of new-fangled speech—would naturally excite a laugh. Is it then because the title of king commands respect, and might again inspire it by the effects of habit, that the Assembly has such a repugnance to employ it? Yet it still has recourse to it on some occasions, as may be remarked in this very decree; but when the Assembly assumes an imperative tone, when it prescribes to the monarch his rule of action, then, wishing, doubtless, to avoid the *antithesis* (as yet too harsh for the ears of the French) of king and subordinate agent, it personifies the *executive power*, and under that name imposes its obligation on the monarch."

It is true, indeed, that in the article in question, the legislative body appears only to reserve to itself the right of *requesting* the executive power to negotiate a peace; but, in the language of the Assembly, *request* and *command* were synonymous, since, in the same instant, it declared—"the executive power shall be bound to comply with such request."

The contradiction does not consist merely in the words; it is still more remarkable between the commencement and the conclusion of the decree. It begins by declaring, that, "to the king alone is delegated the care of maintaining political connections abroad, and of conducting negotiations;" and it concludes by giving to the legislative body the power of deciding on the proper time for negotiating a peace. "But"—exclaimed Mirabeau—"who is to know which is the proper moment for making peace, except the person who holds the thread of all political connections? Will you disclose"—said that orator to the Assembly—by a public discussion, the secret motives which lead you to sue for peace? Will you, by such means, betray the extent of your strength or weakness? It belongs then to the executive power to fix on the proper time for negotiation, to prepare for it in silence, to conduct it with address."

<sup>80</sup> l'Etat de la France, p. 185.

<sup>81</sup> M. Monnier also takes notice of this affectation—he tells us that on expressing his concern (on the sixth of October) that the Assembly had not gone to the palace, in compliance with the king's request, a member very gravely observed to him that, *the legislative power ought not to wait upon the executive power*, Le pouvoir législatif ne doit pas aller chez le pouvoir exécutif. *Faits relatifs à la dernière insurrection*, p. 16 note.



In opposition to these sentiments it was observed, that the nation was alone competent to decide on its own interests; was alone entitled to dispose of its own blood. It was asked, Whether it was just that a man, deceived by his ministers, should have it in his power to expose a whole nation to the dangers of war;—to doom, from frivolous motives, a hundred thousand citizens to death, to involve a hundred thousand families in affliction; and to load his subjects with taxes, for the support of his destructive expeditions? The right of declaring war is the right of expressing the general will, of forming a public resolution, of deciding on a great national interest;—such a right as this, it was contended, could only belong to the representatives of the nation.

Such is the substance of the most powerful arguments that were employed to impress a conviction, that it would be equally prejudicial to the national right, and to the national interest, to leave the king in possession of that essential part of the monarchical prerogative which gives the power of making peace and war. It was urged in reply, that the same sophisms on the question of right, the same illusions on that of interest, were here apparent, as had given birth to so many other errors. They were sophisms on the question of right, since they not only incessantly confounded the legislative body with the nation, and the delegation of the right with the right itself, but lost sight of this fact—that the king was also a representative of the general will; and since the consequences which they drew from this character of representative were as applicable to him as to the legislative body; and since, as often as any question occurred on the regulation of their respective functions, or the determination of their limits, that question was only between the hereditary delegate of the nation, and its *removable* delegates. The national sovereignty was then the judge, and not a party in the cause, and the principle which made all the public resolutions, the general will, and the interests of the community, center in the people, did not operate more in favour of the Assembly which exercised the legislative power, than in favour of the supreme chief, who was entrusted with the executive power; but that principle being equally the source of both powers, held the balance between them, and if any doubts arose on the distribution of rights to either, they could only be tried by the standard of general utility.

If the general utility, then—say the advocates for monarchy—be consulted on this question, Whether the right of making peace and war ought to be entrusted to the active power, or to the deliberative power; to the monarch, to whom all the forces are entrusted for the defence of the kingdom, or to the Assembly, whose duty it is to make laws for ruling it? The decision is evident, for it is the same thing as asking whether the exercise of that right requires a promptness of determination, assistance in its preparations, strength in its means, and activity in every thing that depends on it—and whether it be proper to delegate such a right to a body incapable, by its nature, of fulfilling the conditions annexed to it?—Means, however, were found to persuade the people, and, through them,

them, the Assembly, that the state would be more exempt from danger when its chief should no longer be at liberty to defend it from external attacks, and should no longer be considered as its representative with foreign powers.

To superinduce the adoption of this strange opinion, the declamatory orators of the democratic party appealed to the history of all monarchical governments, and to the cruel use which kings have made, in all ages, of the dangerous right of drawing the sword at their pleasure. They shewed that oceans of blood had been shed to gratify the vanity of an ambitious monarch, or the interested views of an odious minister. They exhibited, in their dreadful representations, the destruction of the human race, sacrificed to the caprice of sovereigns; not one of the common-place remarks on the horrors of war escaped their pencil; and, as if those horrors had been wholly confined to the regions of monarchy, they artfully threw a veil over all that has occurred in other governments, and seemed to have destroyed all those dark pages of history which are polluted with the more sanguinary wars of republics and oligarchies. Were we to give credit to them, we should believe that the wish of the multitude is ever the wish of reason; and that the intoxication of enthusiasm, the whirlwind of passion, the arts of corruption, and the blindness of precipitation, have less access to an Assembly of eight hundred members, than to a council of seven or eight <sup>82</sup>.

These are what were termed illusions. They proved, however, inadequate to seduce such as were said to understand and adhere to the essential principles of a good government. Many of those members of the Assembly who were most distinguished for solidity of sense, justness of sentiment, and splendor of eloquence, victoriously refuted, both the sophisms on the right of making war, and the declamations on the pretended utility of despoiling the king of that material part of his prerogative.

“ Since this right”—said M. de Clermont Tonnerre—“ must be entrusted to some one, is it not better to confide it, under the clause of responsibility, to a few persons who are bound by anterior laws, than to a great number of men who are restrained by no laws, who are checked by no responsibility? Will it be more prudent to confide it, unconditionally, to those who will make an arbitrary use of it, than to confide it, under strict and specific conditions, to such as will be responsible for the exercise of it?”—The decision of this question is to be found in the annals of every nation, and M. de Clermont was well-justified in quoting the political acts of violence and injustice exercised by the Roman senate; the calamities experienced by all those powers who have vested the right of making peace and war in an Assembly whose deliberations are public;

<sup>82</sup> De Calonne.



the people of Athens, led away by the mercenary orators of Philip<sup>83</sup>, in spite of the remonstrances of Demosthenes; the influence of intrigues or of foreign interference in the Diets of Poland, and the senate of Sweden.

If the right of making war be vested in the king—said the abbé de Montesquiou—before he attempts to exercise it, he must necessarily reflect on all the evils produced by war, and on the maledictions which he is about to incur. If, on the contrary, that right be confided to the National Assembly, nothing will be more easy to it than to engage in a war without incurring any part of that odium, which is generally annexed to such a measure. In support of this observation, the abbé remarked, that William the Third, in England, where he had the exclusive right of making war, consulted the parliament before he engaged in it; while he did not scruple to omit all similar forms in Holland, where the right was vested in a representative assembly, which he had reduced to submission.

The abbé Maury demonstrated, by arguments apparently irresistible, that France would no longer be a monarchy, but would become a *monstrous government, for which no name could be found*, should they presume to despoil the king of a right inherent in his crown, for the long space of fourteen centuries—a right, of which to deprive him, would be to rob him of the most essential prerogative of the executive power—a right which the Assembly was not authorized to contest, since although it was ordered by the nation to enforce the acknowledgment of the ancient constitutional rights of the French, it had not received full power to change and overturn, at its pleasure, the form of government. Let them quote, said, the abbé, from *the history of the whole world*, one single ~~state~~, *only* monarchical, in which the sovereign does not exercise, without dissent or participation, the right of making war and peace. The English themselves, at the Revolution of 1688, when the throne was declared vacant, and when they had the power of imposing such restrictions as they might think proper on their new monarch, never dreamed of limiting the right of making war, and of concluding such treaties of alliance or commerce as he might deem advantageous to the nation.

This eloquent ecclesiastic then entering on a luminous discussion of all the epochs of the monarchy, endeavoured to dispel the doubts which had been artfully raised by the opposite party, on the legal title of the French monarchs to the uninterrupted possession of that ancient right which was now the subject of dispute. Only one solitary fact had been opposed to it; and his manner of refuting that part of the arguments of his adversaries is sufficiently remarkable to justify historical notice.

<sup>83</sup> The inhabitants of *Paris* had been too often led away by the mercenary orators of *Philip*!

