

# Book III. The Parlement of Paris

## Chapter 1. Dishonoured Bills.

While the unspeakable confusion is everywhere weltering within, and through so many cracks in the surface sulphur-smoke is issuing, the question arises: Through what crevice will the main Explosion carry itself? Through which of the old craters or chimneys; or must it, at once, form a new crater for itself? In every Society are such chimneys, are Institutions serving as such: even Constantinople is not without its safety-valves; there too Discontent can vent itself,—in material fire; by the number of nocturnal conflagrations, or of hanged bakers, the Reigning Power can read the signs of the times, and change course according to these.

We may say that this French Explosion will doubtless first try all the old Institutions of escape; for by each of these there is, or at least there used to be, some communication with the interior deep; they are national Institutions in virtue of that. Had they even become personal Institutions, and what we can call choked up from their original uses, there nevertheless must the impediment be weaker than elsewhere. Through which of them then? An observer might have guessed: Through the Law Parlements; above all, through the Parlement of Paris.

Men, though never so thickly clad in dignities, sit not inaccessible to the influences of their time; especially men whose life is business; who at all turns, were it even from behind judgment-seats, have come in contact with the actual workings of the world. The Counsellor of Parlement, the President himself, who has bought his place with hard money that he might be looked up to by his fellow-creatures, how shall he, in all Philosophe-soirees, and saloons of elegant culture, become notable as a Friend of Darkness? Among the Paris Long-ropes there may be more than one patriotic Malesherbes, whose rule is conscience and the public good; there are clearly more than one hotheaded D'Espremeniil, to whose confused thought any loud reputation of the Brutus sort may seem glorious. The Lepelletiers, Lamoignons have titles and wealth; yet, at Court, are only styled 'Noblesse of the Robe.' There are Duports of deep scheme; Freteaus, Sabatiers, of incontinent tongue: all nursed more or less on the milk of the Contrat Social. Nay, for the whole Body, is not this patriotic opposition also a fighting for oneself? Awake, Parlement of Paris, renew thy long warfare! Was not the Parlement Maupeou abolished with ignominy? Not now hast thou to dread a Louis XIV., with the crack of his whip, and his Olympian looks; not now a Richelieu and Bastilles: no, the whole Nation is behind thee. Thou too (*O heavens!*) mayest become a Political Power; and with the shakings of thy horse-hair wig shake principalities and dynasties, like a very Jove with his ambrosial curls!

Light old M. de Maurepas, since the end of 1781, has been fixed in the frost of death: "Never more," said the good Louis, "shall I hear his step overhead;" his light jestings and gyratings are at an end. No more can the importunate reality be hidden by pleasant wit, and today's evil be deftly rolled over upon tomorrow. The morrow itself has arrived; and now nothing but a solid phlegmatic M. de Vergennes sits there, in dull matter of fact, like some dull punctual Clerk (*which he originally was*); admits what cannot be denied, let the remedy come whence it will. In him is no remedy; only clerklike 'despatch of business' according to routine. The poor King, grown older yet hardly more experienced, must himself, with such no-faculty as he has, begin governing; wherein also his Queen will give help. Bright Queen, with her quick clear glances and impulses; clear, and even noble; but all too superficial, vehement-

shallow, for that work! To govern France were such a problem; and now it has grown well-nigh too hard to govern even the Oeil-de-Boeuf. For if a distressed People has its cry, so likewise, and more audibly, has a bereaved Court. To the Oeil-de-Boeuf it remains inconceivable how, in a France of such resources, the Horn of Plenty should run dry: did it not use to flow? Nevertheless Necker, with his revenue of parsimony, has 'suppressed above six hundred places,' before the Courtiers could oust him; parsimonious finance-pedant as he was. Again, a military pedant, Saint-Germain, with his Prussian manoeuvres; with his Prussian notions, as if merit and not coat-of-arms should be the rule of promotion, has disaffected military men; the Mousquetaires, with much else are suppressed: for he too was one of your suppressors; and unsettling and oversetting, did mere mischief—to the Oeil-de-Boeuf. Complaints abound; scarcity, anxiety: it is a changed Oeil-de-Boeuf. Besenval says, already in these years (1781) there was such a melancholy (*such a tristesse*) about Court, compared with former days, as made it quite dispiriting to look upon.

No wonder that the Oeil-de-Boeuf feels melancholy, when you are suppressing its places! Not a place can be suppressed, but some purse is the lighter for it; and more than one heart the heavier; for did it not employ the working-classes too,—manufacturers, male and female, of laces, essences; of Pleasure generally, whosoever could manufacture Pleasure? Miserable economies; never felt over Twenty-five Millions! So, however, it goes on: and is not yet ended. Few years more and the Wolf-hounds shall fall suppressed, the Bear-hounds, the Falconry; places shall fall, thick as autumnal leaves. Duke de Polignac demonstrates, to the complete silencing of ministerial logic, that his place cannot be abolished; then gallantly, turning to the Queen, surrenders it, since her Majesty so wishes. Less chivalrous was Duke de Coigny, and yet not luckier: "We got into a real quarrel, Coigny and I," said King Louis; "but if he had even struck me, I could not have blamed him." (*Besenval, iii. 255-58.*) In regard to such matters there can be but one opinion. Baron Besenval, with that frankness of speech which stamps the independent man, plainly assures her Majesty that it is frightful (*affreux*); "you go to bed, and are not sure but you shall rise impoverished on the morrow: one might as well be in Turkey." It is indeed a dog's life.

How singular this perpetual distress of the royal treasury! And yet it is a thing not more incredible than undeniable. A thing mournfully true: the stumbling-block on which all Ministers successively stumble, and fall. Be it 'want of fiscal genius,' or some far other want, there is the palpable discrepancy between Revenue and Expenditure; a Deficit of the Revenue: you must 'choke (*combler*) the Deficit,' or else it will swallow you! This is the stern problem; hopeless seemingly as squaring of the circle. Controller Joly de Fleury, who succeeded Necker, could do nothing with it; nothing but propose loans, which were tardily filled up; impose new taxes, unproductive of money, productive of clamour and discontent. As little could Controller d'Ormesson do, or even less; for if Joly maintained himself beyond year and day, d'Ormesson reckons only by months: till 'the King purchased Rambouillet without consulting him,' which he took as a hint to withdraw. And so, towards the end of 1783, matters threaten to come to still-stand. Vain seems human ingenuity. In vain has our newly-devised 'Council of Finances' struggled, our Intendants of Finance, Controller-General of Finances: there are unhappily no Finances to control. Fatal paralysis invades the social movement; clouds, of blindness or of blackness, envelop us: are we breaking down, then, into the black horrors of NATIONAL BANKRUPTCY?

Great is Bankruptcy: the great bottomless gulf into which all Falsehoods, public and private, do sink, disappearing; whither, from the first origin of them, they were all doomed. For Nature is true and not a lie. No lie you can speak or act but it will come, after longer or shorter circulation, like a Bill drawn on Nature's Reality, and be presented there for payment,—with the answer, No effects. Pity only that it often had so long a circulation: that the original forger were so seldom he who bore the final smart of

it! Lies, and the burden of evil they bring, are passed on; shifted from back to back, and from rank to rank; and so land ultimately on the dumb lowest rank, who with spade and mattock, with sore heart and empty wallet, daily come in contact with reality, and can pass the cheat no further.

Observe nevertheless how, by a just compensating law, if the lie with its burden (*in this confused whirlpool of Society*) sinks and is shifted ever downwards, then in return the distress of it rises ever upwards and upwards. Whereby, after the long pining and demi-starvation of those Twenty Millions, a Duke de Coigny and his Majesty come also to have their 'real quarrel.' Such is the law of just Nature; bringing, though at long intervals, and were it only by Bankruptcy, matters round again to the mark.

But with a Fortunatus' Purse in his pocket, through what length of time might not almost any Falsehood last! Your Society, your Household, practical or spiritual Arrangement, is untrue, unjust, offensive to the eye of God and man. Nevertheless its hearth is warm, its larder well replenished: the innumerable Swiss of Heaven, with a kind of Natural loyalty, gather round it; will prove, by pamphleteering, musketeering, that it is a truth; or if not an unmixed (*unearthly, impossible*) Truth, then better, a wholesomely attempered one, (*as wind is to the shorn lamb*), and works well. Changed outlook, however, when purse and larder grow empty! Was your Arrangement so true, so accordant to Nature's ways, then how, in the name of wonder, has Nature, with her infinite bounty, come to leave it famishing there? To all men, to all women and all children, it is now indutiable that your Arrangement was false. Honour to Bankruptcy; ever righteous on the great scale, though in detail it is so cruel! Under all Falsehoods it works, unweariedly mining. No Falsehood, did it rise heaven-high and cover the world, but Bankruptcy, one day, will sweep it down, and make us free of it.

## Chapter 2. Controller Calonne.

Under such circumstances of tristesse, obstruction and sick langour, when to an exasperated Court it seems as if fiscal genius had departed from among men, what apparition could be welcomer than that of M. de Calonne? Calonne, a man of indisputable genius; even fiscal genius, more or less; of experience both in managing Finance and Parlements, for he has been Intendant at Metz, at Lille; King's Procureur at Douai. A man of weight, connected with the moneyed classes; of unstained name,—if it were not some peccadillo (*of showing a Client's Letter*) in that old D'Aiguillon-Lachalotais business, as good as forgotten now. He has kinsmen of heavy purse, felt on the Stock Exchange. Our Foulons, Berthiers intrigue for him:—old Foulon, who has now nothing to do but intrigue; who is known and even seen to be what they call a scoundrel; but of unmeasured wealth; who, from Commissariat-clerk which he once was, may hope, some think, if the game go right, to be Minister himself one day.

