

# Book II. The Paper Age.

## Chapter I. Astraea Redux.

A paradoxical philosopher, carrying to the uttermost length that aphorism of Montesquieu's, 'Happy the people whose annals are tiresome,' has said, 'Happy the people whose annals are vacant.' In which saying, mad as it looks, may there not still be found some grain of reason? For truly, as it has been written, 'Silence is divine,' and of Heaven; so in all earthly things too there is a silence which is better than any speech. Consider it well, the Event, the thing which can be spoken of and recorded, is it not, in all cases, some disruption, some solution of continuity? Were it even a glad Event, it involves change, involves loss (*of active Force*); and so far, either in the past or in the present, is an irregularity, a disease. Stillest perseverance were our blessedness; not dislocation and alteration,—could they be avoided.

The oak grows silently, in the forest, a thousand years; only in the thousandth year, when the woodman arrives with his axe, is there heard an echoing through the solitudes; and the oak announces itself when, with a far-sounding crash, it falls. How silent too was the planting of the acorn; scattered from the lap of some wandering wind! Nay, when our oak flowered, or put on its leaves (*its glad Events*), what shout of proclamation could there be? Hardly from the most observant a word of recognition. These things befell not, they were slowly done; not in an hour, but through the flight of days: what was to be said of it? This hour seemed altogether as the last was, as the next would be.

It is thus everywhere that foolish Rumour babbles not of what was done, but of what was misdone or undone; and foolish History (*ever, more or less, the written epitomised synopsis of Rumour*) knows so little that were not as well unknown. Attila Invasions, Walter-the-Penniless Crusades, Sicilian Vespers, Thirty-Years Wars: mere sin and misery; not work, but hindrance of work! For the Earth, all this while, was yearly green and yellow with her kind harvests; the hand of the craftsman, the mind of the thinker rested not: and so, after all, and in spite of all, we have this so glorious high-domed blossoming World; concerning which, poor History may well ask, with wonder, Whence it came? She knows so little of it, knows so much of what obstructed it, what would have rendered it impossible. Such, nevertheless, by necessity or foolish choice, is her rule and practice; whereby that paradox, 'Happy the people whose annals are vacant,' is not without its true side.

And yet, what seems more pertinent to note here, there is a stillness, not of unobstructed growth, but of passive inertness, and symptom of imminent downfall. As victory is silent, so is defeat. Of the opposing forces the weaker has resigned itself; the stronger marches on, noiseless now, but rapid, inevitable: the fall and overturn will not be noiseless. How all grows, and has its period, even as the herbs of the fields, be it annual, centennial, millennial! All grows and dies, each by its own wondrous laws, in wondrous fashion of its own; spiritual things most wondrously of all. Inscrutable, to the wisest, are these latter; not to be prophesied of, or understood. If when the oak stands proudest flourishing to the eye, you know that its heart is sound, it is not so with the man; how much less with the Society, with the Nation of men! Of such it may be affirmed even that the superficial aspect, that the inward feeling of full health, is generally ominous. For indeed it is of apoplexy, so to speak, and a plethoric lazy habit of body, that Churches, Kingships, Social Institutions, oftenest die. Sad, when such Institution plethorically says to itself, Take thy ease, thou hast goods laid up;—like the fool of the

Gospel, to whom it was answered, Fool, this night thy life shall be required of thee!

Is it the healthy peace, or the ominous unhealthy, that rests on France, for these next Ten Years? Over which the Historian can pass lightly, without call to linger: for as yet events are not, much less performances. Time of sunniest stillness;—shall we call it, what all men thought it, the new Age of God? Call it at least, of Paper; which in many ways is the succedaneum of Gold. Bank-paper, wherewith you can still buy when there is no gold left; Book-paper, splendid with Theories, Philosophies, Sensibilities,—beautiful art, not only of revealing Thought, but also of so beautifully hiding from us the want of Thought! Paper is made from the rags of things that did once exist; there are endless excellences in Paper.—What wisest Philosophe, in this halcyon uneventful period, could prophesy that there was approaching, big with darkness and confusion, the event of events? Hope ushers in a Revolution,—as earthquakes are preceded by bright weather. On the Fifth of May, fifteen years hence, old Louis will not be sending for the Sacraments; but a new Louis, his grandson, with the whole pomp of astonished intoxicated France, will be opening the States-General.

Dubarrydom and its D'Aiguillons are gone forever. There is a young, still docile, well-intentioned King; a young, beautiful and bountiful, well-intentioned Queen; and with them all France, as it were, become young. Maupeou and his Parlement have to vanish into thick night; respectable Magistrates, not indifferent to the Nation, were it only for having been opponents of the Court, can descend unchained from their 'steep rocks at Croe in Combrailles' and elsewhere, and return singing praises: the old Parlement of Paris resumes its functions. Instead of a profligate bankrupt Abbe Terray, we have now, for Contrôller-General, a virtuous philosophic Turgot, with a whole Reformed France in his head. By whom whatsoever is wrong, in Finance or otherwise, will be righted,—as far as possible. Is it not as if Wisdom herself were henceforth to have seat and voice in the Council of Kings? Turgot has taken office with the noblest plainness of speech to that effect; been listened to with the noblest royal trustfulness. (*Turgot's Letter: Condorcet, Vie de Turgot (Oeuvres de Condorcet, t. v.), p. 67. The date is 24th August, 1774.*) It is true, as King Louis objects, "They say he never goes to mass;" but liberal France likes him little worse for that; liberal France answers, "The Abbe Terray always went." Philosophism sees, for the first time, a Philosophe (*or even a Philosopher*) in office: she in all things will applausively second him; neither will light old Maurepas obstruct, if he can easily help it.

Then how 'sweet' are the manners; vice 'losing all its deformity;' becoming decent (*as established things, making regulations for themselves, do*); becoming almost a kind of 'sweet' virtue! Intelligence so abounds; irradiated by wit and the art of conversation. Philosophism sits joyful in her glittering saloons, the dinner-guest of Opulence grown ingenuous, the very nobles proud to sit by her; and preaches, lifted up over all Bastilles, a coming millennium. From far Ferney, Patriarch Voltaire gives sign: veterans Diderot, D'Alembert have lived to see this day; these with their younger Marmontels, Morellets, Chamforts, Raynals, make glad the spicy board of rich ministering Dowager, of philosophic Farmer-General. O nights and suppers of the gods! Of a truth, the long-demonstrated will now be done: 'the Age of Revolutions approaches' (*as Jean Jacques wrote*), but then of happy blessed ones. Man awakens from his long somnambulism; chases the Phantasms that beleagured and bewitched him. Behold the new morning glittering down the eastern steeps; fly, false Phantasms, from its shafts of light; let the Absurd fly utterly forsaking this lower Earth for ever. It is Truth and Astraea Redux that (*in the shape of Philosophism*) henceforth reign. For what imaginable purpose was man made, if not to be 'happy'? By victorious Analysis, and Progress of the Species, happiness enough now awaits him. Kings can become philosophers; or else philosophers Kings. Let but Society be once rightly constituted,—by victorious Analysis. The stomach that is empty shall be filled; the throat that is dry shall be wetted with wine. Labour itself shall be all one as rest; not grievous, but joyous. Wheatfields,

one would think, cannot come to grow untilled; no man made clayey, or made weary thereby;—unless indeed machinery will do it? Gratuitous Tailors and Restaurateurs may start up, at fit intervals, one as yet sees not how. But if each will, according to rule of Benevolence, have a care for all, then surely—no one will be uncared for. Nay, who knows but, by sufficiently victorious Analysis, 'human life may be indefinitely lengthened,' and men get rid of Death, as they have already done of the Devil? We shall then be happy in spite of Death and the Devil.—So preaches magniloquent Philosophism her Redeunt Saturnia regna.