“ It is with concern”—said he—“ that I find myself constrained, by the necessity of a  
 “ just defence, to fix your attention on a disastrous epoch, which every true Frenchman  
 “ must wish to efface from our annals. I allude to the year 1356, when the States-  
 “ General were assembled, immediately after the ignominious defeat of Maupertuis,  
 “ near Poitiers. That National Assembly, or rather that grand conspiracy, directed by  
 “ Stephen Marcel, provost of Paris, undertook to forbid the dauphin, then regent of the  
 “ kingdom, to exercise the right of making peace and war. You recollect, gentlemen,  
 “ the deplorable state into which our unhappy country was plunged at this calamitous  
 “ period. The popular plunderer, Marcel, seized the produce of the taxes; caused the  
 “ king’s most faithful servants to be massacred in his very palace; and deceived the  
 “ people by promulgating the most seditious maxims; the nobility were assassinated in  
 “ every part of the kingdom; the seats of the wealthy were reduced to ashes; to be  
 “ rich was, in some measure, to be guilty of a capital crime; and property the most sac-  
 “ cred was openly invaded. All those magistrates, who were royalists, were deposed.  
 “ The conspirators, wishing to establish a royal democracy in France, had usurped all  
 “ the powers of the king. An universal defection took place throughout the army.  
 “ That part of the insurgents which was attached to *Charles the Bad*, proposed to raise  
 “ to the throne a prince of a collateral branch; a prince, too, who was convicted of  
 “ having formed the most abominable plots for the total annihilation of the royal fami-  
 “ ly<sup>84</sup>. This multitude of conspirators was distinguished by a standard of revolt, that  
 “ was publicly displayed. The provost of Paris had delivered up the gate of Saint  
 “ Anthony to the English and Navarrese. King John was, at that time, a captive in  
 “ London: the regent was a minor. It was under these unhappy circumstances that  
 “ the guilty States, profiting by the captivity of the monarch, and the minority of the  
 “ regent, disputed the king’s right of making war and peace. But the French nation  
 “ was no sooner restored to itself, than it repulsed and exterminated, as enemies to the  
 “ state, those daring madmen, who had sought to substitute the principles of democracy,  
 “ in other words, a general insurrection, for the ancient government of the kingdom.  
 “ The States, convened in 1359, formally acknowledged the king’s right of making  
 “ war, and when they refused to ratify the treaty between John and Edward, the only  
 “ motive they alledged for their refusal was, that the king was not at liberty when he  
 “ signed it. Such, gentlemen, is the epoch of horror and carnage, whence our ances-  
 “ tors saw, for the first time, those strange systems arise, which are now revived in this  
 “ Assembly. The comparison to which they must necessarily lead, and which we are  
 “ compelled to exhibit to our adversaries, (since they have dared to avail themselves of

<sup>84</sup> Though the abbé Maury strictly confined himself to the point of truth in his representation of the times he was delineating, it was scarcely possible to have exhibited a more striking or faithful picture of the *present* times. The features cannot fail to be recognized, though the colouring is too faint.



“ an example thus calculated to excite disgust? will not, I trust, prove very favourable to  
 “ their desire of securing the confidence of the nation.

“ It is proved, by all the fundamental maxims of the French government, that the  
 “ right of declaring war belongs to the king. It is proved, then, that the king will  
 “ cease to be king, if this prerogative be taken from him; if he be not the sole represen-  
 “ tative of the nation with foreign powers; or, at least, it will, surely, be acknowledg-  
 “ ed, that such a phantom of a king will no longer be the monarch of the French.”

The abbé Maury was equally impressive when, quitting the point of right to consider the interest of the nation, he asked the Assembly, how it could be uneasy about the delegation of a right, which it was impossible to exercise, and *a fortiori* to abuse, without that assistance which could only be derived from itself? and how it could answer for the safety of the nation, if, after having given to the legislative body the power of imposing taxes, it should likewise confer on it the right of making peace and war—How that body, released from all responsibility, and exposed to the ascendancy of eloquence, the seduction of gold, the threats of a deluded people, and, above all, to the first emotions of enthusiastic patriotism, unmatured by reflection—could inspire the nation with as much confidence as a citizen king, whose interests were inseparable from the public prosperity?—and how, when this state sentinel must necessarily keep an incessant watch over the motions of every power in Europe, assemblies, permanent indeed, but destined in future to sit only four months in the year, for the discharge of the numerous duties they had imposed on themselves, could preserve that same continuity of vigilance which was necessary for observing the dispositions, the projects, and the resources of the different courts; that promptitude of decision, without which the first of all political advantages, the art of profiting by the moment, could not exist; and that necessary secrecy, without which the designs of France, and her preparations, would be continually disclosed to other nations, who would be studiously careful to conceal their own?

The same considerations were developed by Mirabeau, with all that energy by which his speeches were generally distinguished. “ Let me ask you”—said he to his colleagues—  
 “ whether we shall have any better security, that no wars but such as are founded in jus-  
 “ tice will be undertaken, if we delegate the exercise of the right of making war exclu-  
 “ sively to an assembly of seven hundred persons? Have you foreseen how far the trans-  
 “ ports of passion, how far mistaken courage, and false ideas of dignity, may lead us to the  
 “ adoption and justification of imprudent measures? Cast your eyes on all political as-  
 “ semblies; you will see that they have never declared war but when under the influ-  
 “ ence of passion. If you give the exclusive right of deciding on the propriety of go-  
 “ ing to war to the legislative body, will you avoid that slowness of deliberation, which,  
 “ in such cases, is attended with infinite danger? Have you no dread lest your national  
 “ force

“ force should be *palsied*, as in Poland, Holland, &c. Have you no apprehensions that  
 “ that tardiness will be augmented, either because *our constitution insensibly assumes the*  
 “ *form of a great confederacy*, or because the departments must inevitably acquire a con-  
 “ siderable influence over the legislative body? Do you entertain no fears lest the peo-  
 “ ple, being informed that their representatives are to declare war in their name, should  
 “ not thereby *contract a dangerous tendency towards a democracy, or, rather, towards an*  
 “ *oligarchy*?—lest the wish for war and peace should originate in your provinces, should  
 “ soon become the subject of petitions, and excite, in a vast body of men, all the agita-  
 “ tion which an object of such importance is capable of exciting? Have you no fears  
 “ that the legislative body may be induced to pass the boundaries of its own power, by  
 “ the almost inevitable consequences of the exercise of the right of making peace and  
 “ war? Have you no fears that, in order to promote the success of a war voted by itself,  
 “ it may seek to influence its direction, and the choice of generals, especially in case of  
 “ misfortune, and that it may inspect every measure adopted by the monarch, with an  
 “ ever-doubting eye of suspicion and jealousy, that would, in fact, form a second execu-  
 “ tive power?

“ Again, do you think nothing of the inconvenience of an assembly being obliged to  
 “ assemble at the very time it should be employed in deliberating;—of the uncertain-  
 “ ty and hesitation which must mark all the measures of the executive power, which will  
 “ never know the extent of your provisional orders; of the inconveniences attending a  
 “ public discussion of the motives for making war or peace—a discussion, of which  
 “ all the secrets of the state (and long shall we have such secrets) often compose  
 “ the very elements?

“ Lastly, do you think nothing of the danger of transporting *republican* forms into a  
 “ government at once representative and monarchical? Let me entreat you to reflect on  
 “ this danger, for your own sake, for the sake of the constitution, and for the sake of  
 “ the king<sup>85</sup>!”—It was impossible to represent with greater force and perspicuity those  
 motives which necessarily led to the conclusion, that the right of making peace and war  
 should remain vested in the king; and yet that conclusion was neither adopted by the As-  
 sembly, nor, finally, by Mirabeau himself, who, after the decree had passed, became the  
 pusillanimous advocate of that very question which he had, at first, so openly and so  
 ably attacked. *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*, should have been his motto. In-

<sup>85</sup> In consequence of this speech, Mirabeau, who had the fortune of being so often, alternately, the idol, and the  
 aversion, of the mob, became the object of their utmost execration and rage. It was immediately reported, either  
 by the democratic party in the Assembly, or by those in the galleries, that he had been bribed by the court: and  
 this charge being speedily conveyed to the populace, a pamphlet was within a few hours cried and hawked about  
 the streets, entitled—“*The Great Treachery of Count Mirabeau.*” In this dangerous predicament he shewed great bold-  
 ness, and braved the democrats; but soon contrived, as usual, by a change of conduct, to reconcile matters.



deed it might have been applied with almost equal propriety to the major part of the Assembly, who were over-awed by the mob that collected in the Thuilleries, and by the exclamations of those in the galleries, on the day they passed the decree.

Immediately after the publication of this decree, the Assembly appointed a committee to examine into and report upon all treaties of alliance existing between France and other countries. This enquiry was founded upon a new doctrine at this time holden by many of the most violent republicans—that all treaties concluded by kings were in their nature illegal, therefore null, and consequently should not be binding on the nation.

It appears from the event, that however other treaties were considered, it was determined to support the connection and alliances with Spain, even at the hazard of a war, a consequence, which, in the present convulsed and disjointed state of the nation, must have been attended with infinite danger. During this interval, the people evinced that hatred of the English, which, notwithstanding the occasional professions of amity and regard, still lurked in their hearts. Violent speeches had been made, both in the Assembly and the popular clubs, and violent pamphlets published, all calculated to agitate and inflame the public mind, by expatiating upon the ambitious views and dangerous designs attributed to England. Commercial jealousy was also roused, and tended to encrease the national enmity. The merchants of the southern provinces, a great, powerful, and numerous order of men, were alarmed by the apprehension, that if Spain should be deserted in this emergency, she would find herself under a necessity of concluding a treaty with England, which, in its consequences, might prove highly prejudicial to the interests of France. The remonstrances and influence of the merchants were seconded and confirmed by the report of the committee of alliances, which was highly favourable to Spain, and consequently adverse to England.

Things were in this train, when M. Montmorin, in the beginning of August, laid before the National Assembly a recent application from the court of Spain for the expected assistance. The equipment of a powerful fleet, and a defensive alliance with Spain, were immediately determined upon; the Assembly, at the same time, deprecating any alliance for offensive purposes; a reserve which could operate only in words, as the assistance must from its nature prove offensive. A fleet of above thirty sail was fitted out at Brest with the utmost possible expedition; but the French naval force had, by this time, shaken off all subordination and discipline, with the same contempt as the army had done, and the seamen were become in all respects as disorderly and licentious as the soldiers. They had already gone to such a length as to refuse to serve under any officers but such as they liked; had instituted committees to report upon the naval qualifications, and political principles, of their commanders; and had, in some instances, cashiered their captains, and chosen new ones; a measure deducible from, and fully warranted

ranted by, that part of the new doctrines, which held, that kings were liable to be cashiered for misbehaviour like footmen. These mutineers had likewise been guilty of great disorders and excesses in the port and town of Brest; and, it was said, were encouraged and supported in all their enormities by the municipality of that place.