Such propping and backing has M. de Calonne; and then intrinsically such qualities! Hope radiates from his face; persuasion hangs on his tongue. For all straits he has present remedy, and will make the world roll on wheels before him. On the 3d of November 1783, the Oeil-de-Boeuf rejoices in its new Controller-General. Calonne also shall have trial; Calonne also, in his way, as Turgot and Necker had done in theirs, shall forward the consummation; suffuse, with one other flush of brilliancy, our now too leaden-coloured Era of Hope, and wind it up—into fulfilment.

Great, in any case, is the felicity of the Oeil-de-Boeuf. Stinginess has fled from these royal abodes: suppression ceases; your Besenval may go peaceably to sleep, sure that he shall awake unplundered. Smiling Plenty, as if conjured by some enchanter, has returned; scatters contentment from her new-

flowing horn. And mark what suavity of manners! A bland smile distinguishes our Controller: to all men he listens with an air of interest, nay of anticipation; makes their own wish clear to themselves, and grants it; or at least, grants conditional promise of it. "I fear this is a matter of difficulty," said her Majesty.—"Madame," answered the Controller, "if it is but difficult, it is done, if it is impossible, it shall be done (*se fera*)." A man of such 'facility' withal. To observe him in the pleasure-vortex of society, which none partakes of with more gusto, you might ask, When does he work? And yet his work, as we see, is never behindhand; above all, the fruit of his work: ready-money. Truly a man of incredible facility; facile action, facile elocution, facile thought: how, in mild suasion, philosophic depth sparkles up from him, as mere wit and lambent sprightliness; and in her Majesty's Soirees, with the weight of a world lying on him, he is the delight of men and women! By what magic does he accomplish miracles? By the only true magic, that of genius. Men name him 'the Minister;' as indeed, when was there another such? Crooked things are become straight by him, rough places plain; and over the Oeil-de-Boeuf there rests an unspeakable sunshine.

Nay, in seriousness, let no man say that Calonne had not genius: genius for Persuading; before all things, for Borrowing. With the skilfulest judicious appliances of underhand money, he keeps the Stock-Exchanges flourishing; so that Loan after Loan is filled up as soon as opened. 'Calculators likely to know' (*Besenal*, iii. 216.) have calculated that he spent, in extraordinaries, 'at the rate of one million daily;' which indeed is some fifty thousand pounds sterling: but did he not procure something with it; namely peace and prosperity, for the time being? Philosophedom grumbles and croaks; buys, as we said, 80,000 copies of Necker's new Book: but Nonpareil Calonne, in her Majesty's Apartment, with the glittering retinue of Dukes, Duchesses, and mere happy admiring faces, can let Necker and Philosophedom croak.

The misery is, such a time cannot last! Squandering, and Payment by Loan is no way to choke a Deficit. Neither is oil the substance for quenching conflagrations;—but, only for assuaging them, not permanently! To the Nonpareil himself, who wanted not insight, it is clear at intervals, and dimly certain at all times, that his trade is by nature temporary, growing daily more difficult; that changes incalculable lie at no great distance. Apart from financial Deficit, the world is wholly in such a new-fangled humour; all things working loose from their old fastenings, towards new issues and combinations. There is not a dwarf jokei, a cropt Brutus'-head, or Anglomaniac horseman rising on his stirrups, that does not betoken change. But what then? The day, in any case, passes pleasantly; for the morrow, if the morrow come, there shall be counsel too. Once mounted (*by munificence, suasion, magic of genius*) high enough in favour with the Oeil-de-Boeuf, with the King, Queen, Stock-Exchange, and so far as possible with all men, a Nonpareil Controller may hope to go careering through the Inevitable, in some unimagined way, as handsomely as another.

At all events, for these three miraculous years, it has been expedient heaped on expedient; till now, with such cumulation and height, the pile topples perilous. And here has this world's-wonder of a Diamond Necklace brought it at last to the clear verge of tumbling. Genius in that direction can no more: mounted high enough, or not mounted, we must fare forth. Hardly is poor Rohan, the Necklace-Cardinal, safely bestowed in the Auvergne Mountains, Dame de Lamotte (*unsafely*) in the Salpetriere, and that mournful business hushed up, when our sanguine Controller once more astonishes the world. An expedient, unheard of for these hundred and sixty years, has been propounded; and, by dint of suasion (*for his light audacity, his hope and eloquence are matchless*) has been got adopted,—Convocation of the Notables.

Let notable persons, the actual or virtual rulers of their districts, be summoned from all sides of France: let a true tale, of his Majesty's patriotic purposes and wretched pecuniary impossibilities, be suavely told them; and then the question put: What are we to do? Surely to adopt healing measures; such as the magic of genius will unfold; such as, once sanctioned by Notables, all Parlements and all men must, with more or less reluctance, submit to.

## Chapter 3. The Notables.

Here, then is verily a sign and wonder; visible to the whole world; bodeful of much. The Oeil-de-Boeuf dolorously grumbles; were we not well as we stood,—quenching conflagrations by oil? Constitutional Philosophedom starts with joyful surprise; stares eagerly what the result will be. The public creditor, the public debtor, the whole thinking and thoughtless public have their several surprises, joyful and sorrowful. Count Mirabeau, who has got his matrimonial and other Lawsuits huddled up, better or worse; and works now in the dimmest element at Berlin; compiling Prussian Monarchies, Pamphlets On Cagliostro; writing, with pay, but not with honourable recognition, innumerable Despatches for his Government,—scents or descries richer quarry from afar. He, like an eagle or vulture, or mixture of both, preens his wings for flight homewards. (*Fils Adoptif, Memoires de Mirabeau, t. iv. livv. 4 et 5.*)

M. de Calonne has stretched out an Aaron's Rod over France; miraculous; and is summoning quite unexpected things. Audacity and hope alternate in him with misgivings; though the sanguine-valiant side carries it. Anon he writes to an intimate friend, "Here me fais pitie a moi-meme (*I am an object of pity to myself*);" anon, invites some dedicating Poet or Poetaster to sing 'this Assembly of the Notables and the Revolution that is preparing.' (*Biographie Universelle, para Calonne* (by Guizot).) Preparing indeed; and a matter to be sung,—only not till we have seen it, and what the issue of it is. In deep obscure unrest, all things have so long gone rocking and swaying: will M. de Calonne, with this his alchemy of the Notables, fasten all together again, and get new revenues? Or wrench all asunder; so that it go no longer rocking and swaying, but clashing and colliding?

Be this as it may, in the bleak short days, we behold men of weight and influence threading the great vortex of French Locomotion, each on his several line, from all sides of France towards the Chateau of Versailles: summoned thither de par le roi. There, on the 22d day of February 1787, they have met, and got installed: Notables to the number of a Hundred and Thirty-seven, as we count them name by name: (*Lacretelle, iii. 286. Montgaillard, i. 347.*) add Seven Princes of the Blood, it makes the round Gross of Notables. Men of the sword, men of the robe; Peers, dignified Clergy, Parliamentary Presidents: divided into Seven Boards (*Bureaux*); under our Seven Princes of the Blood, Monsieur, D'Artois, Penthièvre, and the rest; among whom let not our new Duke d'Orleans (*for, since 1785, he is Chartres no longer*) be forgotten. Never yet made Admiral, and now turning the corner of his fortieth year, with spoiled blood and prospects; half-weary of a world which is more than half-weary of him, Monseigneur's future is most questionable. Not in illumination and insight, not even in conflagration; but, as was said, 'in dull smoke and ashes of outburnt sensualities,' does he live and digest. Sumptuousness and sordidness; revenge, life-weariness, ambition, darkness, putrescence; and, say, in sterling money, three hundred thousand a year,—were this poor Prince once to burst loose from his Court-moorings, to what regions, with what phenomena, might he not sail and drift! Happily as yet he 'affects to hunt daily;' sits there, since he must sit, presiding that Bureau of his, with dull moon-visage, dull glassy eyes, as if it were a mere tedium to him.

We observe finally, that Count Mirabeau has actually arrived. He descends from Berlin, on the scene of action; glares into it with flashing sun-gance; discerns that it will do nothing for him. He had hoped these Notables might need a Secretary. They do need one; but have fixed on Dupont de Nemours; a man of smaller fame, but then of better;—who indeed, as his friends often hear, labours under this complaint, surely not a universal one, of having 'five kings to correspond with.' (*Dumont, Souvenirs sur Mirabeau* (Paris, 1832), p. 20.) The pen of a Mirabeau cannot become an official one; nevertheless it remains a pen. In defect of Secretaryship, he sets to denouncing Stock-brokerage (*Denonciation de l'Agiotage*); testifying, as his wont is, by loud bruit, that he is present and busy;—till, warned by friend Talleyrand, and even by Calonne himself underhand, that 'a seventeenth Lettre-de-Cachet may be launched against him,' he timefully flits over the marches.