The prophetic song of Paris and its Philosophes is audible enough in the Versailles Oeil-de-Boeuf; and the Oeil-de-Boeuf, intent chiefly on nearer blessedness, can answer, at worst, with a polite "Why not?" Good old cheery Maurepas is too joyful a Prime Minister to dash the world's joy. Sufficient for the day be its own evil. Cheery old man, he cuts his jokes, and hovers careless along; his cloak well adjusted to the wind, if so be he may please all persons. The simple young King, whom a Maurepas cannot think of troubling with business, has retired into the interior apartments; taciturn, irresolute; though with a sharpness of temper at times: he, at length, determines on a little smithwork; and so, in apprenticeship with a Sieur Gamain (*whom one day he shall have little cause to bless*), is learning to make locks. (*Campan, i. 125.*) It appears further, he understood Geography; and could read English. Unhappy young King, his childlike trust in that foolish old Maurepas deserved another return. But friend and foe, destiny and himself have combined to do him hurt.

Meanwhile the fair young Queen, in her halls of state, walks like a goddess of Beauty, the cynosure of all eyes; as yet mingles not with affairs; heeds not the future; least of all, dreads it. Weber and Campan (*Ib. i. 100-151. Weber, i. 11-50.*) have pictured her, there within the royal tapestries, in bright boudoirs, baths, peignoirs, and the Grand and Little Toilette; with a whole brilliant world waiting obsequious on her glance: fair young daughter of Time, what things has Time in store for thee! Like Earth's brightest Appearance, she moves gracefully, environed with the grandeur of Earth: a reality, and yet a magic vision; for, behold, shall not utter Darkness swallow it! The soft young heart adopts orphans, portions meritorious maids, delights to succour the poor,—such poor as come picturesquely in her way; and sets the fashion of doing it; for as was said, Benevolence has now begun reigning. In her Duchess de Polignac, in Princess de Lamballe, she enjoys something almost like friendship; now too, after seven long years, she has a child, and soon even a Dauphin, of her own; can reckon herself, as Queens go, happy in a husband.

Events? The Grand events are but charitable Feasts of Morals (*Fetes des moeurs*), with their Prizes and Speeches; Poissarde Processions to the Dauphin's cradle; above all, Flirtations, their rise, progress, decline and fall. There are Snow-statues raised by the poor in hard winter to a Queen who has given them fuel. There are masquerades, theatricals; beautifyings of little Trianon, purchase and repair of St. Cloud; journeyings from the summer Court-Elysium to the winter one. There are poutings and grudgings from the Sardinian Sisters-in-law (*for the Princes too are wedded*); little jealousies, which Court-Etiquette can moderate. Wholly the lightest-hearted frivolous foam of Existence; yet an artfully refined foam; pleasant were it not so costly, like that which mantles on the wine of Champagne!

Monsieur, the King's elder Brother, has set up for a kind of wit; and leans towards the Philosophe side. Monseigneur d'Artois pulls the mask from a fair impertinent; fights a duel in consequence,—almost drawing blood. (*Besenval, ii. 282-330.*) He has breeches of a kind new in this world;—a fabulous kind; 'four tall lackeys,' says Mercier, as if he had seen it, 'hold him up in the air, that he may fall into the garment without vestige of wrinkle; from which rigorous encasement the same four, in the same way, and with more effort, must deliver him at night.' (*Mercier, Nouveau Paris, iii. 147.*) This last is he who

now, as a gray time-worn man, sits desolate at Gratz; (A.D. 1834.) having winded up his destiny with the Three Days. In such sort are poor mortals swept and shovelled to and fro.

## Chapter 2. Petition in Hieroglyphs.

With the working people, again it is not so well. Unlucky! For there are twenty to twenty-five millions of them. Whom, however, we lump together into a kind of dim compendious unity, monstrous but dim, far off, as the canaille; or, more humanely, as 'the masses.' Masses, indeed: and yet, singular to say, if, with an effort of imagination, thou follow them, over broad France, into their clay hovels, into their garrets and hutches, the masses consist all of units. Every unit of whom has his own heart and sorrows; stands covered there with his own skin, and if you prick him he will bleed. O purple Sovereignty, Holiness, Reverence; thou, for example, Cardinal Grand-Almoner, with thy plush covering of honour, who hast thy hands strengthened with dignities and moneys, and art set on thy world watch-tower solemnly, in sight of God, for such ends,—what a thought: that every unit of these masses is a miraculous Man, even as thyself art; struggling, with vision, or with blindness, for his infinite Kingdom (*this life which he has got, once only, in the middle of Eternities*); with a spark of the Divinity, what thou callest an immortal soul, in him!

Dreary, languid do these struggle in their obscure remoteness; their hearth cheerless, their diet thin. For them, in this world, rises no Era of Hope; hardly now in the other,—if it be not hope in the gloomy rest of Death, for their faith too is failing. Untaught, uncomforted, unfed! A dumb generation; their voice only an inarticulate cry: spokesman, in the King's Council, in the world's forum, they have none that finds credence. At rare intervals (*as now, in 1775*), they will fling down their hoes and hammers; and, to the astonishment of thinking mankind, (*Lacretelle, France pendant le 18me Siecle, ii. 455. Biographie Universelle, para Turgot* (by Durozoir).) flock hither and thither, dangerous, aimless; get the length even of Versailles. Turgot is altering the Corn-trade, abrogating the absurdest Corn-laws; there is dearth, real, or were it even 'factitious;' an indubitable scarcity of bread. And so, on the second day of May 1775, these waste multitudes do here, at Versailles Chateau, in wide-spread wretchedness, in sallow faces, squalor, winged raggedness, present, as in legible hieroglyphic writing, their Petition of Grievances. The Chateau gates have to be shut; but the King will appear on the balcony, and speak to them. They have seen the King's face; their Petition of Grievances has been, if not read, looked at. For answer, two of them are hanged, 'on a new gallows forty feet high;' and the rest driven back to their dens,—for a time.

Clearly a difficult 'point' for Government, that of dealing with these masses;—if indeed it be not rather the sole point and problem of Government, and all other points mere accidental crotchets, superficialities, and beatings of the wind! For let Charter-Chests, Use and Wont, Law common and special say what they will, the masses count to so many millions of units; made, to all appearance, by God,—whose Earth this is declared to be. Besides, the people are not without ferocity; they have sinews and indignation. Do but look what holiday old Marquis Mirabeau, the crabbed old friend of Men, looked on, in these same years, from his lodging, at the Baths of Mont d'Or: 'The savages descending in torrents from the mountains; our people ordered not to go out. The Curate in surplice and stole; Justice in its peruke; Marechausee sabre in hand, guarding the place, till the bagpipes can begin. The dance interrupted, in a quarter of an hour, by battle; the cries, the squealings of children, of infirm persons, and other assistants, tarring them on, as the rabble does when dogs fight: frightful men, or rather frightful wild animals, clad in jupes of coarse woollen, with large girdles of leather studded with copper nails; of gigantic stature, heightened by high wooden-clogs (*sabots*); rising on tiptoe to see

the fight; tramping time to it; rubbing their sides with their elbows: their faces haggard (*figures haves*), and covered with their long greasy hair; the upper part of the visage waxing pale, the lower distorting itself into the attempt at a cruel laugh and a sort of ferocious impatience. And these people pay the taille! And you want further to take their salt from them! And you know not what it is you are stripping barer, or as you call it, governing; what by the spurt of your pen, in its cold dastard indifference, you will fancy you can starve always with impunity; always till the catastrophe come!—Ah Madame, such Government by Blindman's-buff, stumbling along too far, will end in the General Overturn (*culbute generale*). (*Memoires de Mirabeau, ecrits par Lui-meme, par son Pere, son Oncle et son Fils Adoptif* (Paris, 34-5), ii.186.)