M. Albert de Rioms was first admiral and commander in chief of this mutinous fleet, a man of good character, deemed an able officer, and fully competent to discharge the duties of his command in all situations of service that could occur. It was said, and is believed, that whatever the admiral's other qualifications might be, he was suspected of not being so thoroughly democratic in his principles as the violent party in the Assembly wished him to be. It was likewise supposed, that they wanted to make the disorders at Brest a pretence for turning both that admiral and the present ministers out of their offices together; at the latter of whom they had long been carping, without, however, being able to bring any one direct charge to the proof against them. Some new penal marine law or code, which had been hastily voted by the Assembly, gave such offence to the sailors, that a more violent mutiny than any which had yet taken place, suddenly broke out at Brest. When their officers endeavoured to recall them to their duty, by reminding them of the oath of fidelity and obedience which they had taken;—they replied, in the true spirit of the Revolution, “We have taken no oath; we are the strongest, and will make the law<sup>86</sup>.”

As all business was now transacted by committees, one was immediately appointed to enquire into and report upon the causes of these disorders. M. Menon, one of the members, accordingly reported, that both the sailors and the municipality were deserving not only of censure but of punishment; but he, at the same time, represented, that the general dislike to, and want of confidence in, the ministry, was the latent cause of all the riots, mutinies, and disorders in the kingdom. A motion was immediately made for accusing the ministers, but, though it occasioned a violent debate, it was most unexpectedly lost; a disappointment which excited the most violent rage in the democratic party. M. Cazales distinguished himself by an excellent speech which he made, on this occasion, tending to demonstrate the impolicy of influencing the will of the monarch in the choice of ministers. He insisted, that the interference of the legislative body in such a point was repugnant to the principles of the constitution, and tended to destroy that division of powers on which the safety of nations depended. He enforced and confirmed this doctrine by quotations from the English history, taken from the reign of the two Charleses and the third William. He concluded thus:

“I must now observe to the National Assembly, that the ministers whom they now attack were pointed out by themselves to the king, and that many of them were

<sup>86</sup> *Histoire de la Revolution de 1789*, tom. vi. p. 168.



“ chosen from among their own members: every vague accusation is the invention of a tyrant; wherever such are countenanced, the state—to use the expression of Montesquieu—must be destitute of freedom.

“ It is already reported, that a project is formed for taking from the royal authority what little efficacy it is still suffered to retain; such a project is, doubtless, far from being the wish of the Assembly; but if they should be brought to adopt it, the true friends of the monarchy would then have nothing more to do than to crowd around the throne, and bury themselves beneath its ruins.”

Upon the re-consideration of the report, on the following day, the same reporter, who had before acknowledged, that both the sailors and the municipality had been guilty of crimes deserving of punishment, had the effrontery to tell the Assembly, that since they would not punish the real authors of the mischief, they ought not to punish men, who had only erred *through an excess of patriotism*. This strange doctrine was adopted as soon as delivered; and, in defiance of all regard to military order, subordination, and discipline. The mutinous sailors were only mildly exhorted to return to their duty; something like an apology was made to them for the new penal articles, by promising to re-consider them; at the same time, that they were flattered, by being presented with a new striped flag, which was to supersede the ancient white military ensign of France. The rage of the democratic party at the defeat which they had experienced on the preceding day, was so excessive as to become intolerable; and some of the opposite side having expressed their disapprobation at the measure proposed of changing the national flag, this awakened all the suppressed fury of Mirabeau, who, with his usual intemperance and violence, cried out—“ The aristocrates are grown insolent from their victory of yesterday; a fortnight ago they would not have dared, for their own safety, to object to this proposal.” These words, being properly resented, brought forth the immediate reply, “ That it was language worthy only of a leader of banditti.” Thus was instantly produced one of those scenes of disorder, noise, clamour, and passion, which so often disgraced that “ august” body.

The servants or assistants of the executive government, being now convinced that their official fate was finally determined, did not hold it to be either prudent or wise to urge the exertions of power to any farther extremity. Luzerne, the marine minister, resigned, and was replaced by Fleureau; but some suspicion or dislike prevailing against him, he experienced so many mortifications from the Assembly, that he was soon after glad to resign, and was succeeded by M. Thevenard. M. de la Tour du Pin, the war minister, was succeeded by M. Duportail, who had the good fortune to please the Assembly, but was loudly reproached by the other side, for totally neglecting the discipline of the army, and suffering the soldiers, already too little disposed to submit to any order or controul, to become entirely independent of all command; at the same time

that

that they began to be the common accusers of their officers, and constituted themselves judges not only of their actions, but of their principles. M. Duport du Tertre was appointed minister of justice and the admiral de Rioms; having resigned, he was succeeded in the command of the Brest fleet by the celebrated navigator, Bougainville.

Though the sailors at Brest were pacified, and the preparations carried on with such vigour as to be nearly if not quite concluded, the court of Spain received such terrible accounts of the incorrigible spirit of disorder and mutiny which prevailed in the French fleet, that it is said to have been impressed with the greatest dread of engaging, with such consorts, in a doubtful war with a most formidable enemy; the whole fortune and success of which must almost wholly depend upon the joint and great naval exertions of the united nations. This impression was supposed and believed to be the principal operative motive with Spain, inducing her suddenly to conclude the convention with England, which settled the differences between the two nations<sup>87</sup>.

During these transactions the violent republican party found themselves so much increased in strength and in number, both within and without the Assembly, and believed that the new system was so firmly established, that they did not deem it necessary to submit any longer to the restraint of observing any terms with the nobility, but thought they might venture boldly to bring forward their grand and long-concerted scheme for the total extirpation of that body; and even, so far as it was possible to be done, to erase and obliterate the very name, along with all memorials and remembrance of their past existence.

It should be observed, that many of the most eminent of the French nobility, whether with respect to family, fortune, character, or influence, (among whom we shall mention, as instances, the dukes de la Rochefoucault and de Liancourt) although they abhorred some of the violent acts of the Assembly, were still zealous adherents to the Revolution, so far as it corresponded with the principles originally avowed by its advocates and friends; for they were no less averse from regal despotism than the democrats themselves, but they detested republicanism even more than despotism, as the greater evil of the two. Their object was a rational, moderate, limited monarchy, whose powers should be precisely defined, which, with full security to the persons and property of the people, with all the liberty that was compatible with good government, should, at the same time,

<sup>87</sup> While this business was pending, M. Dupont, a member of the National Assembly, published a pamphlet, entitled, "Considerations on the Politics of France, Spain, and England," in which he insisted, that the court of France should summon that of England to disarm immediately, and that the *English nation* should be informed, that if she refused to comply, the French nation "swore, upon her honour, that she would instantly repair to London, in order to enforce a compliance with her proposals." "The answer"—said he—"must be prompt; for either England must begin to disarm in a week, or hostilities must commence in a month!"



have its own rights as firmly secured, and as well guarded, as theirs. It will be easily perceived, from a recollection of past circumstances, that had it not been for the support and influence of such men as these, in different seasons of great difficulty, the business of the Revolution could scarcely, if at all, have been accomplished. But they were now no longer deemed necessary, and they experienced, as well as the clergy, to their grief and cost, that from the beginning they had been made instruments and tools to the designs of that faction, which they abhorred and detested beyond all others.

This occasion renders it necessary to notice a strange character, which, except in the account of so singular a Revolution as that of France, could scarcely have found means to attract the observation of an historian.—This man was a discontented Prussian, who had assumed the strange name of Anacharsis Clootz, and who wanted to communicate the knowledge of that liberty to the French, which he dared not to talk about at home. Though the obscurity in which he was involved was highly unfavourable to his exertions, yet, having received so much education in Germany as sufficed to exalt his natural extravagance to its utmost pitch, his self-confidence would not allow him to miss any opportunity of exhibiting his talents to the public. As declamatory philosophy, and the negative quality of infidelity, were the points in which he supposed himself principally to excel, he conceived, and not without some rational grounds, that Paris was the place for displaying to advantage his abilities and endowments: but whether it was that the people thought they had orators and philosophers enough of their own, and that infidelity was too common to bear any value, or that the bombast with which his eloquence was loaded was incomprehensible even to the Parisians, so it was, that all his exertions were unable to push him forward into any degree of particular notice.

The modern Anacharsis, thus foiled in his hopes, that eloquence and philosophy would have opened the way to fame and fortune, shrewdly conceived, that extravagance might possibly succeed where they failed. Having procured a number of those vagabonds who filled and infested the streets of Paris, and hired all the ancient, foreign, and grotesque dresses, which the opera and play-houses could supply, in order to disguise them, he masqueraded at the head of this motley crew to the National Assembly, where he introduced them as ambassadors arrived from all or most of the nations of the globe, being the virtual ambassadors of all those enslaved nations who wished to be free, and were therefore disposed to enter into fraternity with France, for the glorious purpose of establishing liberty throughout the world. The orator, in order to give a full display to his talents, delivered a speech, in the name of his dumb gang of ambassadors, which for absurdity and bombast equalled any thing that ever was, or can be, spoken. In this he represented the ambassadors of all existing governments, as being themselves slaves, the representatives of tyrants, and therefore unfitting to be received in the honourable public character which they assumed: that those citizens by whom he was accompanied were the real representa-

tives

tives and ambassadors of mankind, and had constituted him, in their name, to demand places for them, suitable to their rank and character, at the ensuing grand confederation of the nation.