And now, in stately royal apartments, as Pictures of that time still represent them, our hundred and forty-four Notables sit organised; ready to hear and consider. Controller Calonne is dreadfully behindhand with his speeches, his preparatives; however, the man's 'facility of work' is known to us. For freshness of style, lucidity, ingenuity, largeness of view, that opening Harangue of his was unsurpassable:—had not the subject-matter been so appalling. A Deficit, concerning which accounts vary, and the Controller's own account is not unquestioned; but which all accounts agree in representing as 'enormous.' This is the epitome of our Controller's difficulties: and then his means? Mere Turgotism; for thither, it seems, we must come at last: Provincial Assemblies; new Taxation; nay, strangest of all, new Land-tax, what he calls Subvention Territoriale, from which neither Privileged nor Unprivileged, Noblemen, Clergy, nor Parlemeuteers, shall be exempt!

Foolish enough! These Privileged Classes have been used to tax; levying toll, tribute and custom, at all hands, while a penny was left: but to be themselves taxed? Of such Privileged persons, meanwhile, do these Notables, all but the merest fraction, consist. Headlong Calonne had given no heed to the 'composition,' or judicious packing of them; but chosen such Notables as were really notable; trusting for the issue to off-hand ingenuity, good fortune, and eloquence that never yet failed. Headlong Controller-General! Eloquence can do much, but not all. Orpheus, with eloquence grown rhythmic, musical (*what we call Poetry*), drew iron tears from the cheek of Pluto: but by what witchery of rhyme or prose wilt thou from the pocket of Plutus draw gold?

Accordingly, the storm that now rose and began to whistle round Calonne, first in these Seven Bureaus, and then on the outside of them, awakened by them, spreading wider and wider over all France, threatens to become unappeasable. A Deficit so enormous! Mismanagement, profusion is too clear. Peculation itself is hinted at; nay, Lafayette and others go so far as to speak it out, with attempts at proof. The blame of his Deficit our brave Calonne, as was natural, had endeavoured to shift from himself on his predecessors; not excepting even Necker. But now Necker vehemently denies; whereupon an 'angry Correspondence,' which also finds its way into print.

In the Oeil-de-Boeuf, and her Majesty's private Apartments, an eloquent Controller, with his "Madame, if it is but difficult," had been persuasive: but, alas, the cause is now carried elsewhere. Behold him, one of these sad days, in Monsieur's Bureau; to which all the other Bureaus have sent deputies. He is standing at bay: alone; exposed to an incessant fire of questions, interpellations, objurgations, from those 'hundred and thirty-seven' pieces of logic-ordnance,—what we may well call bouches a feu, fire-mouths literally! Never, according to Besenval, or hardly ever, had such display of intellect, dexterity, coolness, suasive eloquence, been made by man. To the raging play of so many fire-mouths he opposes nothing angrier than light-beams, self-possession and fatherly smiles. With the imperturbablest bland clearness, he, for five hours long, keeps answering the incessant volley of fiery

captious questions, reproachful interpellations; in words prompt as lightning, quiet as light. Nay, the cross-fire too: such side questions and incidental interpellations as, in the heat of the main-battle, he (*having only one tongue*) could not get answered; these also he takes up at the first slake; answers even these. (*Besenal, iii. 196.*) Could blindest suasive eloquence have saved France, she were saved.

Heavy-laden Controller! In the Seven Bureaus seems nothing but hindrance: in Monsieur's Bureau, a Lomenie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, with an eye himself to the Controllership, stirs up the Clergy; there are meetings, underground intrigues. Neither from without anywhere comes sign of help or hope. For the Nation (*where Mirabeau is now, with stentor-lungs, 'denouncing Agio'*) the Controller has hitherto done nothing, or less. For Philosophedom he has done as good as nothing,—sent out some scientific Laperouse, or the like: and is he not in 'angry correspondence' with its Necker? The very Oeil-de-Boeuf looks questionable; a falling Controller has no friends. Solid M. de Vergennes, who with his phlegmatic judicious punctuality might have kept down many things, died the very week before these sorrowful Notables met. And now a Seal-keeper, Garde-des-Sceaux Miromenil is thought to be playing the traitor: spinning plots for Lomenie-Brienne! Queen's-Reader Abbe de Vermond, unloved individual, was Brienne's creature, the work of his hands from the first: it may be feared the backstairs passage is open, ground getting mined under our feet. Treacherous Garde-des-Sceaux Miromenil, at least, should be dismissed; Lamoignon, the eloquent Notable, a stanch man, with connections, and even ideas, Parlement-President yet intent on reforming Parlements, were not he the right Keeper? So, for one, thinks busy Besenal; and, at dinner-table, rounds the same into the Controller's ear,—who always, in the intervals of landlord-duties, listens to him as with charmed look, but answers nothing positive. (*Besenal, iii. 203.*)

Alas, what to answer? The force of private intrigue, and then also the force of public opinion, grows so dangerous, confused! Philosophedom sneers aloud, as if its Necker already triumphed. The gaping populace gapes over Wood-cuts or Copper-cuts; where, for example, a Rustic is represented convoking the poultry of his barnyard, with this opening address: "Dear animals, I have assembled you to advise me what sauce I shall dress you with;" to which a Cock responding, "We don't want to be eaten," is checked by "You wander from the point (*Vous vous ecartez de la question*)."  
(*Republished in the Musee de la Caricature* (Paris, 1834).) Laughter and logic; ballad-singer, pamphleteer; epigram and caricature: what wind of public opinion is this,—as if the Cave of the Winds were bursting loose! At nightfall, President Lamoignon steals over to the Controller's; finds him 'walking with large strides in his chamber, like one out of himself.' (*Besenal, iii. 209.*) With rapid confused speech the Controller begs M. de Lamoignon to give him 'an advice.' Lamoignon candidly answers that, except in regard to his own anticipated Keepership, unless that would prove remedial, he really cannot take upon him to advise.

'On the Monday after Easter,' the 9th of April 1787, a date one rejoices to verify, for nothing can excel the indolent falsehood of these Histoires and Memoires,—'On the Monday after Easter, as I, Besenal, was riding towards Romainville to the Marechal de Segur's, I met a friend on the Boulevards, who told me that M. de Calonne was out. A little further on came M. the Duke d'Orleans, dashing towards me, head to the wind' (*trotting a l'Anglaise*), 'and confirmed the news.' (*Ib. iii. 211.*) It is true news. Treacherous Garde-des-Sceaux Miromenil is gone, and Lamoignon is appointed in his room: but appointed for his own profit only, not for the Controller's: 'next day' the Controller also has had to move. A little longer he may linger near; be seen among the money changers, and even 'working in the Controller's office,' where much lies unfinished: but neither will that hold. Too strong blows and beats this tempest of public opinion, of private intrigue, as from the Cave of all the Winds; and blows him (*higher Authority giving sign*) out of Paris and France,—over the horizon, into Invisibility, or uuter (

*utter, outer?)* Darkness.

Such destiny the magic of genius could not forever avert. Ungrateful Oeil-de-Boeuf! did he not miraculously rain gold manna on you; so that, as a Courtier said, "All the world held out its hand, and I held out my hat,"—for a time? Himself is poor; penniless, had not a 'Financier's widow in Lorraine' offered him, though he was turned of fifty, her hand and the rich purse it held. Dim henceforth shall be his activity, though unwearied: Letters to the King, Appeals, Prognostications; Pamphlets (*from London*), written with the old suasive facility; which however do not persuade. Luckily his widow's purse fails not. Once, in a year or two, some shadow of him shall be seen hovering on the Northern Border, seeking election as National Deputy; but be sternly beckoned away. Dimmer then, far-borne over utmost European lands, in uncertain twilight of diplomacy, he shall hover, intriguing for 'Exiled Princes,' and have adventures; be overset into the Rhine stream and half-drowned, nevertheless save his papers dry. Unwearied, but in vain! In France he works miracles no more; shall hardly return thither to find a grave. Farewell, thou facile sanguine Controller-General, with thy light rash hand, thy suasive mouth of gold: worse men there have been, and better; but to thee also was allotted a task,—of raising the wind, and the winds; and thou hast done it.

But now, while Ex-Controller Calonne flies storm-driven over the horizon, in this singular way, what has become of the Controllorship? It hangs vacant, one may say; extinct, like the Moon in her vacant interlunar cave. Two preliminary shadows, poor M. Fourqueux, poor M. Villedueil, do hold in quick succession some simulacrum of it, (*Besenal, iii. 225.*)—as the new Moon will sometimes shine out with a dim preliminary old one in her arms. Be patient, ye Notables! An actual new Controller is certain, and even ready; were the indispensable manoeuvres but gone through. Long-headed Lamoignon, with Home Secretary Breteuil, and Foreign Secretary Montmorin have exchanged looks; let these three once meet and speak. Who is it that is strong in the Queen's favour, and the Abbe de Vermond's? That is a man of great capacity? Or at least that has struggled, these fifty years, to have it thought great; now, in the Clergy's name, demanding to have Protestant death-penalties 'put in execution;' no flaunting it in the Oeil-de-Boeuf, as the gayest man-pleaser and woman-pleaser; gleaning even a good word from Philosophedom and your Voltaires and D'Alemberts? With a party ready-made for him in the Notables?—Lomenie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse! answer all the three, with the clearest instantaneous concord; and rush off to propose him to the King; 'in such haste,' says Besenal, 'that M. de Lamoignon had to borrow a simarre,' seemingly some kind of cloth apparatus necessary for that. (*Ib. iii. 224.*)

Lomenie-Brienne, who had all his life 'felt a kind of predestination for the highest offices,' has now therefore obtained them. He presides over the Finances; he shall have the title of Prime Minister itself, and the effort of his long life be realised. Unhappy only that it took such talent and industry to gain the place; that to qualify for it hardly any talent or industry was left disposable! Looking now into his inner man, what qualification he may have, Lomenie beholds, not without astonishment, next to nothing but vacuity and possibility. Principles or methods, acquirement outward or inward (*for his very body is wasted, by hard tear and wear*) he finds none; not so much as a plan, even an unwise one. Lucky, in these circumstances, that Calonne has had a plan! Calonne's plan was gathered from Turgot's and Necker's by compilation; shall become Lomenie's by adoption. Not in vain has Lomenie studied the working of the British Constitution; for he professes to have some Anglomania, of a sort. Why, in that free country, does one Minister, driven out by Parliament, vanish from his King's presence, and another enter, borne in by Parliament? (*Montgaillard, Histoire de France, i. 410-17.*) Surely not for mere change (*which is ever wasteful*); but that all men may have share of what is going; and so the strife of Freedom indefinitely prolong itself, and no harm be done.