Undoubtedly a dark feature this in an Age of Gold,—Age, at least, of Paper and Hope! Meanwhile, trouble us not with thy prophecies, O croaking Friend of Men: 'tis long that we have heard such; and still the old world keeps wagging, in its old way.

## Chapter 3. Questionable.

Or is this same Age of Hope itself but a simulacrum; as Hope too often is? Cloud-vapour with rainbows painted on it, beautiful to see, to sail towards,—which hovers over Niagara Falls? In that case, victorious Analysis will have enough to do.

Alas, yes! a whole world to remake, if she could see it; work for another than she! For all is wrong, and gone out of joint; the inward spiritual, and the outward economical; head or heart, there is no soundness in it. As indeed, evils of all sorts are more or less of kin, and do usually go together: especially it is an old truth, that wherever huge physical evil is, there, as the parent and origin of it, has moral evil to a proportionate extent been. Before those five-and-twenty labouring Millions, for instance, could get that haggardness of face, which old Mirabeau now looks on, in a Nation calling itself Christian, and calling man the brother of man,—what unspeakable, nigh infinite Dishonesty (*of seeming and not being*) in all manner of Rulers, and appointed Watchers, spiritual and temporal, must there not, through long ages, have gone on accumulating! It will accumulate: moreover, it will reach a head; for the first of all Gospels is this, that a Lie cannot endure for ever.

In fact, if we pierce through that rosepink vapour of Sentimentalism, Philanthropy, and Feasts of Morals, there lies behind it one of the sorriest spectacles. You might ask, What bonds that ever held a human society happily together, or held it together at all, are in force here? It is an unbelieving people; which has suppositions, hypotheses, and froth-systems of victorious Analysis; and for belief this mainly, that Pleasure is pleasant. Hunger they have for all sweet things; and the law of Hunger; but what other law? Within them, or over them, properly none!

Their King has become a King Popinjay; with his Maurepas Government, gyrating as the weather-cock does, blown about by every wind. Above them they see no God; or they even do not look above, except with astronomical glasses. The Church indeed still is; but in the most submissive state; quite tamed by Philosophism; in a singularly short time; for the hour was come. Some twenty years ago, your Archbishop Beaumont would not even let the poor Jansenists get buried: your Lomenie Brienne (*a rising man, whom we shall meet with yet*) could, in the name of the Clergy, insist on having the Anti-protestant laws, which condemn to death for preaching, 'put in execution.' (*Boissy d'Anglas, Vie de Malesherbes, i. 15-22.*) And, alas, now not so much as Baron Holbach's Atheism can be burnt,—except as pipe-matches by the private speculative individual. Our Church stands haltered,

dumb, like a dumb ox; lowing only for provender (*of tithes*); content if it can have that; or, dumbly, dully expecting its further doom. And the Twenty Millions of 'haggard faces;' and, as finger-post and guidance to them in their dark struggle, 'a gallows forty feet high'! Certainly a singular Golden Age; with its Feasts of Morals, its 'sweet manners,' its sweet institutions (*institutions douces*); betokening nothing but peace among men!—Peace? O Philosophe-Sentimentalism, what hast thou to do with peace, when thy mother's name is Jezebel? Foul Product of still fouler Corruption, thou with the corruption art doomed!

Meanwhile it is singular how long the rotten will hold together, provided you do not handle it roughly. For whole generations it continues standing, 'with a ghastly affectation of life,' after all life and truth has fled out of it; so loth are men to quit their old ways; and, conquering indolence and inertia, venture on new. Great truly is the Actual; is the Thing that has rescued itself from bottomless depths of theory and possibility, and stands there as a definite indisputable Fact, whereby men do work and live, or once did so. Widely shall men cleave to that, while it will endure; and quit it with regret, when it gives way under them. Rash enthusiast of Change, beware! Hast thou well considered all that Habit does in this life of ours; how all Knowledge and all Practice hang wondrous over infinite abysses of the Unknown, Impracticable; and our whole being is an infinite abyss, over-arched by Habit, as by a thin Earth-rind, laboriously built together?

But if 'every man,' as it has been written, 'holds confined within him a mad-man,' what must every Society do;—Society, which in its commonest state is called 'the standing miracle of this world'! 'Without such Earth-rind of Habit,' continues our author, 'call it System of Habits, in a word, fixed ways of acting and of believing,—Society would not exist at all. With such it exists, better or worse. Herein too, in this its System of Habits, acquired, retained how you will, lies the true Law-Code and Constitution of a Society; the only Code, though an unwritten one which it can in nowise disobey. The thing we call written Code, Constitution, Form of Government, and the like, what is it but some miniature image, and solemnly expressed summary of this unwritten Code? Is,—or rather alas, is not; but only should be, and always tends to be! In which latter discrepancy lies struggle without end.' And now, we add in the same dialect, let but, by ill chance, in such ever-enduring struggle,—your 'thin Earth-rind' be once broken! The fountains of the great deep boil forth; fire-fountains, enveloping, engulfing. Your 'Earth-rind' is shattered, swallowed up; instead of a green flowery world, there is a waste wild-weltering chaos:—which has again, with tumult and struggle, to make itself into a world.

On the other hand, be this conceded: Where thou findest a Lie that is oppressing thee, extinguish it. Lies exist there only to be extinguished; they wait and cry earnestly for extinction. Think well, meanwhile, in what spirit thou wilt do it: not with hatred, with headlong selfish violence; but in clearness of heart, with holy zeal, gently, almost with pity. Thou wouldst not replace such extinct Lie by a new Lie, which a new Injustice of thy own were; the parent of still other Lies? Whereby the latter end of that business were worse than the beginning.

So, however, in this world of ours, which has both an indestructible hope in the Future, and an indestructible tendency to persevere as in the Past, must Innovation and Conservation wage their perpetual conflict, as they may and can. Wherein the 'daemonic element,' that lurks in all human things, may doubtless, some once in the thousand years—get vent! But indeed may we not regret that such conflict,—which, after all, is but like that classical one of 'hate-filled Amazons with heroic Youths,' and will end in embraces,—should usually be so spasmodic? For Conservation, strengthened by that mightiest quality in us, our indolence, sits for long ages, not victorious only, which she should be; but tyrannical, incommunicative. She holds her adversary as if annihilated; such adversary lying,

all the while, like some buried Enceladus; who, to gain the smallest freedom, must stir a whole Trinacria with it Aetnas.

Wherefore, on the whole, we will honour a Paper Age too; an Era of hope! For in this same frightful process of Enceladus Revolt; when the task, on which no mortal would willingly enter, has become imperative, inevitable,—is it not even a kindness of Nature that she lures us forward by cheerful promises, fallacious or not; and a whole generation plunges into the Erebus Blackness, lighted on by an Era of Hope? It has been well said: 'Man is based on Hope; he has properly no other possession but Hope; this habitation of his is named the Place of Hope.'