So barefaced, so impudent, so ridiculous a farce, was never before exhibited, in the presence of any public assembly, or, indeed, of any collection of men supposed to be in possession of their rational faculties<sup>87</sup>. To heighten, if that were possible, the ridiculousness of the scene, it was affirmed, that several of the Asiatic ambassadors stripped of their hired robes and plumes, were seen at the doors of the Assembly, in their proper garb and character, humbly soliciting the payment of their wages; a trifling matter, which, it would seem, the sublime ideas of their orator had rendered him inattentive to<sup>88</sup>.

It seems, however, probable, if we may be allowed to judge from the immediate consequences, that this exhibition was not to be entirely ascribed to the extravagance or insanity of Cloutz; but was calculated to answer a most serious and important purpose. But to understand this, it may be necessary to observe, that, from the bad, and too often shameful, effects, which the copious libations to Bacchus, during the hour of dinner, had frequently produced on the debates of the Assembly, it had long become a standing rule, though without any particular order for it, that no business of moment should be brought forward at the evening sittings. On this account, they were generally very thinly attended, most of the members gladly seizing the opportunity of indulging these pursuits of private business or pleasure, from which they had been withheld by the morning sitting. The exhibition we have described was presented at an evening sitting, (on the nineteenth of June); when the house was not, indeed, so thin as usual, but, however it happened, so it was, that the most violent of the democratic leaders, and that party in general, were those who principally attended.

When the mock ambassadors had acted their part, and were withdrawn, it seemed as if the Assembly thought it necessary to act theirs likewise. As if they had believed the mockery which they had just beheld to be a reality, and that the ambassadors of all man-

<sup>87</sup> We might naturally have supposed that no writer, in possession of his rational faculties, could have received this absurd farce as a serious representation, and have considered the motley followers of Cloutz as the real characters which their leader stated them to be, had we not met with the following passage in the English "History of the Revolution."—"The patriotic feelings of the Assembly were raised to a high pitch of enthusiasm, by a deputation of sovereigns from every nation, who came to testify their respect for the new constitution, in a warm panegyric, and to request a seat at the ensuing solemnity. They were answered by the president, with dignity, and dismissed with respect." Vol. i. p. 345.—*Risum teneatis?*

<sup>88</sup> One of these philosophical mendicants stopped M. de Biancourt, at the door of the Assembly, whom he mistook for M. de Liancourt, and said to him—"I called at your house, sir"—"Why I do not know you, my friend."—"Why it is I sir, you know very well"—"No, friend, I do not"—"I am the man who represented the Chaldean, and I am come for my twelve livres."—*Journal Politique*, &c. tom. iii. p. 68. note.



kind were in fact present, and supplicating their protection, they were all at once, as if they had felt an electric shock, stricken with the most violent fit of enthusiasm for liberty, which it was possible to describe or imagine. The first effusion of this passion was highly laudable; it was a decree to destroy or remove those figures of chained slaves, intended to represent prostrate and conquered nations, which surround the statue so much celebrated, and so often condemned and ridiculed, of Lewis the Fourteenth, in the Place des Victoires, and which, but for this decree, might have long continued shameful memorials of the insufferable vanity and arrogance of that monarch.

The succeeding effect of this enthusiasm was not so blameless. The resolution for abolishing hereditary nobility for ever was, in this evening's sitting, introduced, debated in a certain manner, and passed into an irrevocable law before their rising. It was to little purpose that the nobility, all the royalists, and many others, who were not absolute republicans, cried out, in the midst of their distress or astonishment, against the unfairness and dishonesty of this proceeding, which they openly asserted was carried by stratagem and surprize. The law was passed, and there was no remedy! There was no house of lords to check the exorbitance of a house of commons; there was no king, with freedom or power to curb the enormities of either, or both; and, to crown the evil, the Assembly itself was unfortunately not bound by any of the wholesome and necessary regulations which so happily prevail in the English parliament; by which previous notice is given of the introduction of a new law; by which every bill must go through a certain number of readings, and a reasonable time is allowed for due consideration, before it can be passed; and by which, in cases of moment, a general call of one or both houses takes place, and all the members are obliged, under penalty, to give their attendance on a day appointed. All these forms, so necessary to cool and wise deliberation, all these salutary checks and essential powers of controul, were here wanting.

The decree is thus worded: "The National Assembly, considering that hereditary nobility cannot exist in a *free state*, enact, in consequence, that the titles of duke, marquis, baron, excellency, greatness, abbé, and the like, shall be abolished; and that all citizens shall take in future their family and patronymick names: that no one shall, in future, cause liveries to be worn, or take a coat of arms; that the title of my lord shall not be given to any individual or body," &c.

The friends to this singular decree proudly entitled it, The Triumph of Reason over Prejudice; but we conceive it might, with greater justice, have been called the triumph of prejudice over reason. Certain it is, that the decree itself is founded on a falshood, evident on the very face of it. By their arrogant and presumptuous declaration, that hereditary nobility was incompatible with a free state, they virtually maintained, that all Europe, excepting a very few democratic republics, was in a state of slavery. When  
men

men thus substitute falshood for reason, their cause must be bad indeed ; nor can those be accused of injustice who suspected the virtue of their motives.—*Is England a land of freedom, or is it not?*—The present convention of France, and some few dozens of knaves or idiots on this side the channel, will probably answer in the negative ; but millions of voices—the organs of knowledge and experience—will give them *the lie direct*. No wonder then, that where the foundation is rotten, the fabric itself should moulder on the slightest touch.

To speak in the terms of a justly-celebrated writer of our own nation, whose solid talents and profound knowledge entitle his sentiments and decisions to the highest respect.—“ It is impossible that government can be maintained without a due subordination of RANK, that the people may know and distinguish such as are set over them, in order to yield them their due respect and obedience ; and also that the officers themselves, being encouraged by emulation and the hopes of superiority, may better discharge their functions<sup>89</sup>.” “ But”—said M. de Noailles—“ we do not hear men speak of the marquis of Franklin, the earl of Washington, prince Fox, or duke Pitt. Great men have no need of these equivocal dignities which veil insignificance.”—M. de Noailles seems not to have been aware, that in governments purely republican, where there is no head or chief, properly so called, titles can rarely, for obvious reasons, subsist. The exclusion, therefore, of Franklin and Washington, could not be applied as an argument in favour of the abolition of titles where they had subsisted for centuries, and in a *monarchical* government. He seems, likewise, to have been equally ignorant of the motives which have hitherto influenced the conduct of our two great political leaders, in the non-acceptance of that rank which they have, both of them, had opportunities of procuring for others. He knew not, that there was a necessity of keeping an able leader of either party in the lower house of parliament, for the purpose of supporting the measures of their friends, and attacking those of their opponents. Take his argument, if it can be called an argument, in another point of view :—if the distinguished characters quoted by M. de Noailles, were only mentioned to shew that greatness can subsist independent of rank, we must regard it, without examining the justice and propriety of his *examples*, as a mere *gratis dictum* ; an assertion which nobody can attempt to confute, or even to deny. But does it follow, because great men do not seek rewards, policy requires that they should not be rewarded ? and on men of opulence, what reward can be bestowed but rank and title ? Rank and title may, indeed, when *hereditary*, be justly denominated *equivocal* dignities ; we must not, therefore, conclude, that, because they are equivocal, they veil insignificance. A voyage to this country would have convinced M. de Noailles that no title, however exalted, can shelter its possessor from any portion of that indignation or contempt which his conduct may be calculated to excite, and would have

<sup>89</sup> Blackstone's Commentaries.



proved to him, that rank rather tends to expose than conceal insignificance. Nay, the treatment which men of the first rank had recently experienced in his own country, whether justly or unjustly, was alone sufficient to demonstrate the fallacy and absurdity of an argument, which frivolous and absurd as it undoubtedly is, received greater commendation than any other employed on this extraordinary occasion, and appeared to carry conviction to the major part of his audience. It exhibits a curious specimen of popular imbecility, and shews, that when prejudice has once established her sway in the mind, the utmost force of reason is inadequate to effect her deposition.

This measure excited a degree of indignation before unknown, in the whole body of gentlemen throughout the kingdom, who sent up repeated protests against it; but there was so little regard paid to them, that they were not even suffered to be inserted in the journals. The nobility and clergy of Alsace were peculiarly enraged; they deriving their honours as well as their emoluments not from France, but from the German empire, and both being moreover secured to them by the treaty of Westphalia. The democratic writers say, that, from that day, the greatest part of the nobles of the kingdom became the unappeaseable enemies of the constitution; and that this decree had determined them to excite a civil war, and to perish upon the ruins of France, rather than renounce their claim to honour<sup>90</sup>.

The decree, which was passed on the nineteenth, received the king's sanction on the twenty-first of June; and was signalized by the singular circumstance, that, of all his ministers, Neckar alone, a plebeian, a republican, a man born and bred in a democracy, insisted on his not giving it his sanction, but, on the contrary, to send back his express disapprobation to the Assembly. Being over-ruled in his attempt by the joint opposition of the other ministers, he immediately published a pamphlet, containing a number of very judicious observations on the decree, and informing the public of the reasons which operated upon him in advising the king to refuse his sanction.