The Notables, mollified by Easter festivities, by the sacrifice of Calonne, are not in the worst humour. Already his Majesty, while the 'interlunar shadows' were in office, had held session of Notables; and from his throne delivered promissory conciliatory eloquence: 'The Queen stood waiting at a window, till his carriage came back; and Monsieur from afar clapped hands to her,' in sign that all was well. (*Besneval*, iii. 220.) It has had the best effect; if such do but last. Leading Notables meanwhile can be 'caressed;' Brienne's new gloss, Lamoignon's long head will profit somewhat; conciliatory eloquence shall not be wanting. On the whole, however, is it not undeniable that this of ousting Calonne and adopting the plans of Calonne, is a measure which, to produce its best effect, should be looked at from a certain distance, cursorily; not dwelt on with minute near scrutiny. In a word, that no service the Notables could now do were so obliging as, in some handsome manner, to—take themselves away! Their 'Six Propositions' about Provisional Assemblies, suppression of Corvees and suchlike, can be accepted without criticism. The Subvention on Land-tax, and much else, one must glide hastily over; safe nowhere but in flourishes of conciliatory eloquence. Till at length, on this 25th of May, year 1787, in solemn final session, there bursts forth what we can call an explosion of eloquence; King, Lomenie, Lamoignon and retinue taking up the successive strain; in harrangues to the number of ten, besides his Majesty's, which last the livelong day;—whereby, as in a kind of choral anthem, or bravura peal, of thanks, praises, promises, the Notables are, so to speak, organed out, and dismissed to their respective places of abode. They had sat, and talked, some nine weeks: they were the first Notables since Richelieu's, in the year 1626.

By some Historians, sitting much at their ease, in the safe distance, Lomenie has been blamed for this dismissal of his Notables: nevertheless it was clearly time. There are things, as we said, which should not be dwelt on with minute close scrutiny: over hot coals you cannot glide too fast. In these Seven Bureaus, where no work could be done, unless talk were work, the questionablest matters were coming up. Lafayette, for example, in Monseigneur d'Artois' Bureau, took upon him to set forth more than one deprecatory oration about Lettres-de-Cachet, Liberty of the Subject, Agio, and suchlike; which Monseigneur endeavouring to repress, was answered that a Notable being summoned to speak his opinion must speak it. (*Montgaillard*, i. 360.)

Thus too his Grace the Archbishop of Aix perorating once, with a plaintive pulpit tone, in these words? "Tithe, that free-will offering of the piety of Christians"—"Tithe," interrupted Duke la Rochefoucault, with the cold business-manner he has learned from the English, "that free-will offering of the piety of Christians; on which there are now forty-thousand lawsuits in this realm." (*Dumont, Souvenirs sur Mirabeau*, p. 21.) Nay, Lafayette, bound to speak his opinion, went the length, one day, of proposing to convoke a 'National Assembly.' "You demand States-General?" asked Monseigneur with an air of minatory surprise.—"Yes, Monseigneur; and even better than that."—"Write it," said Monseigneur to the Clerks. (*Toulangeon, Histoire de France depuis la Revolution de 1789* (Paris, 1803), i. app. 4.)—Written accordingly it is; and what is more, will be acted by and by.

## Chapter 4. Lomenie's Edicts.

Thus, then, have the Notables returned home; carrying to all quarters of France, such notions of deficit, decrepitude, distraction; and that States-General will cure it, or will not cure it but kill it. Each Notable, we may fancy, is as a funeral torch; disclosing hideous abysses, better left hid! The unquietest humour possesses all men; ferments, seeks issue, in pamphleteering, caricaturing, projecting, declaiming; vain jangling of thought, word and deed.

It is Spiritual Bankruptcy, long tolerated; verging now towards Economical Bankruptcy, and become intolerable. For from the lowest dumb rank, the inevitable misery, as was predicted, has spread upwards. In every man is some obscure feeling that his position, oppressive or else oppressed, is a false one: all men, in one or the other acrid dialect, as assaulters or as defenders, must give vent to the unrest that is in them. Of such stuff national well-being, and the glory of rulers, is not made. O Lomenie, what a wild-heaving, waste-looking, hungry and angry world hast thou, after lifelong effort, got promoted to take charge of!

Lomenie's first Edicts are mere soothing ones: creation of Provincial Assemblies, 'for apportioning the imposts,' when we get any; suppression of Corvees or statute-labour; alleviation of Gabelle. Soothing measures, recommended by the Notables; long clamoured for by all liberal men. Oil cast on the waters has been known to produce a good effect. Before venturing with great essential measures, Lomenie will see this singular 'swell of the public mind' abate somewhat.

Most proper, surely. But what if it were not a swell of the abating kind? There are swells that come of upper tempest and wind-gust. But again there are swells that come of subterranean pent wind, some say; and even of inward decomposition, of decay that has become self-combustion:—as when, according to Neptuno-Plutonic Geology, the World is all decayed down into due attritus of this sort; and shall now be exploded, and new-made! These latter abate not by oil.—The fool says in his heart, How shall not tomorrow be as yesterday; as all days,—which were once tomorrows? The wise man, looking on this France, moral, intellectual, economical, sees, 'in short, all the symptoms he has ever met with in history,'—unabatable by soothing Edicts.

Meanwhile, abate or not, cash must be had; and for that quite another sort of Edicts, namely 'bursal' or fiscal ones. How easy were fiscal Edicts, did you know for certain that the Parlement of Paris would what they call 'register' them! Such right of registering, properly of mere writing down, the Parlement has got by old wont; and, though but a Law-Court, can remonstrate, and higgler considerably about the same. Hence many quarrels; desperate Maupeou devices, and victory and defeat;—a quarrel now near forty years long. Hence fiscal Edicts, which otherwise were easy enough, become such problems. For example, is there not Calonne's Subvention Territoriale, universal, unexempting Land-tax; the sheet-anchor of Finance? Or, to show, so far as possible, that one is not without original finance talent, Lomenie himself can devise an Edit du Timbre or Stamp-tax,—borrowed also, it is true; but then from America: may it prove luckier in France than there!

France has her resources: nevertheless, it cannot be denied, the aspect of that Parlement is questionable. Already among the Notables, in that final symphony of dismissal, the Paris President had an ominous tone. Adrien Duport, quitting magnetic sleep, in this agitation of the world, threatens to rouse himself into preternatural wakefulness. Shallower but also louder, there is magnetic D'Esprenil, with his tropical heat (*he was born at Madras*); with his dusky confused violence; holding of Illumination, Animal Magnetism, Public Opinion, Adam Weisshaupt, Harmodius and Aristogiton, and all manner of confused violent things: of whom can come no good. The very Peerage is infected with the leaven. Our Peers have, in too many cases, laid aside their frogs, laces, bagwigs; and go about in English costume, or ride rising in their stirrups,—in the most headlong manner; nothing but insubordination, eleutheromania, confused unlimited opposition in their heads. Questionable: not to be ventured upon, if we had a Fortunatus' Purse! But Lomenie has waited all June, casting on the waters what oil he had; and now, betide as it may, the two Finance Edicts must out. On the 6th of July, he forwards his proposed Stamp-tax and Land-tax to the Parlement of Paris; and, as if putting his own leg foremost, not his borrowed Calonne's-leg, places the Stamp-tax first in order.

Alas, the Parlement will not register: the Parlement demands instead a 'state of the expenditure,' a 'state of the contemplated reductions;' 'states' enough; which his Majesty must decline to furnish! Discussions arise; patriotic eloquence: the Peers are summoned. Does the Nemean Lion begin to bristle? Here surely is a duel, which France and the Universe may look upon: with prayers; at lowest, with curiosity and bets. Paris stirs with new animation. The outer courts of the Palais de Justice roll with unusual crowds, coming and going; their huge outer hum mingles with the clang of patriotic eloquence within, and gives vigour to it. Poor Lomenie gazes from the distance, little comforted; has his invisible emissaries flying to and fro, assiduous, without result.

So pass the sultry dog-days, in the most electric manner; and the whole month of July. And still, in the Sanctuary of Justice, sounds nothing but Harmodius-Aristogiton eloquence, environed with the hum of crowding Paris; and no registering accomplished, and no 'states' furnished. "States?" said a lively Parleunteer: "Messieurs, the states that should be furnished us, in my opinion are the STATES-GENERAL." On which timely joke there follow cachinnatory buzzes of approval. What a word to be spoken in the Palais de Justice! Old D'Ormesson (*the Ex-Controller's uncle*) shakes his judicious head; far enough from laughing. But the outer courts, and Paris and France, catch the glad sound, and repeat it; shall repeat it, and re-echo and reverberate it, till it grow a deafening peal. Clearly enough here is no registering to be thought of.