## Chapter 4. Maurepas.

But now, among French hopes, is not that of old M. de Maurepas one of the best-grounded; who hopes that he, by dexterity, shall contrive to continue Minister? Nimble old man, who for all emergencies has his light jest; and ever in the worst confusion will emerge, cork-like, unsunk! Small care to him is Perfectibility, Progress of the Species, and Astraea Redux: good only, that a man of light wit, verging towards fourscore, can in the seat of authority feel himself important among men. Shall we call him, as haughty Chateauroux was wont of old, 'M. Faquinet (*Diminutive of Scoundrel*)'? In courtier dialect, he is now named 'the Nestor of France;' such governing Nestor as France has.

At bottom, nevertheless, it might puzzle one to say where the Government of France, in these days, specially is. In that Chateau of Versailles, we have Nestor, King, Queen, ministers and clerks, with paper-bundles tied in tape: but the Government? For Government is a thing that governs, that guides; and if need be, compels. Visible in France there is not such a thing. Invisible, inorganic, on the other hand, there is: in Philosophe saloons, in Oeil-de-Boeuf galleries; in the tongue of the babbler, in the pen of the pamphleteer. Her Majesty appearing at the Opera is applauded; she returns all radiant with joy. Anon the applauses wax fainter, or threaten to cease; she is heavy of heart, the light of her face has fled. Is Sovereignty some poor Montgolfier; which, blown into by the popular wind, grows great and mounts; or sinks flaccid, if the wind be withdrawn? France was long a 'Despotism tempered by Epigrams;' and now, it would seem, the Epigrams have got the upper hand.

Happy were a young 'Louis the Desired' to make France happy; if it did not prove too troublesome, and he only knew the way. But there is endless discrepancy round him; so many claims and clamours; a mere confusion of tongues. Not reconcilable by man; not manageable, suppressible, save by some strongest and wisest men;—which only a lightly-jesting lightly-gyrating M. de Maurepas can so much as subsist amidst. Philosophism claims her new Era, meaning thereby innumerable things. And claims it in no faint voice; for France at large, hitherto mute, is now beginning to speak also; and speaks in that same sense. A huge, many-toned sound; distant, yet not unimpressive. On the other hand, the Oeil-de-Boeuf, which, as nearest, one can hear best, claims with shrill vehemence that the Monarchy be as heretofore a Horn of Plenty; wherefrom loyal courtiers may draw,—to the just support of the throne. Let Liberalism and a New Era, if such is the wish, be introduced; only no curtailment of the royal moneys? Which latter condition, alas, is precisely the impossible one.

Philosophism, as we saw, has got her Turgot made Controller-General; and there shall be endless reformation. Unhappily this Turgot could continue only twenty months. With a miraculous Fortunatus' Purse in his Treasury, it might have lasted longer; with such Purse indeed, every French Controller-General, that would prosper in these days, ought first to provide himself. But here again may we not

remark the bounty of Nature in regard to Hope? Man after man advances confident to the Augean Stable, as if he could clean it; expends his little fraction of an ability on it, with such cheerfulness; does, in so far as he was honest, accomplish something. Turgot has faculties; honesty, insight, heroic volition; but the Fortunatus' Purse he has not. Sanguine Controller-General! a whole pacific French Revolution may stand schemed in the head of the thinker; but who shall pay the unspeakable 'indemnities' that will be needed? Alas, far from that: on the very threshold of the business, he proposes that the Clergy, the Noblesse, the very Parlements be subjected to taxes! One shriek of indignation and astonishment reverberates through all the Chateau galleries; M. de Maurepas has to gyrate: the poor King, who had written few weeks ago, 'Il n'y a que vous et moi qui aimions le peuple' (*There is none but you and I that has the people's interest at heart*), must write now a dismissal; (*In May, 1776.*) and let the French Revolution accomplish itself, pacifically or not, as it can.

Hope, then, is deferred? Deferred; not destroyed, or abated. Is not this, for example, our Patriarch Voltaire, after long years of absence, revisiting Paris? With face shrivelled to nothing; with 'huge peruke a la Louis Quatorze, which leaves only two eyes "visible" glittering like carbuncles,' the old man is here. (*February, 1778.*) What an outburst! Sneering Paris has suddenly grown reverent; devotional with Hero-worship. Nobles have disguised themselves as tavern-waiters to obtain sight of him: the loveliest of France would lay their hair beneath his feet. 'His chariot is the nucleus of a comet; whose train fills whole streets;' they crown him in the theatre, with immortal vivats; 'finally stifle him under roses,'—for old Richelieu recommended opium in such state of the nerves, and the excessive Patriarch took too much. Her Majesty herself had some thought of sending for him; but was dissuaded. Let Majesty consider it, nevertheless. The purport of this man's existence has been to wither up and annihilate all whereon Majesty and Worship for the present rests: and is it so that the world recognises him? With Apotheosis; as its Prophet and Speaker, who has spoken wisely the thing it longed to say? Add only, that the body of this same rose-stifled, beatified-Patriarch cannot get buried except by stealth. It is wholly a notable business; and France, without doubt, is big (*what the Germans call 'Of good Hope'*): we shall wish her a happy birth-hour, and blessed fruit.

Beaumarchais too has now winded-up his Law-Pleadings (*Memoires*); (*1773-6. See Oeuvres de Beaumarchais; where they, and the history of them, are given.*) not without result, to himself and to the world. Caron Beaumarchais (*or de Beaumarchais, for he got ennobled*) had been born poor, but aspiring, esurient; with talents, audacity, adroitness; above all, with the talent for intrigue: a lean, but also a tough, indomitable man. Fortune and dexterity brought him to the harpsichord of Mesdames, our good Princesses Loque, Graille and Sisterhood. Still better, Paris Duvernier, the Court-Banker, honoured him with some confidence; to the length even of transactions in cash. Which confidence, however, Duvernier's Heir, a person of quality, would not continue. Quite otherwise; there springs a Lawsuit from it: wherein tough Beaumarchais, losing both money and repute, is, in the opinion of Judge-Reporter Gozman, of the Parlement Maupeou, of a whole indifferent acquiescing world, miserably beaten. In all men's opinions, only not in his own! Inspired by the indignation, which makes, if not verses, satirical law-papers, the withered Music-master, with a desperate heroism, takes up his lost cause in spite of the world; fights for it, against Reporters, Parlements and Principalities, with light banter, with clear logic; adroitly, with an inexhaustible toughness and resource, like the skilfullest fencer; on whom, so skilful is he, the whole world now looks. Three long years it lasts; with wavering fortune. In fine, after labours comparable to the Twelve of Hercules, our unconquerable Caron triumphs; regains his Lawsuit and Lawsuits; strips Reporter Gozman of the judicial ermine; covering him with a perpetual garment of obloquy instead:—and in regard to the Parlement Maupeou (*which he has helped to extinguish*), to Parlements of all kinds, and to French Justice generally, gives rise to endless reflections in the minds of men. Thus has Beaumarchais, like a lean French Hercules, ventured



down, driven by destiny, into the Nether Kingdoms; and victoriously tamed hell-dogs there. He also is henceforth among the notabilities of his generation.