M. Neckar wisely remarked, that, by the suppression of all honorary denominations, but a very small part of the community would be benefited—that part only, which, by its fortune or education, found itself but little removed from those in the possession of titles. “Such, indeed,”—said he—“might perhaps find a momentary satisfaction in the absolute destruction of these little elevations which yet offend their sight. But for a relief so trifling and insignificant, resting wholly on opinion; for a benefit so circumscribed and indifferent in the eyes of a wise man, is it just to deprive a numerous class of citizens of those honorary distinctions which form a part of their inheritance, and the loss of which must be much more painful to them than that of the pecuniary

<sup>90</sup> Rabaud de Saint Etienne, p. 152, 153

“advantages

“ advantages which they possessed? Is it not sufficient to have exacted from them all the  
 “ sacrifices that can promote the good of the people? Is it generous, is it equitable, to  
 “ require still more? and ought not the difficulties of the present time, great as they are,  
 “ to lead to as considerable a diminution as possible of the subjects of complaint or  
 “ causes of provocation? To pursue those who refuse to lay aside the titles they have  
 “ inherited from a long line of ancestors, into the interior of civil life, is an exertion of  
 “ severity, tyrannical, because useless. It will be, moreover, impossible to watch over  
 “ the execution of such a law in the commerce of society, without an inquisition dia-  
 “ metrically opposite to every principle of liberty. Men may be more easily obliged to  
 “ conform to it in the tenor of particular acts, since public officers, charged with the  
 “ compilation of such acts, may be rendered sureties for the execution of the law; but  
 “ can they have a right to prevent the contracting party, after having declared his patro-  
 “ nymic name, from adding that he is the son, or descendant, of such a noble race, or of  
 “ such a one, who, at such a period of time, was legally qualified? Yet, by an explana-  
 “ tion so simple, the distinctions which are wished to be destroyed will be continually  
 “ supported. Besides, the industry of vanity may be trusted to for the use of all possi-  
 “ ble evasions to maintain those remembrances which are flattering to it. The grandees  
 “ of Spain employ *thou* and *thee* among themselves, but never use the same familiar ex-  
 “ pressions to their inferiors; how then can the obstacle to all distinctions take place,  
 “ when the forms intended to express distinction and respect may themselves be employed  
 “ to manifest the consciousness of superiority, and that thus, so many different means  
 “ suffice, in able hands, to preserve the gradations which time and custom have estab-  
 “ lished?

“ To proscribe, with earnestness, all the appendages of vanity, is not the best way of  
 “ lowering their value; it is better to consider them with calmness and indifference; it  
 “ is better to lessen the consequence attached to them, by bestowing all our esteem on ta-  
 “ lents and virtue, and on those actions which are performed for the public good. *These*  
 “ *opinions which owe their establishment to the work of time, time only can destroy*; some pre-  
 “ paration is necessary for all important innovations. Enthusiasm, unchecked by re-  
 “ flection, untempered by experience, may create the desire of bringing back mankind to  
 “ the simplicity of primitive principles; but new manners, and even *new virtues*, would  
 “ be requisite to ensure success to such an enterprize.

“ By pursuing, in all their minutiae, every sign of distinction, there is a great risk of  
 “ misleading the people concerning the true meaning of the word *equality*, which can  
 “ never signify, in a civilized nation, and in a society already formed, equality of rank  
 “ or property<sup>91</sup>. The diversity of labours and employments; the difference arising

<sup>91</sup> The people of France thought otherwise, as, indeed, it was natural to suppose they would; the author of the Journal Politique tells us, that the establishment of an *Agrarian* law had been already seriously proposed in some of the provinces,



“ from fortune, education, emulation, and industry ; the gradation of talents and learning ; all these disparities, the common produce of social exertions, inevitably cause an exterior inequality ; and the sole object of a legislator is, in imitation of nature, to unite them all towards an equal and general good, though it may differ in its form, or in its expressions. In the vast extent of social combinations, each part joins to the other, and forms a link of the great chain of society : those appearances of superiority, which seem an abuse to the first glance of a philosopher, are often essentially useful as protectors of the different laws of subordination ; of those laws, so necessary to be defended, and which would be exposed to such varied attacks, if custom and opinion ever ceased to support them.”

That truly philosophical writer, who, in discussing the principles of government, has displayed the most extensive knowledge and sagacity ;—that writer, on whom has been conferred the most glorious title that a sage can deserve—THE LEGISLATOR OF NATIONS<sup>92</sup>—Montesquieu, in his Spirit of Laws<sup>93</sup>, observes—“ That a monarchical government implies pre-eminence of rank, and even an original nobility ; that the intermediate powers constitute the nature of this government ; that the nobility form the most natural intermediate power ; that they are, in a certain degree, inherent in the monarchy, the fundamental maxim of which is—*no monarch ; no nobility ; no nobility, no monarch*—and, that the abolition of the prerogatives of the nobles, the clergy, and the communities, would soon lead to the establishment of a popular or a despotic government.”—It is almost needless to observe, that when Montesquieu made this observation, he was not the echo of vulgar prejudices. As a political philosopher, he had reflected deeply on the constitution of governments, and on their springs of action ; and from thence he concluded that the nature of a monarchy requires many intermediate ranks, and that honour is the principle which sets it and keeps it in motion.

On this point too, as in so many others, the instructions of their constituents have been successfully quoted in opposition to the rash and inconsiderate measures of the representatives. We shall not notice those of the clergy and nobility, which it will be easily supposed are strenuous in enforcing an acknowledgment of their constitutional rights, as the two first orders of the state. It will be sufficient to observe, that while they expressly sacrificed every species of pecuniary privilege, they preserved all their honorary prerogatives ; that, in proposing, themselves, a reform in the excessive multiplication of those prerogatives, and of all the abuses introduced in the mode of acquiring them, they wished to render them more respectable ; and, finally, that, by the unanimous declaration of the necessity of abolishing all such distinctions as were humiliating

<sup>92</sup> See D'Alembert's eulogy on Montesquieu, in the fifth volume of the French Encyclopedia.

<sup>93</sup> Tom. i. liv. 2. chap. 4.

to the third order, which had been admitted into the States-General, they deserved, that the pre-eminence due to their birth, and their services, as well as to those of their ancestors, should have been viewed without pain, and that the Third Estate itself should have acknowledged the justice of it.

The people themselves, indeed, did make that acknowledgement, as may be seen by their instructions to their representatives. “The formal declaration of the clergy and nobility”—says the instructions of the electors of Chateau Thierry—“after having renounced their pecuniary privileges, assures the Third Estate that those two orders will cordially unite. Let the deputies of all the orders, like children of the same family, surrounding their father, expel that fatal spirit of fermentations, which, by a rapid transition from threats to insults, and from insults to natural violence, has caused the blood of innocent citizens to be shed. In order that the nation may be truly and legally represented in the States-General, it is necessary that the three orders should deliberate conjointly, and the suffrages be reckoned by numbers and not by orders.”<sup>94</sup> Each order composing the States-General may assemble separately, under the conduct of a speaker, chosen by itself:<sup>95</sup> but the deliberations shall be common to the three orders:<sup>96</sup> It is to be desired, that the three orders may unite in their deliberations, and their suffrages to be taken by numbers:<sup>97</sup> Let the three orders, though different in their rank, be equal in their rights.<sup>98</sup> Let the civil rights of the meanest citizen be equal to those of the most distinguished of the members of the two first orders:<sup>99</sup> Let the just prerogative of precedency, granted to the clergy and nobility, be respected: Let the deputies of the Third Estate be forbidden to accede to those humiliating distinctions which degrade the third order in the states assembled at Blois and at Paris.”<sup>100</sup>

It is here evident, that the Third Estate was far from imagining that the suppression of the two first orders of the state could ever become an object of discussion; on the contrary, it is clear, that it always supposed, they had a *distinct* and separate existence; and that its wishes were confined to a demand of an equality of civil rights, and an union of the three chambers in all deliberations of the *General Assembly*. It was not only for the present Assembly that the instructions of the Third Estate proposed regulations to each of the three orders; their foresight extended to future time; and they made themselves certain that the distinction of orders would continue to subsist, since it is farther expressed in the instructions, that a complete and regular constitution and organization shall be established for future States-General, so that the deputies may be equally, freely, universally chosen, and exclusively in their respective orders.<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Dax, Saint-Sever, and Bayonne, Art. 2.    <sup>95</sup> Chalons-sur-Marne, p. 13.    <sup>96</sup> Saumur and Rhodéz, p. 8.    <sup>97</sup> Troyes, Art. 2.    <sup>98</sup> Saintonge, au Chap. des trois ordres.    <sup>99</sup> Foix, p. 21.    <sup>100</sup> Haut-Vivaraire.  
\* Instructions of the Third Estate of Paris, *extra-muros*.



The Third Estate had explained itself, in a manner still more positive, on the necessity of preserving the nobility, as well as on the means to be employed for purifying their source, and regulating their rights, in order to remove all prejudices hurtful to commerce, and to the nobles themselves. Its instructions on this point, display no less wisdom than unanimity. They say “It ought to be laid down as a fundamental law, that hereditary nobility should be restored to its primitive state—it should not suffer degradation from any thing but vice or crimes. Thus the nation will find most valuable subjects in a number of men who are now prejudicial to it, in a hundred different ways; and the nobles without losing any part of their lustre, will be, more than ever, entitled to preserve a noble pride, which only becomes such as neither founding their claims to distinction or court-favour, nor on court-pensions, find all their resources within themselves.<sup>2</sup>—Nobility should no longer be venal; since it is a reward due only to merit and virtue.<sup>3</sup>—Hereditary nobility should only be granted in very particular cases.<sup>4</sup>—Though an imaginary, yet is it an *effective* coin; it is the treasure of honour—an inexhaustible treasure, if distributed with prudence. The States-General will render a great service to the people and to posterity, if they will find the means of re-coining, in some degree, this national money, and give it a sufficient value to serve a substitute (as it formerly did, and may do again) for those vile and shameful salaries, which have a pecuniary stamp, and can never be considered as the pay of heroism, or the reward of virtue.<sup>5</sup> The search after false nobles should be made under the direction of the Seneschals;<sup>6</sup> the titles of the nobility should be verified by commissioners appointed by the three orders;<sup>7</sup> the provincial States should make out a list of the nobles in their respective districts;”<sup>8</sup> &c. &c.