The pious Proverb says, 'There are remedies for all things but death.' When a Parlement refuses registering, the remedy, by long practice, has become familiar to the simplest: a Bed of Justice. One complete month this Parlement has spent in mere idle jargon, and sound and fury; the Timbre Edict not registered, or like to be; the Subvention not yet so much as spoken of. On the 6th of August let the whole refractory Body roll out, in wheeled vehicles, as far as the King's Chateau of Versailles; there shall the King, holding his Bed of Justice, order them, by his own royal lips, to register. They may remonstrate, in an under tone; but they must obey, lest a worse unknown thing befall them.

It is done: the Parlement has rolled out, on royal summons; has heard the express royal order to register. Whereupon it has rolled back again, amid the hushed expectancy of men. And now, behold, on the morrow, this Parlement, seated once more in its own Palais, with 'crowds inundating the outer courts,' not only does not register, but (*O portent!*) declares all that was done on the prior day to be null, and the Bed of Justice as good as a futility! In the history of France here verily is a new feature. Nay better still, our heroic Parlement, getting suddenly enlightened on several things, declares that, for its part, it is incompetent to register Tax-edicts at all,—having done it by mistake, during these late centuries; that for such act one authority only is competent: the assembled Three Estates of the Realm!

To such length can the universal spirit of a Nation penetrate the most isolated Body-corporate: say rather, with such weapons, homicidal and suicidal, in exasperated political duel, will Bodies-corporate fight! But, in any case, is not this the real death-grapple of war and internecine duel, Greek meeting Greek; whereon men, had they even no interest in it, might look with interest unspeakable? Crowds, as was said, inundate the outer courts: inundation of young eleutheromaniac Noblemen in English costume, uttering audacious speeches; of Procureurs, Basoche-Clerks, who are idle in these days: of Loungers, News-mongers and other nondescript classes,—rolls tumultuous there. 'From three to four thousand persons,' waiting eagerly to hear the *Arretes (Resolutions)* you arrive at within; applauding with bravos, with the clapping of from six to eight thousand hands! Sweet also is the meed of patriotic eloquence, when your D'Espremeni, your Freteau, or Sabatier, issuing from his Demosthenic Olympus, the thunder being hushed for the day, is welcomed, in the outer courts, with a shout from four thousand throats; is borne home shoulder-high 'with benedictions,' and strikes the stars with his

sublime head.

## Chapter 5. Lomenie's Thunderbolts.

Arise, Lomenie-Brienne: here is no case for 'Letters of Jussion;' for faltering or compromise. Thou seest the whole loose fluent population of Paris (*whatsoever is not solid, and fixed to work*) inundating these outer courts, like a loud destructive deluge; the very Basoche of Lawyers' Clerks talks sedition. The lower classes, in this duel of Authority with Authority, Greek throttling Greek, have ceased to respect the City-Watch: Police-satellites are marked on the back with chalk (*the M signifies mouchard, spy*); they are hustled, hunted like *ferae naturae*. Subordinate rural Tribunals send messengers of congratulation, of adherence. Their Fountain of Justice is becoming a Fountain of Revolt. The Provincial Parlements look on, with intent eye, with breathless wishes, while their elder sister of Paris does battle: the whole Twelve are of one blood and temper; the victory of one is that of all.

Ever worse it grows: on the 10th of August, there is 'Plainte' emitted touching the 'prodigalities of Calonne,' and permission to 'proceed' against him. No registering, but instead of it, denouncing: of dilapidation, peculation; and ever the burden of the song, States-General! Have the royal armories no thunderbolt, that thou couldst, O Lomenie, with red right-hand, launch it among these Demosthenic theatrical thunder-barrels, mere resin and noise for most part;—and shatter, and smite them silent? On the night of the 14th of August, Lomenie launches his thunderbolt, or handful of them. Letters named of the Seal (*de Cachet*), as many as needful, some sixscore and odd, are delivered overnight. And so, next day betimes, the whole Parlement, once more set on wheels, is rolling incessantly towards Troyes in Champagne; 'escorted,' says History, 'with the blessings of all people;' the very innkeepers and postillions looking gratuitously reverent. (*A. Lameth, Histoire de l'Assemblée Constituante* (Int. 73).) This is the 15th of August 1787.

What will not people bless; in their extreme need? Seldom had the Parlement of Paris deserved much blessing, or received much. An isolated Body-corporate, which, out of old confusions (*while the Sceptre of the Sword was confusedly struggling to become a Sceptre of the Pen*), had got itself together, better and worse, as Bodies-corporate do, to satisfy some dim desire of the world, and many clear desires of individuals; and so had grown, in the course of centuries, on concession, on acquirement and usurpation, to be what we see it: a prosperous social Anomaly, deciding Lawsuits, sanctioning or rejecting Laws; and withal disposing of its places and offices by sale for ready money,—which method sleek President Henault, after meditation, will demonstrate to be the indifferent-best. (*Abrege Chronologique*, p. 975.)

In such a Body, existing by purchase for ready-money, there could not be excess of public spirit; there might well be excess of eagerness to divide the public spoil. Men in helmets have divided that, with swords; men in wigs, with quill and inkhorn, do divide it: and even more hatefully these latter, if more peaceably; for the wig-method is at once irresistibler and baser. By long experience, says Besenval, it has been found useless to sue a Parleunteer at law; no Officer of Justice will serve a writ on one; his wig and gown are his Vulcan's-panoply, his enchanted cloak-of-darkness.

The Parlement of Paris may count itself an unloved body; mean, not magnanimous, on the political side. Were the King weak, always (*as now*) has his Parlement barked, cur-like at his heels; with what popular cry there might be. Were he strong, it barked before his face; hunting for him as his alert beagle. An unjust Body; where foul influences have more than once worked shameful perversion of

judgment. Does not, in these very days, the blood of murdered Lally cry aloud for vengeance? Baited, circumvented, driven mad like the snared lion, Valour had to sink extinguished under vindictive Chicane. Behold him, that hapless Lally, his wild dark soul looking through his wild dark face; trailed on the ignominious death-hurdle; the voice of his despair choked by a wooden gag! The wild fire-soul that has known only peril and toil; and, for threescore years, has buffeted against Fate's obstruction and men's perfidy, like genius and courage amid poltroonery, dishonesty and commonplace; faithfully enduring and endeavouring,—O Parlement of Paris, dost thou reward it with a gibbet and a gag? (*9th May, 1766: Biographie Universelle, para Lally.*) The dying Lally bequeathed his memory to his boy; a young Lally has arisen, demanding redress in the name of God and man. The Parlement of Paris does its utmost to defend the indefensible, abominable; nay, what is singular, dusky-glowing Aristogiton d'Espremenil is the man chosen to be its spokesman in that.

Such Social Anomaly is it that France now blesses. An unclean Social Anomaly; but in duel against another worse! The exiled Parlement is felt to have 'covered itself with glory.' There are quarrels in which even Satan, bringing help, were not unwelcome; even Satan, fighting stiffly, might cover himself with glory,—of a temporary sort.

But what a stir in the outer courts of the Palais, when Paris finds its Parlement trundled off to Troyes in Champagne; and nothing left but a few mute Keepers of records; the Demosthenic thunder become extinct, the martyrs of liberty clean gone! Confused wail and menace rises from the four thousand throats of Procureurs, Basoche-Clerks, Nondescripts, and Anglomaniac Noblesse; ever new idlers crowd to see and hear; Rascality, with increasing numbers and vigour, hunts mouchards. Loud whirlpool rolls through these spaces; the rest of the City, fixed to its work, cannot yet go rolling. Audacious placards are legible, in and about the Palais, the speeches are as good as seditious. Surely the temper of Paris is much changed. On the third day of this business (*18th of August*), Monsieur and Monseigneur d'Artois, coming in state-carriages, according to use and wont, to have these late obnoxious Arretes and protests 'expunged' from the Records, are received in the most marked manner. Monsieur, who is thought to be in opposition, is met with vivats and strewed flowers; Monseigneur, on the other hand, with silence; with murmurs, which rise to hisses and groans; nay, an irreverent Rascality presses towards him in floods, with such hissing vehemence, that the Captain of the Guards has to give order, "Haut les armes (*Handle arms*)!"—at which thunder-word, indeed, and the flash of the clear iron, the Rascal-flood recoils, through all avenues, fast enough. (*Montgaillard, i. 369. Besenval, &c.*) New features these. Indeed, as good M. de Malesherbes pertinently remarks, "it is a quite new kind of contest this with the Parlement:" no transitory sputter, as from collision of hard bodies; but more like "the first sparks of what, if not quenched, may become a great conflagration." (*Montgaillard, i. 373.*)

This good Malesherbes sees himself now again in the King's Council, after an absence of ten years: Lomenie would profit if not by the faculties of the man, yet by the name he has. As for the man's opinion, it is not listened to;—wherefore he will soon withdraw, a second time; back to his books and his trees. In such King's Council what can a good man profit? Turgot tries it not a second time: Turgot has quitted France and this Earth, some years ago; and now cares for none of these things. Singular enough: Turgot, this same Lomenie, and the Abbe Morellet were once a trio of young friends; fellow-scholars in the Sorbonne. Forty new years have carried them severally thus far.