## Chapter 5. Astraea Redux without Cash.

Observe, however, beyond the Atlantic, has not the new day verily dawned! Democracy, as we said, is born; storm-girt, is struggling for life and victory. A sympathetic France rejoices over the Rights of Man; in all saloons, it is said, What a spectacle! Now too behold our Deane, our Franklin, American Plenipotentiaries, here in position soliciting; (*1777; Deane somewhat earlier: Franklin remained till 1785.*) the sons of the Saxon Puritans, with their Old-Saxon temper, Old-Hebrew culture, sleek Silas, sleek Benjamin, here on such errand, among the light children of Heathenism, Monarchy, Sentimentalism, and the Scarlet-woman. A spectacle indeed; over which saloons may cackle joyous; though Kaiser Joseph, questioned on it, gave this answer, most unexpected from a Philosophe: "Madame, the trade I live by is that of royalist (*Mon metier a moi c'est d'etre royaliste*)."

So thinks light Maurepas too; but the wind of Philosophism and force of public opinion will blow him round. Best wishes, meanwhile, are sent; clandestine privateers armed. Paul Jones shall equip his Bon Homme Richard: weapons, military stores can be smuggled over (*if the English do not seize them*); wherein, once more Beaumarchais, dimly as the Giant Smuggler becomes visible,—filling his own lank pocket withal. But surely, in any case, France should have a Navy. For which great object were not now the time: now when that proud Termagant of the Seas has her hands full? It is true, an impoverished Treasury cannot build ships; but the hint once given (*which Beaumarchais says he gave*), this and the other loyal Seaport, Chamber of Commerce, will build and offer them. Goodly vessels bound into the waters; a Ville de Paris, Leviathan of ships.

And now when gratuitous three-deckers dance there at anchor, with streamers flying; and eleutheromaniac Philosophedom grows ever more clamorous, what can a Maurepas do—but gyrate? Squadrons cross the ocean: Gages, Lees, rough Yankee Generals, 'with woollen night-caps under their hats,' present arms to the far-glancing Chivalry of France; and new-born Democracy sees, not without amazement, 'Despotism tempered by Epigrams fight at her side. So, however, it is. King's forces and heroic volunteers; Rochambeaus, Bouilles, Lameths, Lafayettes, have drawn their swords in this sacred quarrel of mankind;—shall draw them again elsewhere, in the strangest way.

Off Ushant some naval thunder is heard. In the course of which did our young Prince, Duke de Chartres, 'hide in the hold;' or did he materially, by active heroism, contribute to the victory? Alas, by a second edition, we learn that there was no victory; or that English Keppel had it. (*27th July, 1778.*) Our poor young Prince gets his Opera plaudits changed into mocking tehees; and cannot become Grand-Admiral,—the source to him of woes which one may call endless.

Woe also for Ville de Paris, the Leviathan of ships! English Rodney has clutched it, and led it home, with the rest; so successful was his new 'manoeuvre of breaking the enemy's line.' (*9th and 12th April, 1782.*) It seems as if, according to Louis XV., 'France were never to have a Navy.' Brave Suffren must return from Hyder Ally and the Indian Waters; with small result; yet with great glory for 'six non-defeats;—which indeed, with such seconding as he had, one may reckon heroic. Let the old sea-hero rest now, honoured of France, in his native Cevennes mountains; send smoke, not of gunpowder, but mere culinary smoke, through the old chimneys of the Castle of Jales,—which one day, in other hands, shall have other fame. Brave Laperouse shall by and by lift anchor, on philanthropic Voyage of

Discovery; for the King knows Geography. (*August 1st, 1785.*) But, alas, this also will not prosper: the brave Navigator goes, and returns not; the Seekers search far seas for him in vain. He has vanished trackless into blue Immensity; and only some mournful mysterious shadow of him hovers long in all heads and hearts.

Neither, while the War yet lasts, will Gibraltar surrender. Not though Crillon, Nassau-Siegen, with the ablest projectors extant, are there; and Prince Conde and Prince d'Artois have hastened to help. Wondrous leather-roofed Floating-batteries, set afloat by French-Spanish Pacte de Famille, give gallant summons: to which, nevertheless, Gibraltar answers Plutonically, with mere torrents of red-hot iron,—as if stone Calpe had become a throat of the Pit; and utters such a Doom's-blast of a No, as all men must credit. (*Annual Register (Dodsley's), xxv. 258-267. September, October, 1782.*)

And so, with this loud explosion, the noise of War has ceased; an Age of Benevolence may hope, for ever. Our noble volunteers of Freedom have returned, to be her missionaries. Lafayette, as the matchless of his time, glitters in the Versailles Oeil-de-Beuf; has his Bust set up in the Paris Hotel-de-Ville. Democracy stands inexpugnable, immeasurable, in her New World; has even a foot lifted towards the Old;—and our French Finances, little strengthened by such work, are in no healthy way.

What to do with the Finance? This indeed is the great question: a small but most black weather-symptom, which no radiance of universal hope can cover. We saw Turgot cast forth from the Controllership, with shrieks,—for want of a Fortunatus' Purse. As little could M. de Clugny manage the duty; or indeed do anything, but consume his wages; attain 'a place in History,' where as an ineffectual shadow thou beholdest him still lingering;—and let the duty manage itself. Did Genevese Necker possess such a Purse, then? He possessed banker's skill, banker's honesty; credit of all kinds, for he had written Academic Prize Essays, struggled for India Companies, given dinners to Philosophes, and 'realised a fortune in twenty years.' He possessed, further, a taciturnity and solemnity; of depth, or else of dulness. How singular for Celadon Gibbon, false swain as he had proved; whose father, keeping most probably his own gig, 'would not hear of such a union,'—to find now his forsaken Demoiselle Curchod sitting in the high places of the world, as Minister's Madame, and 'Necker not jealous!' (*Gibbon's Letters: date, 16th June, 1777, &c.*)

A new young Demoiselle, one day to be famed as a Madame and De Stael, was romping about the knees of the Decline and Fall: the lady Necker founds Hospitals; gives solemn Philosophe dinner-parties, to cheer her exhausted Controller-General. Strange things have happened: by clamour of Philosophism, management of Marquis de Pezay, and Poverty constraining even Kings. And so Necker, Atlas-like, sustains the burden of the Finances, for five years long? (*Till May, 1781.*) Without wages, for he refused such; cheered only by Public Opinion, and the ministering of his noble Wife. With many thoughts in him, it is hoped;—which, however, he is shy of uttering. His Compte Rendu, published by the royal permission, fresh sign of a New Era, shows wonders;—which what but the genius of some Atlas-Necker can prevent from becoming portents? In Necker's head too there is a whole pacific French Revolution, of its kind; and in that taciturn dull depth, or deep dulness, ambition enough.

Meanwhile, alas, his Fortunatus' Purse turns out to be little other than the old 'vectigal of Parsimony.' Nay, he too has to produce his scheme of taxing: Clergy, Noblesse to be taxed; Provincial Assemblies, and the rest,—like a mere Turgot! The expiring M. de Maurepas must gyrate one other time. Let Necker also depart; not unlamented.

Great in a private station, Necker looks on from the distance; abiding his time. 'Eighty thousand copies' of his new Book, which he calls Administration des Finances, will be sold in few days. He is gone; but shall return, and that more than once, borne by a whole shouting Nation. Singular Controller-General of the Finances; once Clerk in Thelusson's Bank!

## Chapter 6. Windbags.

So marches the world, in this its Paper Age, or Era of Hope. Not without obstructions, war-explosions; which, however, heard from such distance, are little other than a cheerful marching-music. If indeed that dark living chaos of Ignorance and Hunger, five-and-twenty million strong, under your feet,—were to begin playing!