In short, it was evidently the wish of the nation, as evinced in the different instructions, to preserve the two first orders of the state, abolishing only all such distinctions as were prejudicial to the general welfare—that is to say, that, in future, no distinction should be suffered to influence a partial distribution of taxes; that no citizen should be prevented from aspiring to, and obtaining, by his merit, every kind of employment, whether ecclesiastical, civil, or military; that the different degrees of rank, essential to the existence of a monarchy, should be maintained in France; but that all those gothic customs, which seem to raise up an eternal barrier between the citizens of the same empire, should be abolished; that the dignified ecclesiastics and true nobility, should continue to enjoy all those honorary pre-eminences which belonged to them, but that such pre-eminences should be no longer attached to venal offices; lastly, that the nobility and clergy should send representatives to the National Assembly, who should form an in-

<sup>2</sup> Rennes, Art. 50.<sup>3</sup> Nantes, Art. 38.<sup>4</sup> Troyes, Art. 107.<sup>5</sup> Toul, p. 43.<sup>6</sup> Anch. p. 12.<sup>7</sup> Nantes, Mss.<sup>8</sup> Nerac, Mss. Art. 9.

tegral part thereof, but under such a form as should be found most conformable to the principles of a good constitution, without being in any wise prejudicial to the dignity of the commons.

When the Third Estate wished to engage the nobility and clergy to unite with them in one chamber, they expressed the most earnest desire of establishing a perfect harmony and concord between the three orders; and when their wish was accomplished, they exulted in *the happiness of that day which had witnessed the union of the three orders*; they said, *that day would for ever put an end to those divisions which had been productive of mutual affliction, and would become celebrated in their annals*<sup>10</sup>. But five months after what a different language did they hold? All distinction of orders was abolished. In future there were to be no more representatives of the nobility, no more representatives of the clergy, in the National Assembly! They seem only to have been invited thither for the purpose of being made to concur in pronouncing their own exclusion. It was pretty evident, too, that, as individuals, neither the nobles nor clergy would gain a seat among the national representatives; since their admission cannot depend on popular assemblies formed of *all active citizens, of whatever state or condition, without any distinction whatever*; which, considering the disposition of the people at that period, amounted to an almost absolute exclusion of the two most distinguished orders of the state; because, were they to offer themselves to the primary assemblies, there could be little doubt but they would be repulsed with violence.

Thus, then, by an unexampled subversion of ideas, those classes of citizens, to whom the greater part of the landed property belonged, and who, consequently, were the most interested in all general laws, were to be excluded from the legislative body. The great landed proprietors were to remain unrepresented in an assembly in which all the inhabitants of the kingdom were, *professedly*, to be represented. The public contributions, which could not be levied without the consent of those who contributed, would, in this instance, be imposed, without their participation, on men who contributed the most! And, after having established it as a maxim, that the legislative power was vested in the National Assembly, on the principle, *that what binds every individual ought to be the expression of the general will*, they so contrived, that the more a man possessed, the less part he would have in the formation of those laws, by which his possessions were to be regulated.

Nor were these infant legislators more consistent than just. What an inconsistency was it, after having decreed, that the exercise of the liberal professions should not derogate from the dignity of the nobles; and that citizens of all ranks and conditions should,

<sup>10</sup> See the speech of the president of the National Assembly, on the 27th of June, 1789.



in future, be entitled, equally with the *nobles*, to the possession of all offices, ecclesiastical, civil, and military, as their constituents had desired, to decree afterwards, that there should no longer be any nobility !

It has been well-observed, that nobility is, in a moral sense, a source of economy : “ It is the only reward for service done to the state that is not burdensome ; the only one that can keep alive the spirit of emulation in a great kingdom, without degrading or corrupting the people ; it is, in a generous nation, the most potent stimulus, the most infallible motive to the performance of great and glorious actions.”—By its abolition France was reduced to that degradation of democratical government which Cicero designates, when he quotes, as an example, the decree pronounced by the Ephesians, on the banishment of Hermodorus.—“ Let no one of us be placed above the rest ; but if there be any one thus circumstanced, let him take refuge in some other country, with some other people ;”—a decree which Heraclitus, the philosopher, declared a capital crime in all who were concerned in it.

We shall conclude this subject with a quotation from their own Encyclopedia, where it is remarked, that, “ Every monarchy, in which there is no nobility, must be a government purely tyrannical.—Nobility tempers sovereignty, and by its own brilliancy accustoms the eyes of the people to look on, and support, the splendor of royalty, without being dazzled. It is proper that the nobles should not be too powerful, and that, nevertheless, they should preserve sufficient dignity to secure esteem, and so far to repress popular insolence, as to prevent it from making attacks on the majesty of the throne.”

But though historical justice compels us to censure, in the severest terms, the leading measures of the new legislature, a strict adherence to truth and impartiality forbids that censure to be indiscriminate. It is with pleasure we record those salutary decrees, that would reflect honour on the wisest and best-regulated state : the chief among those is that which declares—“ That the estates of Protestants, in the hands of the public, shall be restored to the heirs of those who have been deprived of them, on condition of their asserting their rights by proper titles, according to rules to be laid down by the Assembly.”—Some wise regulations on the formation of a new judicial code were likewise adopted. The abolition of the sale of offices of judicature—the payment of the salaries of the judges by the state—the declaration that, in all cases, civil and criminal, the pleadings, reports, and judgments shall be in public ; and that every citizen shall have a

“ *Univerfas, ait, Ephesos esse morte mulctandos, quod cum civitate expellerent Hermodorum, ita locuti sunt ; Nemo de nobis unus excellat ; sur quis extitavit, alio in loco & apud alios lit.*” Cic. Tuscul. Quest. lib. v. cap. 361.

right to plead his own cause, verbally, or by writing—and the adoption of *trial by jury* in all criminal cases. Boards of conciliation were appointed in every district, where the parties in a suit were to be cited personally, and where every means were to be employed to effect an amicable termination, before the cause could be brought to a hearing in the ordinary courts of justice. Family arbitrators were also authorized to terminate petty disputes between near relations, and the forms prescribed in all these cases were the simplest that could be invented.

But, might not these and many other wholesome and judicious regulations have been established without a Revolution that has overturned the settled system of government, and violated all the principles of the ancient constitution? We are clearly of opinion they *might*.—"In considering the Revolution impartially"—says an ingenious and judicious writer<sup>12</sup>—"the comparison will not lie between what France now is, or hereafter may be, and France under its late government; but we must consider what it would now have been, or might have shortly become, on the principles of the reform proposed by the sovereign. The periodical meeting of the States; their exclusive right of imposing the public burthens; the establishment of provincial assemblies<sup>13</sup>; the equal taxation of the property of the clergy and nobles with that of other citizens; the equal right of all to serve their country in civil or military employments; the redemption of vexations and rights; the abolition of *lettres de cachet*; the liberty of the press, and the responsibility of ministers, were in reality held out, and might most certainly have been obtained, without any public commotion, or private calamity. Nothing was wanting, but to reduce these propositions into laws, and the constitution was completed: the amendment of the judiciary code, and a variety of other matters, must naturally have followed. Here, indeed, would have been room for the admiration of this and future ages; to see the subjects and the sovereign of an immense nation concur in establishing a system of government for their mutual happiness; who could have said to posterity, 'We transmit to you this work of peace and concord; a compact made with our free consents, without being disgraced by any act of injustice, or tinged with a drop of blood?'—A constitution formed under these happy auspices, and founded on such wholesome principles, must naturally have grown into vigour, while internal tranquillity would have remained undisturbed, and the revenue uninterrupted. Let us look on what France might have been—and then let us look at the picture it now exhibits. We see the flame of civil discord blazing in all its force from the Pyrennees to the Rhine, from the Alps to the ocean; the clergy complaining that their property has been confiscated; the nobility, that rights which formed part of their estates have been taken them from without any compensation; while the houses of many were burned and plundered, and the possessors obliged to seek refuge or conceal themselves in other

<sup>12</sup> Mr. Crawford, author of the History of the Bastille.

<sup>13</sup> Vide the king's declaration, p. 232, 233.



“ countries. We see the streets and highways covered with vagabonds, or artizans who  
“ can no longer find employment; the prisons filled with real, or supposed, criminals;  
“ the minds of all tormented with mutual hatred, and a constant succession of just or  
“ imaginary terrors; and an innumerable people with arms in their hands, and furnish-  
“ ed with a declaration, which, being above their comprehension, has already produced,  
“ and may hereafter be the cause of, unspeakable misfortunes.

“ After immense losses to the kingdom, occasioned by the failure in the revenue, the  
“ interruptions to industry and commerce, and loss of credit with foreign nations; after  
“ many public and private calamities, experienced while they are employed in specula-  
“ tive discussion, they will probably find themselves, in many instances, obliged to re-  
“ turn in their own footsteps, and, abandoning the theory of schools, to have recourse to  
“ principles proved by experience.”