Meanwhile the Parlement sits daily at Troyes, calling cases; and daily adjourns, no Procureur making his appearance to plead. Troyes is as hospitable as could be looked for: nevertheless one has comparatively a dull life. No crowds now to carry you, shoulder-high, to the immortal gods; scarcely a

Patriot or two will drive out so far, and bid you be of firm courage. You are in furnished lodgings, far from home and domestic comfort: little to do, but wander over the unlovely Champagne fields; seeing the grapes ripen; taking counsel about the thousand-times consulted: a prey to tedium; in danger even that Paris may forget you. Messengers come and go: pacific Lomenie is not slack in negotiating, promising; D'Ormesson and the prudent elder Members see no good in strife.

After a dull month, the Parlement, yielding and retaining, makes truce, as all Parlements must. The Stamp-tax is withdrawn: the Subvention Land-tax is also withdrawn; but, in its stead, there is granted, what they call a 'Prorogation of the Second Twentieth,'—itself a kind of Land-tax, but not so oppressive to the Influential classes; which lies mainly on the Dumb class. Moreover, secret promises exist (*on the part of the Elders*), that finances may be raised by Loan. Of the ugly word States-General there shall be no mention.

And so, on the 20th of September, our exiled Parlement returns: D'Espremeniil said, 'it went out covered with glory, but had come back covered with mud (*de boue*).' Not so, Aristogiton; or if so, thou surely art the man to clean it.

## Chapter 6. Lomenie's Plots.

Was ever unfortunate Chief Minister so bested as Lomenie-Brienne? The reins of the State fairly in his hand these six months; and not the smallest motive-power (*of Finance*) to stir from the spot with, this way or that! He flourishes his whip, but advances not. Instead of ready-money, there is nothing but rebellious debating and recalcitrating.

Far is the public mind from having calmed; it goes chafing and fuming ever worse: and in the royal coffers, with such yearly Deficit running on, there is hardly the colour of coin. Ominous prognostics! Malesherbes, seeing an exhausted, exasperated France grow hotter and hotter, talks of 'conflagration:' Mirabeau, without talk, has, as we perceive, descended on Paris again, close on the rear of the Parlement, (*Fils Adoptif, Mirabeau, iv. l. 5.*)—not to quit his native soil any more.

Over the Frontiers, behold Holland invaded by Prussia; (*October, 1787. Montgaillard, i. 374. Besenval, iii. 283.*) the French party oppressed, England and the Stadtholder triumphing: to the sorrow of War-Secretary Montmorin and all men. But without money, sinews of war, as of work, and of existence itself, what can a Chief Minister do? Taxes profit little: this of the Second Twentieth falls not due till next year; and will then, with its 'strict valuation,' produce more controversy than cash. Taxes on the Privileged Classes cannot be got registered; are intolerable to our supporters themselves: taxes on the Unprivileged yield nothing,—as from a thing drained dry more cannot be drawn. Hope is nowhere, if not in the old refuge of Loans.

To Lomenie, aided by the long head of Lamoignon, deeply pondering this sea of troubles, the thought suggested itself: Why not have a Successive Loan (*Emprunt Successif*), or Loan that went on lending, year after year, as much as needful; say, till 1792? The trouble of registering such Loan were the same: we had then breathing time; money to work with, at least to subsist on. Edict of a Successive Loan must be proposed. To conciliate the Philosophes, let a liberal Edict walk in front of it, for emancipation of Protestants; let a liberal Promise guard the rear of it, that when our Loan ends, in that final 1792, the States-General shall be convoked.

Such liberal Edict of Protestant Emancipation, the time having come for it, shall cost a Lomenie as little as the 'Death-penalties to be put in execution' did. As for the liberal Promise, of States-General, it can be fulfilled or not: the fulfilment is five good years off; in five years much intervenes. But the registering? Ah, truly, there is the difficulty!—However, we have that promise of the Elders, given secretly at Troyes. Judicious gratuities, cajoleries, underground intrigues, with old Foulon, named 'Ame damnee, Familiar-demon, of the Parlement,' may perhaps do the rest. At worst and lowest, the Royal Authority has resources,—which ought it not to put forth? If it cannot realise money, the Royal Authority is as good as dead; dead of that surest and miserablest death, inanition. Risk and win; without risk all is already lost! For the rest, as in enterprises of pith, a touch of stratagem often proves furthersome, his Majesty announces a Royal Hunt, for the 19th of November next; and all whom it concerns are joyfully getting their gear ready.

Royal Hunt indeed; but of two-legged unfeathered game! At eleven in the morning of that Royal-Hunt day, 19th of November 1787, unexpected blare of trumpeting, tumult of charioteering and cavalcading disturbs the Seat of Justice: his Majesty is come, with Garde-des-Sceaux Lamoignon, and Peers and retinue, to hold Royal Session and have Edicts registered. What a change, since Louis XIV. entered here, in boots; and, whip in hand, ordered his registering to be done,—with an Olympian look which none durst gainsay; and did, without stratagem, in such unceremonious fashion, hunt as well as register! (*Dulaure, vi. 306.*) For Louis XVI., on this day, the Registering will be enough; if indeed he and the day suffice for it.

Meanwhile, with fit ceremonial words, the purpose of the royal breast is signified:—Two Edicts, for Protestant Emancipation, for Successive Loan: of both which Edicts our trusty Garde-des-Sceaux Lamoignon will explain the purport; on both which a trusty Parlement is requested to deliver its opinion, each member having free privilege of speech. And so, Lamoignon too having perorated not amiss, and wound up with that Promise of States-General,—the Sphere-music of Parliamentary eloquence begins. Explosive, responsive, sphere answering sphere, it waxes louder and louder. The Peers sit attentive; of diverse sentiment: unfriendly to States-General; unfriendly to Despotism, which cannot reward merit, and is suppressing places. But what agitates his Highness d'Orleans? The rubicund moon-head goes wagging; darker beams the copper visage, like unscoured copper; in the glazed eye is disquietude; he rolls uneasy in his seat, as if he meant something. Amid unutterable satiety, has sudden new appetite, for new forbidden fruit, been vouchsafed him? Disgust and edacity; laziness that cannot rest; futile ambition, revenge, non-admiralship:—O, within that carbuncled skin what a confusion of confusions sits bottled!

'Eight Couriers,' in course of the day, gallop from Versailles, where Lomenie waits palpitating; and gallop back again, not with the best news. In the outer Courts of the Palais, huge buzz of expectation reigns; it is whispered the Chief Minister has lost six votes overnight. And from within, resounds nothing but forensic eloquence, pathetic and even indignant; heartrending appeals to the royal clemency, that his Majesty would please to summon States-General forthwith, and be the Saviour of France:—wherein dusky-glowing D'Espremeni, but still more Sabatier de Cabre, and Freteau, since named Commere Freteau (*Goody Freteau*), are among the loudest. For six mortal hours it lasts, in this manner; the infinite hubbub unslackened.

And so now, when brown dusk is falling through the windows, and no end visible, his Majesty, on hint of Garde-des-Sceaux, Lamoignon, opens his royal lips once more to say, in brief That he must have his Loan-Edict registered.—Momentary deep pause!—See! Monseigneur d'Orleans rises; with moon-visage turned towards the royal platform, he asks, with a delicate graciousness of manner covering

unutterable things: "Whether it is a Bed of Justice, then; or a Royal Session?" Fire flashes on him from the throne and neighbourhood: surly answer that "it is a Session." In that case, Monseigneur will crave leave to remark that Edicts cannot be registered by order in a Session; and indeed to enter, against such registry, his individual humble Protest. "Vous etes bien le maitre (*You will do your pleasure*)", answers the King; and thereupon, in high state, marches out, escorted by his Court-retinue; D'Orleans himself, as in duty bound, escorting him, but only to the gate. Which duty done, D'Orleans returns in from the gate; redacts his Protest, in the face of an applauding Parlement, an applauding France; and so—has cut his Court-moorings, shall we say? And will now sail and drift, fast enough, towards Chaos?

Thou foolish D'Orleans; Equality that art to be! Is Royalty grown a mere wooden Scarecrow; whereon thou, pert scald-headed crow, mayest alight at pleasure, and peck? Not yet wholly.

Next day, a Lettre-de-Cachet sends D'Orleans to bethink himself in his Chateau of Villers-Cotterets, where, alas, is no Paris with its joyous necessities of life; no fascinating indispensable Madame de Buffon,—light wife of a great Naturalist much too old for her. Monseigneur, it is said, does nothing but walk distractedly, at Villers-Cotterets; cursing his stars. Versailles itself shall hear penitent wail from him, so hard is his doom. By a second, simultaneous Lettre-de-Cachet, Goody Freteau is hurled into the Stronghold of Ham, amid the Norman marshes; by a third, Sabatier de Cabre into Mont St. Michel, amid the Norman quicksands. As for the Parlement, it must, on summons, travel out to Versailles, with its Register-Book under its arm, to have the Protest biffe (*expunged*); not without admonition, and even rebuke. A stroke of authority which, one might have hoped, would quiet matters.