For the present, however, consider Longchamp; now when Lent is ending, and the glory of Paris and France has gone forth, as in annual wont. Not to assist at Tenebris Masses, but to sun itself and show itself, and salute the Young Spring. (*Mercier, Tableau de Paris, ii. 51. Louvet, Roman de Faublas, &c.*) Manifold, bright-tinted, glittering with gold; all through the Bois de Boulogne, in longdrawn variegated rows;—like longdrawn living flower-borders, tulips, dahlias, lilies of the valley; all in their moving flower-pots (*of new-gilt carriages*): pleasure of the eye, and pride of life! So rolls and dances the Procession: steady, of firm assurance, as if it rolled on adamant and the foundations of the world; not on mere heraldic parchment,—under which smoulders a lake of fire. Dance on, ye foolish ones; ye sought not wisdom, neither have ye found it. Ye and your fathers have sown the wind, ye shall reap the whirlwind. Was it not, from of old, written: The wages of sin is death?

But at Longchamp, as elsewhere, we remark for one thing, that dame and cavalier are waited on each by a kind of human familiar, named jokei. Little elf, or imp; though young, already withered; with its withered air of premature vice, of knowingness, of completed elf-hood: useful in various emergencies. The name jokei (*jockey*) comes from the English; as the thing also fancies that it does. Our Anglomania, in fact, is grown considerable; prophetic of much. If France is to be free, why shall she not, now when mad war is hushed, love neighbouring Freedom? Cultivated men, your Dukes de Liancourt, de la Rochefoucault admire the English Constitution, the English National Character; would import what of it they can.

Of what is lighter, especially if it be light as wind, how much easier the freightage! Non-Admiral Duke de Chartres (*not yet d'Orleans or Egalite*) flies to and fro across the Strait; importing English Fashions; this he, as hand-and-glove with an English Prince of Wales, is surely qualified to do. Carriages and saddles; top-boots and redingotes, as we call riding-coats. Nay the very mode of riding: for now no man on a level with his age but will trot a l'Anglaise, rising in the stirrups; scornful of the old sitfast method, in which, according to Shakspeare, 'butter and eggs' go to market. Also, he can urge the fervid wheels, this brave Chartres of ours; no whip in Paris is rasher and surer than the unprofessional one of Monseigneur.

Elf jokeis, we have seen; but see now real Yorkshire jockeys, and what they ride on, and train: English racers for French Races. These likewise we owe first (*under the Providence of the Devil*) to Monseigneur. Prince d'Artois also has his stud of racers. Prince d'Artois has withal the strangest horseleech: a moonstruck, much-enduring individual, of Neuchatel in Switzerland,—named Jean Paul Marat. A problematic Chevalier d'Eon, now in petticoats, now in breeches, is no less problematic in London than in Paris; and causes bets and lawsuits. Beautiful days of international communion!

Swindlery and Blackguardism have stretched hands across the Channel, and saluted mutually: on the racecourse of Vincennes or Sablons, behold in English curricule-and-four, wafted glorious among the principalities and rascalities, an English Dr. Dodd, (*Adelung, Geschichte der Menschlichen Narrheit, para Dodd.*)—for whom also the too early gallows gapes.

Duke de Chartres was a young Prince of great promise, as young Princes often are; which promise unfortunately has belied itself. With the huge Orleans Property, with Duke de Penthièvre for Father-in-law (*and now the young Brother-in-law Lamballe killed by excesses*),—he will one day be the richest man in France. Meanwhile, 'his hair is all falling out, his blood is quite spoiled,'—by early transcendentalism of debauchery. Carbuncles stud his face; dark studs on a ground of burnished copper. A most signal failure, this young Prince! The stuff prematurely burnt out of him: little left but foul smoke and ashes of expiring sensualities: what might have been Thought, Insight, and even Conduct, gone now, or fast going,—to confused darkness, broken by bewildering dazzlements; to obstreperous crotchets; to activities which you may call semi-delirious, or even semi-galvanic! Paris affects to laugh at his charioteering; but he heeds not such laughter.

On the other hand, what a day, not of laughter, was that, when he threatened, for lucre's sake, to lay sacrilegious hand on the Palais-Royal Garden! (*1781-82. (Dulaure, viii. 423.)*) The flower-parterres shall be riven up; the Chestnut Avenues shall fall: time-honoured boscages, under which the Opera Hamadryads were wont to wander, not inexorable to men. Paris moans aloud. Philidor, from his Cafe de la Regence, shall no longer look on greenness; the loungers and losels of the world, where now shall they haunt? In vain is moaning. The axe glitters; the sacred groves fall crashing,—for indeed Monseigneur was short of money: the Opera Hamadryads fly with shrieks. Shriek not, ye Opera Hamadryads; or not as those that have no comfort. He will surround your Garden with new edifices and piazzas: though narrowed, it shall be replanted; dized with hydraulic jets, cannon which the sun fires at noon; things bodily, things spiritual, such as man has not imagined;—and in the Palais-Royal shall again, and more than ever, be the Sorcerer's Sabbath and Satan-at-Home of our Planet.

What will not mortals attempt? From remote Annonay in the Vivarais, the Brothers Montgolfier send up their paper-dome, filled with the smoke of burnt wool. (*5th June, 1783.*) The Vivarais provincial assembly is to be prorogued this same day: Vivarais Assembly-members applaud, and the shouts of congregated men. Will victorious Analysis scale the very Heavens, then?

Paris hears with eager wonder; Paris shall ere long see. From Reveillon's Paper-warehouse there, in the Rue St. Antoine (*a noted Warehouse*),—the new Montgolfier air-ship launches itself. Ducks and poultry are borne skyward: but now shall men be borne. (*October and November, 1783.*) Nay, Chemist Charles thinks of hydrogen and glazed silk. Chemist Charles will himself ascend, from the Tuileries Garden; Montgolfier solemnly cutting the cord. By Heaven, he also mounts, he and another? Ten times ten thousand hearts go palpitating; all tongues are mute with wonder and fear; till a shout, like the voice of seas, rolls after him, on his wild way. He soars, he dwindles upwards; has become a mere gleaming circlet,—like some Turgotine snuff-box, what we call 'Turgotine Platitude;' like some new daylight Moon! Finally he descends; welcomed by the universe. Duchess Polignac, with a party, is in the Bois de Boulogne, waiting; though it is drizzly winter; the 1st of December 1783. The whole chivalry of France, Duke de Chartres foremost, gallops to receive him. (*Lacretelle, 18me Siecle, iii. 258.*)

Beautiful invention; mounting heavenward, so beautifully,—so unguidably! Emblem of much, and of our Age of Hope itself; which shall mount, specifically-light, majestically in this same manner; and hover,—tumbling whither Fate will. Well if it do not, Pilatre-like, explode; and demount all the more tragically!—So, riding on windbags, will men scale the Empyrean.

Or observe Herr Doctor Mesmer, in his spacious Magnetic Halls. Long-stoled he walks; reverend, glancing upwards, as in rapt commerce; an Antique Egyptian Hierophant in this new age. Soft music flits; breaking fitfully the sacred stillness. Round their Magnetic Mystery, which to the eye is mere tubs with water,—sit breathless, rod in hand, the circles of Beauty and Fashion, each circle a living circular Passion-Flower: expecting the magnetic afflatus, and new-manufactured Heaven-on-Earth. O women, O men, great is your infidel-faith! A Parleментарy Duport, a Bergasse, D'Espremenil we notice there; Chemist Berthollet too,—on the part of Monseigneur de Chartres.