Early in the month of June, M. Baillie had communicated to the Assembly a plan for the celebration of a grand confederation, in which the representatives of the nation, the king, the soldiery, and all who were in ostensible situations, should, solemnly, and in the face of the whole nation, renew their oaths of fidelity to the new constitution: it was accordingly decreed to take place on the fourteenth of July, in honour of the taking of the Bastille, and of the first establishment of Gallic liberty. The preparations for this grand festival immediately commenced, and were proceeded on with astonishing rapidity. The *Champ de Mars* was chosen for this solemnity. This piece of ground, about eight hundred yards in diameter, is bounded on the right and left by lofty trees, and commands at the further extremity a view of the military academy. In the middle of this vast plain an altar was erected for the purpose of administering the civic oath; round it an immense amphitheatre was thrown up, of a league in circumference, capable of containing four hundred thousand spectators. The entrance into the *Champ de Confederation* (as it was now called) was through triumphal arches. The king's throne was placed under an elegant pavilion in the center, and on each side of it were seats for the members of the National Assembly.

Two thousand workmen were employed upon this immense labour; but the citizens of Paris, fearing lest the preparations should not be completed at the appointed time, flocked from every quarter to assist in the undertaking. The provincials, too, who came from the most remote parts of the kingdom to join in the confederation, emulated the citizens in their ardour and enthusiasm; and the work was completed so as, for expedition and magnitude, to surprise every beholder.

A proclamation was published by the king, on the thirteenth, arranging the whole order of the procession, and appointing M. de la Fayette major-general of the Federation;

tion; and in this quality his orders were to be considered as coming immediately from the king. M. Gouvion was appointed major-general *en second*.

The important day at length arrived. At six o'clock in the morning the persons appointed to assist in the procession assembled on the Boulevards, between the gate of Saint Martin and the gate of Saint Antoine, and were arranged in the following order:

A troop of horse, with a standard, and six trumpets; one division of the music, consisting of several hundred instruments; a company of grenadiers; the electors of the city of Paris; a company of volunteers; the assembly of the representatives of the commons; the military committee; a company of chasseurs; a band of drums; the presidents of the districts; the deputies of the commons, appointed to take for them the federal oath; the sixty administrators of the municipality, with the city guards; second division of music; a battalion of children carrying a standard, with the words, "The Hopes of the Nation;" a detachment of the colours of the national guard of Paris; a battalion of veterans; the deputies of the thirty-two first departments of the nation, in alphabetical order; the oriflamme, or grand standard of the king, borne by a cornet-blanc of France, in the first rank of the deputies of the troops of the line, composed of marshals of France; general officers; officers of the staff; subaltern officers; invalids; lieutenants of the marshals of France; deputies of infantry; deputies of cavalry; deputies of hussars, dragoons, and chasseurs; general officers and deputies of the marine, according to rank; the deputies of the forty-one last departments, in alphabetical order; a company of volunteer chasseurs; a company of cavalry, with a standard, and two trumpets.

The procession being formed, made a most noble appearance; for the variety of emblematic ornaments were endless. Every order was marked by distinguishing indications of the district from whence it came, or the body which they represented; and in doing this much fruitful fancy had been employed, to make the marks serve for ornament as well as distinction.

The military deputies had only their side-arms. In each division, a banner, indicative of the department, was borne by the oldest person in the first rank, and the ranks were formed eight a-breast. The procession passed along the streets of Saint Denis, of the Feronnerie, Saint Honoré, Royale, to the Place of Louis the Fifteenth, where they halted, and the detachment of the colours of the national guard of Paris opening to the right and left, received into the center the members of the National Assembly, who were thus surrounded and escorted by the body who had before protected them. The procession then moved on through the Cours de la Reine, along the quay, to the bridge of boats, over which they passed, and from thence they entered the Champ de Mars.



In entering the Champ de Mars, the cavalry marched off to the right, and ranged themselves in the exterior line, on the opposite side to the entrance. The company of grenadiers formed under the steps of the amphitheatre, as well as all the companies that were employed as escorts.

The civil bodies took the places allotted to them in the amphitheatre. The battalion of children formed about a hundred paces from the grand altar, crossing the Champ de Mars, but facing the altar.

While the National Assembly passed through the triumphal arch, the escort of colours passed through the two lateral gates, and the members took their seats on the right and left of the chair of state, and the chair of their own president. The battalion of veterans was placed a hundred paces behind the altar, across the Champ de Mars, but facing the altar. The detachments of national guards, appointed to take the oath, ranged themselves each under the banner indicative of his place in the amphitheatre. The music, now all collected into one immense band, occupied the side of the platform under the altar, next the invalids; the band of drums the opposite side. The detachment of cavalry, that closed the procession, formed the exterior line on the side where they entered, opposite to the first detachment.

While the deputies were taking their seats, the entrances to the tier of elevated benches, that surrounded this immense amphitheatre, were opened, and the people of all ranks and of both sexes, the ladies all dressed in white, took their places. These benches, rising thirty in number above one another, and extending an immense way, were capable of containing, it is said, three hundred thousand persons.

Their majesties entered the Champ de Mars through the Military School, and took their places to assist at the ceremony, in a superb box erected for the occasion, and elevated about fifteen feet. The foreign ministers took their seats in an elegant box near them.

As soon as they were seated, after a solemn invocation to God, the grand standard and all the banners of the several departments were brought up to the platform, and received benedictions; after which they were carried back to their several stations. High mass was then celebrated; after which the nation, thus assembled, proceeded to the great object of the day. The major-general having announced the solemnity, the assembly all rose, and the king approached the grand altar, and swore, in the presence of God, and of three hundred thousand of his people—"I, the king of the French, do swear to the nation, that I will employ the whole power delegated to me by the constitutional law of the state, to maintain the constitution, and enforce the execution of the law."

His

His majesty was followed by the president of the National Assembly, who took the oath to the nation, the law, and the king; while all the other members, holding up their right hand, pronounced, "*Je le jure!*" The sieur de la Fayette then took the oath for himself, and all the other deputies of the eighty-three departments of the national guards, who, all standing, pronounced after him, "*Je le jure!*" and these words, with uplifted hands, were solemnly pronounced by every individual of this immense assembly.

Te Duem was then sung. The performance was lofty beyond the powers of description. Never did France see such an orchestra, and never, surely, did the world behold such an audience. Their numbers baffled the eye to reckon; and their shouts, as it were, rent the skies.

After the whole was over, the deputies of the national guards linked themselves with the deputies of the regiments; and, thus united by the social compact, the soldier and the citizen marched to the chateau of La Muette, in the garden of which dinner was laid in tents, provided by the nation for thirty thousand guests, federative deputies. In the Gros Caillot, and in the environs of the invalids, dinner was provided for the people of all descriptions, not deputies. For the higher communities, sumptuous entertainments were provided in different places. In the evening there was a most superb court, and their majesties supped in public.

The grand altar of liberty was erected in the middle of the field. The approach to it was up a lofty flight of steps, composed of four different staircases. The steps were formed from the stones of the Bastille, and supported by large pillars.

The records of the constitution, the royal sceptre, the hand of justice, with a spear bearing the cap of liberty, were placed on the altar.

About the altar were painted several allegorical designs of the subject of the day. Four grand paintings were hung, one on each front of it: the first represented the Genius of France, pointing to the word "CONSTITUTION," with a picture of Plenty, holding two cornucopias.

The second painting described some of the glorious descendants of France, blowing the trumpet of Fame, and bearing this inscription:—"Hold in your remembrance these three sacred words, which are the guarantee of your decrees—the Nation, the Law, and the King. The nation is yourselves; the law is your own, for it is your will; and the king is the guardian of the law."

The third painting represented the national deputies taking the civic oath; and the fourth described the arts and sciences, with the following words underneath:—"Men are equal:



“equal: it is their virtue, and not their birth, which distinguishes them. The law ought to form the basis of every state; in its presence all men are equal.”

Myrrh and frankincense were burnt in large urns about the altar; the form of it was round, the ceiling of sky-blue, and was ornamented with large chandeliers. At the end of it was placed the sword of justice.

Previous to the confederation, M. d'Orleans desired leave to return and assist at this august ceremony. On the receipt of his letter M. de la Fayette ascended the tribune, and explained his motives for having advised the departure of the duke; which were, “that he apprehended an ill use might be made of his name, while present, in order to disturb the public tranquillity. These reasons,” he added, “did he believe still subsist; though he saw nothing to make him apprehensive, at present, for the public safety.” The duke arrived on the eleventh of July, and, having renewed his civic oath in the National Assembly, assisted personally at the confederation.

The capital now experienced a calm of near three months, when, on the thirteenth of November, it was again agitated, in consequence of a duel between M. Castries and M. Charles Lameth, in which the latter was dangerously wounded; it was immediately rumoured that M. Lameth was killed; and the people, ever prone to suspicion, immediately conceived the idea that a general conspiracy was formed to assassinate all the patriotic members. A prodigious mob assembled at the Hotel de Castries, which they instantly began to demolish. M. de la Fayette, no sooner heard of the commotion, than, with a party of the national guard, he repaired to the spot, and forcibly represented to the populace the rashness of their conduct, when they immediately desisted, and even, on coming out of the house, caused every man to be searched, to evince that plunder was not in the least their object.

In the middle of November the business of Avignon came before the Assembly. It is well known that the county of Avignon is enclosed on every side by the dominions of France; that it formed anciently a part of Provence; was alienated by a queen, who was at that period both under the circumstances of compulsion and a minor; that when she came of age, she reclaimed it; that the cession had not been formally acknowledged by the parliaments; and that several monarchs had renewed their claims to the city, as a part of their hereditary dominions. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged, that long possession had given to the popes that title by which most sovereignties are held; that the cession of Jane, queen of Naples, had been ratified by the states of Provence; and that, although some of the kings had denied the right of the pope, it had been acknowledged by others.