Unhappily, no; it is a mere taste of the whip to rearing coursers, which makes them rear worse! When a team of Twenty-five Millions begins rearing, what is Lomenie's whip? The Parlement will nowise acquiesce meekly; and set to register the Protestant Edict, and do its other work, in salutary fear of these three Lettres-de-Cachet. Far from that, it begins questioning Lettres-de-Cachet generally, their legality, durability; emits dolorous objurgation, petition on petition to have its three Martyrs delivered; cannot, till that be complied with, so much as think of examining the Protestant Edict, but puts it off always 'till this day week.' (*Besenal, iii. 309.*)

In which objurgatory strain Paris and France joins it, or rather has preceded it; making fearful chorus. And now also the other Parlements, at length opening their mouths, begin to join; some of them, as at Grenoble and at Rennes, with portentous emphasis,—threatening, by way of reprisal, to interdict the very Tax-gatherer. (*Weber, i. 266.*) "In all former contests," as Malesherbes remarks, "it was the Parlement that excited the Public; but here it is the Public that excites the Parlement."

## Chapter 7. Internecine.

What a France, through these winter months of the year 1787! The very Oeil-de-Boeuf is doleful, uncertain; with a general feeling among the Suppressed, that it were better to be in Turkey. The Wolf-hounds are suppressed, the Bear-hounds, Duke de Coigny, Duke de Polignac: in the Trianon little-heaven, her Majesty, one evening, takes Besenal's arm; asks his candid opinion. The intrepid Besenal,—having, as he hopes, nothing of the sycophant in him,—plainly signifies that, with a Parlement in rebellion, and an Oeil-de-Boeuf in suppression, the King's Crown is in danger;—whereupon, singular to say, her Majesty, as if hurt, changed the subject, et ne me parla plus de rien! (*Besenal, iii. 264.*)

To whom, indeed, can this poor Queen speak? In need of wise counsel, if ever mortal was; yet beset here only by the hubbub of chaos! Her dwelling-place is so bright to the eye, and confusion and black care darkens it all. Sorrows of the Sovereign, sorrows of the woman, think-coming sorrows environ her more and more. Lamotte, the Necklace-Countess, has in these late months escaped, perhaps been suffered to escape, from the Salpetriere. Vain was the hope that Paris might thereby forget her; and this ever-widening-lie, and heap of lies, subside. The Lamotte, with a V (*for Voleuse, Thief*) branded on both shoulders, has got to England; and will therefrom emit lie on lie; defiling the highest queenly name: mere distracted lies; (*Memoires justificatifs de la Comtesse de Lamotte* (London, 1788). *Vie de Jeanne de St. Remi, Comtesse de Lamotte, &c. &c.* See *Diamond Necklace* (ut supra.) which, in its present humour, France will greedily believe.

For the rest, it is too clear our Successive Loan is not filling. As indeed, in such circumstances, a Loan registered by expunging of Protests was not the likeliest to fill. Denunciation of Lettres-de-Cachet, of Despotism generally, abates not: the Twelve Parlements are busy; the Twelve hundred Placarders, Balladsingers, Pamphleteers. Paris is what, in figurative speech, they call 'flooded with pamphlets (*regorge de brochures*);' flooded and eddying again. Hot deluge,—from so many Patriot ready-writers, all at the fervid or boiling point; each ready-writer, now in the hour of eruption, going like an Iceland Geyser! Against which what can a judicious friend Morellet do; a Rivarol, an unruly Linguet (*well paid for it*),—spouting cold!

Now also, at length, does come discussion of the Protestant Edict: but only for new embroilment; in pamphlet and counter-pamphlet, increasing the madness of men. Not even Orthodoxy, bedrid as she seemed, but will have a hand in this confusion. She, once again in the shape of Abbe Lenfant, 'whom Prelates drive to visit and congratulate,'—raises audible sound from her pulpit-drum. (*Lacretelle, iii. 343. Montgaillard, &c.*) Or mark how D'Espremeni, who has his own confused way in all things, produces at the right moment in Parliamentary harangue, a pocket Crucifix, with the apostrophe: "Will ye crucify him afresh?" Him, O D'Espremeni, without scruple;—considering what poor stuff, of ivory and filigree, he is made of!

To all which add only that poor Brienne has fallen sick; so hard was the tear and wear of his sinful youth, so violent, incessant is this agitation of his foolish old age. Baited, bayed at through so many throats, his Grace, growing consumptive, inflammatory (*with humeur de dartre*), lies reduced to milk diet; in exasperation, almost in desperation; with 'repose,' precisely the impossible recipe, prescribed as the indispensable. (*Besenal, iii. 317.*)

On the whole, what can a poor Government do, but once more recoil ineffectual? The King's Treasury is running towards the lees; and Paris 'eddies with a flood of pamphlets.' At all rates, let the latter subside a little! D'Orleans gets back to Raincy, which is nearer Paris and the fair frail Buffon; finally to Paris itself: neither are Freteau and Sabatier banished forever. The Protestant Edict is registered; to the joy of Boissy d'Anglas and good Malesherbes: Successive Loan, all protests expunged or else withdrawn, remains open,—the rather as few or none come to fill it. States-General, for which the Parlement has clamoured, and now the whole Nation clamours, will follow 'in five years,'—if indeed not sooner. O Parlement of Paris, what a clamour was that! "Messieurs," said old d'Ormesson, "you will get States-General, and you will repent it." Like the Horse in the Fable, who, to be avenged of his enemy, applied to the Man. The Man mounted; did swift execution on the enemy; but, unhappily, would not dismount! Instead of five years, let three years pass, and this clamorous Parlement shall have both seen its enemy hurled prostrate, and been itself ridden to foundering (*say rather, juggled for hide and shoes*), and lie dead in the ditch.

Under such omens, however, we have reached the spring of 1788. By no path can the King's Government find passage for itself, but is everywhere shamefully flung back. Beleaguered by Twelve rebellious Parlements, which are grown to be the organs of an angry Nation, it can advance nowhither; can accomplish nothing, obtain nothing, not so much as money to subsist on; but must sit there, seemingly, to be eaten up of Deficit.

The measure of the Iniquity, then, of the Falsehood which has been gathering through long centuries, is nearly full? At least, that of the misery is! For the hovels of the Twenty-five Millions, the misery, permeating upwards and forwards, as its law is, has got so far,—to the very Oeil-de-Boeuf of Versailles. Man's hand, in this blind pain, is set against man: not only the low against the higher, but the higher against each other; Provincial Noblesse is bitter against Court Noblesse; Robe against Sword; Rochet against Pen. But against the King's Government who is not bitter? Not even Besenval, in these days. To it all men and bodies of men are become as enemies; it is the centre whereon infinite contentions unite and clash. What new universal vertiginous movement is this; of Institution, social Arrangements, individual Minds, which once worked cooperative; now rolling and grinding in distracted collision? Inevitable: it is the breaking-up of a World-Solecism, worn out at last, down even to bankruptcy of money! And so this poor Versailles Court, as the chief or central Solecism, finds all the other Solecisms arrayed against it. Most natural! For your human Solecism, be it Person or Combination of Persons, is ever, by law of Nature, uneasy; if verging towards bankruptcy, it is even miserable:—and when would the meanest Solecism consent to blame or amend itself, while there remained another to amend?

These threatening signs do not terrify Lomenie, much less teach him. Lomenie, though of light nature, is not without courage, of a sort. Nay, have we not read of lightest creatures, trained Canary-birds, that could fly cheerfully with lighted matches, and fire cannon; fire whole powder-magazines? To sit and die of deficit is no part of Lomenie's plan. The evil is considerable; but can he not remove it, can he not attack it? At lowest, he can attack the symptom of it: these rebellious Parlements he can attack, and perhaps remove. Much is dim to Lomenie, but two things are clear: that such Parliamentary duel with Royalty is growing perilous, nay internecine; above all, that money must be had. Take thought, brave Lomenie; thou Garde-des-Sceaux Lamoignon, who hast ideas! So often defeated, balked cruelly when the golden fruit seemed within clutch, rally for one other struggle. To tame the Parlement, to fill the King's coffers: these are now life-and-death questions.

Parlements have been tamed, more than once. Set to perch 'on the peaks of rocks in accessible except by ladders,' a Parlement grows reasonable. O Maupeou, thou bold man, had we left thy work where it was!—But apart from exile, or other violent methods, is there not one method, whereby all things are tamed, even lions? The method of hunger! What if the Parlement's supplies were cut off; namely its Lawsuits!

Minor Courts, for the trying of innumerable minor causes, might be instituted: these we could call Grand Bailliages. Whereon the Parlement, shortened of its prey, would look with yellow despair; but the Public, fond of cheap justice, with favour and hope. Then for Finance, for registering of Edicts, why not, from our own Oeil-de-Boeuf Dignitaries, our Princes, Dukes, Marshals, make a thing we could call Plenary Court; and there, so to speak, do our registering ourselves? St. Louis had his Plenary Court, of Great Barons; (*Montgaillard, i. 405.*) most useful to him: our Great Barons are still here (*at least the Name of them is still here*); our necessity is greater than his.

Such is the Lomenie-Lamoignon device; welcome to the King's Council, as a light-beam in great darkness. The device seems feasible, it is eminently needful: be it once well executed, great deliverance is wrought. Silent, then, and steady; now or never!—the World shall see one other Historical Scene; and so singular a man as Lomenie de Brienne still the Stage-manager there.

Behold, accordingly, a Home-Secretary Breteuil 'beautifying Paris,' in the peaceablest manner, in this hopeful spring weather of 1788; the old hovels and hutches disappearing from our Bridges: as if for the State too there were halcyon weather, and nothing to do but beautify. Parlement seems to sit acknowledged victor. Brienne says nothing of Finance; or even says, and prints, that it is all well. How is this; such halcyon quiet; though the Successive Loan did not fill? In a victorious Parlement, Counsellor Goeslard de Monsabert even denounces that 'levying of the Second Twentieth on strict valuation;' and gets decree that the valuation shall not be strict,—not on the privileged classes. Nevertheless Brienne endures it, launches no Lettre-de-Cachet against it. How is this?