Had not the Academy of Sciences, with its Baillys, Franklins, Lavoisiers, interfered! But it did interfere. (*Lacretelle, 18me Siecle, iii.258.*) Mesmer may pocket his hard money, and withdraw. Let him walk silent by the shore of the Bodensee, by the ancient town of Constance; meditating on much. For so, under the strangest new vesture, the old great truth (*since no vesture can hide it*) begins again to be revealed: That man is what we call a miraculous creature, with miraculous power over men; and, on the whole, with such a Life in him, and such a World round him, as victorious Analysis, with her Physiologies, Nervous-systems, Physic and Metaphysic, will never completely name, to say nothing of explaining. Wherein also the Quack shall, in all ages, come in for his share. (*August, 1784.*)

## Chapter 7. Contrat Social.

In such succession of singular prismatic tints, flush after flush suffusing our horizon, does the Era of Hope dawn on towards fulfilment. Questionable! As indeed, with an Era of Hope that rests on mere universal Benevolence, victorious Analysis, Vice cured of its deformity; and, in the long run, on Twenty-five dark savage Millions, looking up, in hunger and weariness, to that Ecce-signum of theirs 'forty feet high,'—how could it but be questionable?

Through all time, if we read aright, sin was, is, will be, the parent of misery. This land calls itself most Christian, and has crosses and cathedrals; but its High-priest is some Roche-Aymon, some Necklace-Cardinal Louis de Rohan. The voice of the poor, through long years, ascends inarticulate, in Jacqueries, meal-mobs; low-whimpering of infinite moan: unheeded of the Earth; not unheeded of Heaven. Always moreover where the Millions are wretched, there are the Thousands straitened, unhappy; only the Units can flourish; or say rather, be ruined the last. Industry, all noosed and haltered, as if it too were some beast of chase for the mighty hunters of this world to bait, and cut slices from,—cries passionately to these its well-paid guides and watchers, not, Guide me; but, Laissez faire, Leave me alone of your guidance! What market has Industry in this France? For two things there may be market and demand: for the coarser kind of field-fruits, since the Millions will live: for the fine kinds of luxury and spicery,—of multiform taste, from opera-melodies down to racers and courtesans; since the Units will be amused. It is at bottom but a mad state of things.

To mend and remake all which we have, indeed, victorious Analysis. Honour to victorious Analysis; nevertheless, out of the Workshop and Laboratory, what thing was victorious Analysis yet known to make? Detection of incoherences, mainly; destruction of the incoherent. From of old, Doubt was but half a magician; she evokes the spectres which she cannot quell. We shall have 'endless vortices of

froth-logic;' whereon first words, and then things, are whirled and swallowed. Remark, accordingly, as acknowledged grounds of Hope, at bottom mere precursors of Despair, this perpetual theorising about Man, the Mind of Man, Philosophy of Government, Progress of the Species and such-like; the main thinking furniture of every head. Time, and so many Montesquieus, Mablys, spokesmen of Time, have discovered innumerable things: and now has not Jean Jacques promulgated his new Evangel of a Contrat Social; explaining the whole mystery of Government, and how it is contracted and bargained for,—to universal satisfaction? Theories of Government! Such have been, and will be; in ages of decadence. Acknowledge them in their degree; as processes of Nature, who does nothing in vain; as steps in her great process. Meanwhile, what theory is so certain as this, That all theories, were they never so earnest, painfully elaborated, are, and, by the very conditions of them, must be incomplete, questionable, and even false? Thou shalt know that this Universe is, what it professes to be, an infinite one. Attempt not to swallow it, for thy logical digestion; be thankful, if skilfully planting down this and the other fixed pillar in the chaos, thou prevent its swallowing thee. That a new young generation has exchanged the Sceptic Creed, What shall I believe? for passionate Faith in this Gospel according to Jean Jacques is a further step in the business; and betokens much.

Blessed also is Hope; and always from the beginning there was some Millennium prophesied; Millennium of Holiness; but (*what is notable*) never till this new Era, any Millennium of mere Ease and plentiful Supply. In such prophesied Lubberland, of Happiness, Benevolence, and Vice cured of its deformity, trust not, my friends! Man is not what one calls a happy animal; his appetite for sweet victual is so enormous. How, in this wild Universe, which storms in on him, infinite, vague-menacing, shall poor man find, say not happiness, but existence, and footing to stand on, if it be not by girding himself together for continual endeavour and endurance? Woe, if in his heart there dwelt no devout Faith; if the word Duty had lost its meaning for him! For as to this of Sentimentalism, so useful for weeping with over romances and on pathetic occasions, it otherwise verily will avail nothing; nay less. The healthy heart that said to itself, 'How healthy am I!' was already fallen into the fatalest sort of disease. Is not Sentimentalism twin-sister to Cant, if not one and the same with it? Is not Cant the materia prima of the Devil; from which all falsehoods, imbecilities, abominations body themselves; from which no true thing can come? For Cant is itself properly a double-distilled Lie; the second-power of a Lie.

And now if a whole Nation fall into that? In such case, I answer, infallibly they will return out of it! For life is no cunningly-devised deception or self-deception: it is a great truth that thou art alive, that thou hast desires, necessities; neither can these subsist and satisfy themselves on delusions, but on fact. To fact, depend on it, we shall come back: to such fact, blessed or cursed, as we have wisdom for. The lowest, least blessed fact one knows of, on which necessitous mortals have ever based themselves, seems to be the primitive one of Cannibalism: That I can devour Thee. What if such Primitive Fact were precisely the one we had (*with our improved methods*) to revert to, and begin anew from!

## Chapter 8. Printed Paper.

In such a practical France, let the theory of Perfectibility say what it will, discontents cannot be wanting: your promised Reformation is so indispensable; yet it comes not; who will begin it—with himself? Discontent with what is around us, still more with what is above us, goes on increasing; seeking ever new vents.

Of Street Ballads, of Epigrams that from of old tempered Despotism, we need not speak. Nor of Manuscript Newspapers (*Nouvelles a la main*) do we speak. Bachaumont and his journeymen and followers may close those 'thirty volumes of scurrilous eaves-dropping,' and quit that trade; for at length if not liberty of the Press, there is license. Pamphlets can be surreptitiously vended and read in Paris, did they even bear to be 'Printed at Pekin.' We have a *Courrier de l'Europe* in those years, regularly published at London; by a De Morande, whom the guillotine has not yet devoured. There too an unruly Linguet, still unguillotined, when his own country has become too hot for him, and his brother Advocates have cast him out, can emit his hoarse wailings, and Bastille Devoilee (*Bastille unveiled*). Loquacious Abbe Raynal, at length, has his wish; sees the *Histoire Philosophique*, with its 'lubricity,' unveracity, loose loud eleutheromaniac rant (*contributed, they say, by Philosophedom at large, though in the Abbe's name, and to his glory*), burnt by the common hangman;—and sets out on his travels as a martyr. It was the edition of 1781; perhaps the last notable book that had such fire-beatitude,—the hangman discovering now that it did not serve.