*Jones Fecit*

M. CLAMETH.



A party in that city saw with a spirit of emulation the new government of France; they wished to make it their model, but still professed obedience to the pope. They elected a municipality, and formed the active citizens into a national guard. A contest between the vice-legat and the people immediately succeeded: on the tenth of June a violent insurrection took place in the city; the people seized the palace; the papal arms were thrown down, and those of France erected in their place. A petition was dispatched to the National Assembly, entreating, that the territory of Avignon might be incorporated into the dominion of France. This first application, the Assembly only answered, by sending a body of troops to restore tranquillity, and to preserve order in the city; at the same time, adjourning the question concerning the object of the petition. In May 1791 the discussion was again resumed, and again deferred. In the mean time a most dreadful civil war desolated that beautiful country. It would be disgusting, as well as tedious, to enter into a detail of the bloody scenes and the horrid outrages which succeeded. The circumstances being made known to the Assembly, after repeated deliberations, it was at length resolved, on the fourteenth of September 1791, that the territory of Avignon, with the adjacent county of Venaissin, should be considered as a part of the French empire, and that a compensation in lieu of those countries should be offered to the pope<sup>15</sup>.

The year 1790 closed with some little accession of popularity to the National Assembly of France. A statue was decreed to be erected to the memory of Rousseau, and his widow was allowed a pension. Some other popular acts were passed; but what conferred upon them the most solid applause, was the report of the committee of finances, from which it appeared, that the national receipt exceeded the expenditure by three millions, and that there was upwards of five hundred thousand pounds sterling in specie in the public treasury. The pernicious and disgraceful tax of *lotteries* was totally abolished and prohibited. About the close of the year M. de St. Priest, minister of the interior department, resigned.

The first act of the new year, instead of indicating an inclination to prolong its session, like the long parliament of England, enumerated a list of articles which were necessary to be discussed previous to the final establishment of the constitution; after the determination of which, the Assembly declared its intention of dissolving itself, and accordingly resigned its authority.

The jealousy of the neighbouring potentates now began to be alarmed, and there was much reason to apprehend that a league was formed against the rising liberties of France,

<sup>15</sup> This was the first violation of that excellent maxim, which the new legislature of France had so solemnly enacted, to avoid all conquests, all accession of territory, all increase of dominion.

among the most powerful nations of the continent. Cordons of troops were advanced from Germany on the north, from Spain on the south, and from Italy and Savoy on the west; and France might be said literally to be besieged with hostile armies. The events which took place in France, retarded for a while the execution of this plan: but the dispositions of despotic courts never alter; their action is occasionally interrupted by circumstances; but their tenour is direct, and their conduct commonly consistent: what Leopold left unperformed, Francis has endeavoured to accomplish.

The only plea which the conduct of France afforded these powers for interfering in her domestic concerns, was the claims of the German princes who had estates in Alsace and Lorraine. On the subversion of the feudal institutions, the claims of vassalage, mortmain, &c. &c. which these princes considered as their right, were necessarily abolished. It was in vain that the National Assembly repeatedly decreed them the amplest compensation. The views of the German courts were different. Alsace and Lorraine afforded the excuse, but the object of the projected war was certainly not the seigniorial rights of a few petty princes, who would think themselves amply recompensed by the receipt of a few louis in their empty treasuries. The cautious politics of Leopold, however, led him to pursue the most courtly measures in treating with France. On the twenty-second of January, the king communicated to the Assembly a letter from the emperor of Germany, in which that monarch makes the most unqualified protestations of his amicable intentions towards France; but intimates at the same time, that "It is necessary that all the innovations that have taken place in consequence of the decrees of the fourth of August be done away, and matters put upon the ancient footing."—The king, when he communicated the letter, treated it merely as an official measure of the emperor, as head of the German empire; and observed, that he received at the same time the most pacific assurances from the court of Vienna. The Assembly, however, were not to be imposed upon by the finesse of Leopold; they immediately decreed a considerable augmentation of the national force, and that every defensive measure should be expeditiously adopted.

On the twentieth of February, the president of the National Assembly received a letter from the king, stating that his aunts, the daughters of Louis the Fifteenth, had left Paris that morning at six o'clock, and that, as he was persuaded that they could not legally be deprived of the liberty which the constitution gave to every citizen to travel wherever he would, he had not attempted to prevent their departure. This report was no sooner made, than M. Camus proposed, that the civil list should be diminished in proportion to the provision which the nation allotted them: this was again opposed by M. Martineau; but the assembly considering the subject unworthy of their notice, passed to the order of the day. On the following day, however, the subject was renewed by M. Barnave, who, as the constitutional committee were at present occupied in providing a set of regulations for the government of the royal family, proposed that they should be instructed to present



to the Assembly the plan of a decree to ascertain the right which persons allied to the throne should have to travel out of the kingdom. This proposal produced another from Messrs. Martineau, Goupil, and others, that the law against emigrants should extend not only to the royal family, but to all other individuals; and that a reasonable absentee tax should be imposed, in order to discourage emigration in general.

In the mean time the ladies continued their journey, and with a train of carriages presented themselves before Moret, and produced to the magistrates a passport from the king, countersigned Montmorin, and a declaration from the municipality of Paris, stating that they arrogated to themselves no right to stop any persons travelling through the kingdom. As the municipality of Moret was informed that the matter was now under the consideration of the constitutional committee, they determined to arrest them. They had, however, no sooner taken this determination, than a party of a hundred or more of the chafseurs de Lorraine, with a number of the domestics of M. Montmorin, mayor of Fontainebleau, appeared before the gates, forced them open, and made a clear passage for the travellers. At Arnay-le-Duc, the municipality was more successful: there they effectually stopped the progress of the royal emigrants, and dispatched an account of their proceedings to the National Assembly. On mature consideration, however, the legislative body decreed, that "as there was no positive law existing which sanctioned the arrest of mesdames aunts to the king, it should be referred to the executive power;" and in consequence of this decree, after some delays, they were left to pursue their journey to Rome.

On the twenty-eighth of February an event of a more extraordinary and suspicious nature occurred, and unfortunately contributed to encrease the jealousy and dissatisfaction of the public. On the morning of that day, at the usual hour of divine service at the Royal Chapel, a gentleman, after walking for some time in the gallery, requested of the attendants on the dauphin to be permitted to see the prince. As he passed into the apartment, a poniard of a peculiar construction was discovered under his coat: he was arrested, and examined before the mayor of Paris, and committed to custody.

While the mayor was occupied with this affair, he received intelligence of a riot in another quarter. The castle of Vincennes had been directed to undergo some repair; and, as that edifice had formerly been used as a state prison, the jealousy of the populace immediately took fire, and their imaginations represented to them the horrible spectre of a Bastille still more formidable than that which had been demolished. The suburb of St. Antoine was presently in motion, and the object of popular suspicion was powerfully assailed. M. Bailly was however no sooner informed of this commotion, than he proceeded thither, accompanied by M. de la Fayette and a strong party of the national guard. The populace were easily undeceived, and persuaded to disperse; but what was the surprise of the magistrate and the national guard, on their return to the Thuilleries,

to find the gates barred against them ; and as soon as they were forced open, the apartments were discovered to be filled with men who had assembled under the pretence of defending the king ! As no criminal intention could be proved against them, after being searched, and deprived of their arms, they were ordered civilly to depart, and leave the protection of the royal family to the national guard. The general suspicion was, that a conspiracy had been concerted by the chiefs of the aristocratic party, to take advantage of the first commotion, which would necessarily draw off the national guard, to put in effect their long-projected plan of carrying off the king. Whatever might be the motive of the persons who assembled on this occasion, it is much to be regretted, as it gave too much countenance to the suspicions of the people, and cherished that spirit of party which it was so much the interest of the nation to counteract and subdue.

The beginning of March was dedicated by the Assembly chiefly to the organization of the army ; and towards the conclusion of the month, several decrees were passed relative to the case of a regency.—“ Women were excluded from that trust, as well as from the succession to the crown. The regency was declared to belong of right to the next male heir to the crown, during the whole minority of the king. The person of the minor king, however, was not confined to the regent ; and he was pronounced to be of age at eighteen.”—Nearly about the same period it was decreed, “ that all public functionaries ought to reside in whatever place was the proper scene of their employments ; that the king, as the first public functionary, should be always resident, during the session, within twenty leagues of the legislative body ; and that if he or the heir apparent went out of the kingdom without a decree of the legislature, they should be considered as having abdicated the crown.”

This was succeeded by one of still greater importance to the welfare of the community. It regarded the succession to property, and the right of disposing of possessions after death. In the outset of the debate, a very judicious distinction was established ; and it was determined, first, to decide what was proper to be decreed with respect to the effects of persons dying intestate ; and, secondly, whether any restriction ought to be laid on the right of testamentary alienation. In the first part of this investigation, the evils of the existing law of inheritances were strongly depicted. The absurd feudal institution of primogeniture was successfully attacked. It was demonstrated, “ that no such institution existed amongst the enlightened nations of antiquity ; that it originated among the most barbarous tribes, and in the most uncivilized periods ; that, in the present circumstances of society, it was warranted by no motive, no reason, no excuse ; that its basis was injustice, its consequences, profligacy, and crimes ; that the heir to a large fortune was generally corrupted by the possession of it, and the younger branches devoted to beggary and prostitution ; that its effects in a public view were still more deplorable ; and that it was the principal cause of that inequality among the citizens, which produced most of the vice and all the misery that exists in society.” In fine, the opinion,





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