Again, in Courts of Law, with their money-quarrels, divorce-cases, wheresoever a glimpse into the household existence can be had, what indications! The Parlements of Besancon and Aix ring, audible to all France, with the amours and destinies of a young Mirabeau. He, under the nurture of a 'Friend of Men,' has, in State Prisons, in marching Regiments, Dutch Authors' garrets, and quite other scenes, 'been for twenty years learning to resist 'despotism:' despotism of men, and alas also of gods. How, beneath this rose-coloured veil of Universal Benevolence and Astraea Redux, is the sanctuary of Home so often a dreary void, or a dark contentious Hell-on-Earth! The old Friend of Men has his own divorce case too; and at times, 'his whole family but one' under lock and key: he writes much about reforming and enfranchising the world; and for his own private behoof he has needed sixty Lettres-de-Cachet. A man of insight too, with resolution, even with manful principle: but in such an element, inward and outward; which he could not rule, but only madden. Edacity, rapacity;—quite contrary to the finer sensibilities of the heart! Fools, that expect your verdant Millennium, and nothing but Love and Abundance, brooks running wine, winds whispering music,—with the whole ground and basis of your existence champed into a mud of Sensuality; which, daily growing deeper, will soon have no bottom but the Abyss!

Or consider that unutterable business of the Diamond Necklace. Red-hatted Cardinal Louis de Rohan; Sicilian jail-bird Balsamo Cagliostro; milliner Dame de Lamotte, 'with a face of some piquancy:' the highest Church Dignitaries waltzing, in Walpurgis Dance, with quack-prophets, pickpurses and public women;—a whole Satan's Invisible World displayed; working there continually under the daylight visible one; the smoke of its torment going up for ever! The Throne has been brought into scandalous collision with the Treadmill. Astonished Europe rings with the mystery for ten months; sees only lie unfold itself from lie; corruption among the lofty and the low, gulosity, credulity, imbecility, strength nowhere but in the hunger. Weep, fair Queen, thy first tears of unmixed wretchedness! Thy fair name has been tarnished by foul breath; irremediably while life lasts. No more shalt thou be loved and pitied by living hearts, till a new generation has been born, and thy own heart lies cold, cured of all its sorrows.—The Epigrams henceforth become, not sharp and bitter; but cruel, atrocious, unmentionable. On that 31st of May, 1786, a miserable Cardinal Grand-Almoner Rohan, on issuing from his Bastille, is escorted by hurraing crowds: unloved he, and worthy of no love; but important since the Court and Queen are his enemies. (*Fils Adoptif, Memoires de Mirabeau, iv. 325.*)

How is our bright Era of Hope dimmed: and the whole sky growing bleak with signs of hurricane and earthquake! It is a doomed world: gone all 'obedience that made men free;' fast going the obedience that made men slaves,—at least to one another. Slaves only of their own lusts they now are, and will

be. Slaves of sin; inevitably also of sorrow. Behold the mouldering mass of Sensuality and Falsehood; round which plays foolishly, itself a corrupt phosphorescence, some glimmer of Sentimentalism;—and over all, rising, as Ark of their Covenant, the grim Patibulary Fork 'forty feet high;' which also is now nigh rotted. Add only that the French Nation distinguishes itself among Nations by the characteristic of Excitability; with the good, but also with the perilous evil, which belongs to that. Rebellion, explosion, of unknown extent is to be calculated on. There are, as Chesterfield wrote, 'all the symptoms I have ever met with in History!'

Shall we say, then: Wo to Philosophism, that it destroyed Religion, what it called 'extinguishing the abomination (*ecraser l'infame*)'? Wo rather to those that made the Holy an abomination, and extinguishable; wo at all men that live in such a time of world-abomination and world-destruction! Nay, answer the Courtiers, it was Turgot, it was Necker, with their mad innovating; it was the Queen's want of etiquette; it was he, it was she, it was that. Friends! it was every scoundrel that had lived, and quack-like pretended to be doing, and been only eating and misdoing, in all provinces of life, as Shoeblick or as Sovereign Lord, each in his degree, from the time of Charlemagne and earlier. All this (*for be sure no falsehood perishes, but is as seed sown out to grow*) has been storing itself for thousands of years; and now the account-day has come. And rude will the settlement be: of wrath laid up against the day of wrath. O my Brother, be not thou a Quack! Die rather, if thou wilt take counsel; 'tis but dying once, and thou art quit of it for ever. Cursed is that trade; and bears curses, thou knowest not how, long ages after thou art departed, and the wages thou hadst are all consumed; nay, as the ancient wise have written,—through Eternity itself, and is verily marked in the Doom-Book of a God!

Hope deferred maketh the heart sick. And yet, as we said, Hope is but deferred; not abolished, not abolishable. It is very notable, and touching, how this same Hope does still light onwards the French Nation through all its wild destinies. For we shall still find Hope shining, be it for fond invitation, be it for anger and menace; as a mild heavenly light it shone; as a red conflagration it shines: burning sulphurous blue, through darkest regions of Terror, it still shines; and goes sent out at all, since Desperation itself is a kind of Hope. Thus is our Era still to be named of Hope, though in the saddest sense,—when there is nothing left but Hope.

But if any one would know summarily what a Pandora's Box lies there for the opening, he may see it in what by its nature is the symptom of all symptoms, the surviving Literature of the Period. Abbe Raynal, with his lubricity and loud loose rant, has spoken his word; and already the fast-hastening generation responds to another. Glance at Beaumarchais' *Mariage de Figaro*; which now (*in 1784*), after difficulty enough, has issued on the stage; and 'runs its hundred nights,' to the admiration of all men. By what virtue or internal vigour it so ran, the reader of our day will rather wonder:—and indeed will know so much the better that it flattered some pruriency of the time; that it spoke what all were feeling, and longing to speak. Small substance in that *Figaro*: thin wiredrawn intrigues, thin wiredrawn sentiments and sarcasms; a thing lean, barren; yet which winds and whisks itself, as through a wholly mad universe, adroitly, with a high-sniffing air: wherein each, as was hinted, which is the grand secret, may see some image of himself, and of his own state and ways. So it runs its hundred nights, and all France runs with it; laughing applause. If the soliloquising Barber ask: "What has your Lordship done to earn all this?" and can only answer: "You took the trouble to be born (*Vous vous etes donne la peine de naitre*)," all men must laugh: and a gay horse-racing Anglomaniac Noblesse loudest of all. For how can small books have a great danger in them? asks the *Sieur Caron*; and fancies his thin epigram may be a kind of reason. Conqueror of a golden fleece, by giant smuggling; tamer of hell-dogs, in the *Parlement Maupeou*; and finally crowned Orpheus in the *Theatre Francais*, Beaumarchais has now culminated, and unites the attributes of several demigods. We shall meet him once again, in the course



of his decline.

Still more significant are two Books produced on the eve of the ever-memorable Explosion itself, and read eagerly by all the world: Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*, and Louvet's *Chevalier de Faublas*. Noteworthy Books; which may be considered as the last speech of old Feudal France. In the first there rises melodiously, as it were, the wail of a moribund world: everywhere wholesome Nature in unequal conflict with diseased perfidious Art; cannot escape from it in the lowest hut, in the remotest island of the sea. Ruin and death must strike down the loved one; and, what is most significant of all, death even here not by necessity, but by etiquette. What a world of prurient corruption lies visible in that super-sublime of modesty! Yet, on the whole, our good Saint-Pierre is musical, poetical though most morbid: we will call his Book the swan-song of old dying France.

Louvet's again, let no man account musical. Truly, if this wretched *Faublas* is a death-speech, it is one under the gallows, and by a felon that does not repent. Wretched cloaca of a Book; without depth even as a cloaca! What 'picture of French society' is here? Picture properly of nothing, if not of the mind that gave it out as some sort of picture. Yet symptom of much; above all, of the world that could nourish itself thereon.

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