Smiling is such vernal weather; but treacherous, sudden! For one thing, we hear it whispered, 'the Intendants of Provinces 'have all got order to be at their posts on a certain day.' Still more singular, what incessant Printing is this that goes on at the King's Chateau, under lock and key? Sentries occupy all gates and windows; the Printers come not out; they sleep in their workrooms; their very food is handed in to them! (*Weber, i. 276.*) A victorious Parlement smells new danger. D'Espremeniil has ordered horses to Versailles; prowls round that guarded Printing-Office; prying, snuffing, if so be the sagacity and ingenuity of man may penetrate it.

To a shower of gold most things are penetrable. D'Espremeniil descends on the lap of a Printer's Danae, in the shape of 'five hundred louis d'or:' the Danae's Husband smuggles a ball of clay to her; which she delivers to the golden Counsellor of Parlement. Kneaded within it, their stick printed proof-sheets;—by Heaven! the royal Edict of that same self-registering Plenary Court; of those Grand Bailliages that shall cut short our Lawsuits! It is to be promulgated over all France on one and the same day.

This, then, is what the Intendants were bid wait for at their posts: this is what the Court sat hatching, as its accursed cockatrice-egg; and would not stir, though provoked, till the brood were out! Hie with it, D'Espremeniil, home to Paris; convoke instantaneous Sessions; let the Parlement, and the Earth, and the Heavens know it.

## **Chapter 8. Lomenie's Death-throes.**

On the morrow, which is the 3rd of May, 1788, an astonished Parlement sits convoked; listens speechless to the speech of D'Espremeniil, unfolding the infinite misdeed. Deed of treachery; of unhallowed darkness, such as Despotism loves! Denounce it, O Parlement of Paris; awaken France and the Universe; roll what thunder-barrels of forensic eloquence thou hast: with thee too it is verily Now or never!

The Parlement is not wanting, at such juncture. In the hour of his extreme jeopardy, the lion first incites himself by roaring, by lashing his sides. So here the Parlement of Paris. On the motion of D'Espremeniil, a most patriotic Oath, of the One-and-all sort, is sworn, with united throat;—an excellent new-idea, which, in these coming years, shall not remain unimitated. Next comes indomitable Declaration, almost of the rights of man, at least of the rights of Parlement; Invocation to

the friends of French Freedom, in this and in subsequent time. All which, or the essence of all which, is brought to paper; in a tone wherein something of plaintiveness blends with, and tempers, heroic valour. And thus, having sounded the storm-bell,—which Paris hears, which all France will hear; and hurled such defiance in the teeth of Lomenie and Despotism, the Parlement retires as from a tolerable first day's work.

But how Lomenie felt to see his cockatrice-egg (*so essential to the salvation of France*) broken in this premature manner, let readers fancy! Indignant he clutches at his thunderbolts (*de Cachet, of the Seal*); and launches two of them: a bolt for D'Espremeni; a bolt for that busy Goeslard, whose service in the Second Twentieth and 'strict valuation' is not forgotten. Such bolts clutched promptly overnight, and launched with the early new morning, shall strike agitated Paris if not into requiescence, yet into wholesome astonishment.

Ministerial thunderbolts may be launched; but if they do not hit? D'Espremeni and Goeslard, warned, both of them, as is thought, by the singing of some friendly bird, elude the Lomenie Tipstaves; escape disguised through skywindows, over roofs, to their own Palais de Justice: the thunderbolts have missed. Paris (*for the buzz flies abroad*) is struck into astonishment not wholesome. The two martyrs of Liberty doff their disguises; don their long gowns; behold, in the space of an hour, by aid of ushers and swift runners, the Parlement, with its Counsellors, Presidents, even Peers, sits anew assembled. The assembled Parlement declares that these its two martyrs cannot be given up, to any sublunary authority; moreover that the 'session is permanent,' admitting of no adjournment, till pursuit of them has been relinquished.

And so, with forensic eloquence, denunciation and protest, with couriers going and returning, the Parlement, in this state of continual explosion that shall cease neither night nor day, waits the issue. Awakened Paris once more inundates those outer courts; boils, in floods wilder than ever, through all avenues. Dissonant hubbub there is; jargon as of Babel, in the hour when they were first smitten (*as here*) with mutual unintelligibility, and the people had not yet dispersed!

Paris City goes through its diurnal epochs, of working and slumbering; and now, for the second time, most European and African mortals are asleep. But here, in this Whirlpool of Words, sleep falls not; the Night spreads her coverlid of Darkness over it in vain. Within is the sound of mere martyr invincibility; tempered with the due tone of plaintiveness. Without is the infinite expectant hum,—growing drowsier a little. So has it lasted for six-and-thirty hours.

But hark, through the dead of midnight, what tramp is this? Tramp as of armed men, foot and horse; Gardes Francaises, Gardes Suisses: marching hither; in silent regularity; in the flare of torchlight! There are Sappers, too, with axes and crowbars: apparently, if the doors open not, they will be forced!—It is Captain D'Agoust, missioned from Versailles. D'Agoust, a man of known firmness;—who once forced Prince Conde himself, by mere incessant looking at him, to give satisfaction and fight; (*Weber, i. 283.*) he now, with axes and torches is advancing on the very sanctuary of Justice. Sacrilegious; yet what help? The man is a soldier; looks merely at his orders; impassive, moves forward like an inanimate engine.

The doors open on summons, there need no axes; door after door. And now the innermost door opens; discloses the long-gowned Senators of France: a hundred and sixty-seven by tale, seventeen of them Peers; sitting there, majestic, 'in permanent session.' Were not the men military, and of cast-iron, this

sight, this silence reechoing the clank of his own boots, might stagger him! For the hundred and sixty-seven receive him in perfect silence; which some liken to that of the Roman Senate overfallen by Brennus; some to that of a nest of coiners surprised by officers of the Police. (*Besenal, iii. 355.*) Messieurs, said D'Agoust, De par le Roi! Express order has charged D'Agoust with the sad duty of arresting two individuals: M. Duval d'Espremenil and M. Goeslard de Monsabert. Which respectable individuals, as he has not the honour of knowing them, are hereby invited, in the King's name, to surrender themselves.—Profound silence! Buzz, which grows a murmur: "We are all D'Espremenils!" ventures a voice; which other voices repeat. The President inquires, Whether he will employ violence? Captain D'Agoust, honoured with his Majesty's commission, has to execute his Majesty's order; would so gladly do it without violence, will in any case do it; grants an august Senate space to deliberate which method they prefer. And thereupon D'Agoust, with grave military courtesy, has withdrawn for the moment.

What boots it, august Senators? All avenues are closed with fixed bayonets. Your Courier gallops to Versailles, through the dewy Night; but also gallops back again, with tidings that the order is authentic, that it is irrevocable. The outer courts simmer with idle population; but D'Agoust's grenadier-ranks stand there as immovable floodgates: there will be no revolting to deliver you. "Messieurs!" thus spoke D'Espremenil, "when the victorious Gauls entered Rome, which they had carried by assault, the Roman Senators, clothed in their purple, sat there, in their curule chairs, with a proud and tranquil countenance, awaiting slavery or death. Such too is the lofty spectacle, which you, in this hour, offer to the universe (*a l'univers*), after having generously"—with much more of the like, as can still be read. (*Toulangeon, i. App. 20.*)

In vain, O D'Espremenil! Here is this cast-iron Captain D'Agoust, with his cast-iron military air, come back. Despotism, constraint, destruction sit waving in his plumes. D'Espremenil must fall silent; heroically give himself up, lest worst befall. Him Goeslard heroically imitates. With spoken and speechless emotion, they fling themselves into the arms of their Parliamentary brethren, for a last embrace: and so amid plaudits and plaints, from a hundred and sixty-five throats; amid wavings, sobbings, a whole forest-sigh of Parliamentary pathos,—they are led through winding passages, to the rear-gate; where, in the gray of the morning, two Coaches with Exempts stand waiting. There must the victims mount; bayonets menacing behind. D'Espremenil's stern question to the populace, 'Whether they have courage?' is answered by silence. They mount, and roll; and neither the rising of the May sun (*it is the 6th morning*), nor its setting shall lighten their heart: but they fare forward continually; D'Espremenil towards the utmost Isles of Sainte Marguerite, or Hieres (*supposed by some, if that is any comfort, to be Calypso's Island*); Goeslard towards the land-fortress of Pierre-en-Cize, extant then, near the City of Lyons.

Captain D'Agoust may now therefore look forward to Majorship, to Commandantship of the Tuilleries; (*Montgaillard, i. 404.*)—and withal vanish from History; where nevertheless he has been fated to do a notable thing. For not only are D'Espremenil and Goeslard safe whirling southward, but the Parlement itself has straightway to march out: to that also his inexorable order reaches. Gathering up their long skirts, they file out, the whole Hundred and Sixty-five of them, through two rows of unsympathetic grenadiers: a spectacle to gods and men. The people revolt not; they only wonder and grumble: also, we remark, these unsympathetic grenadiers are Gardes Francaises,—who, one day, will sympathise! In a word, the Palais de Justice is swept clear, the doors of it are locked; and D'Agoust returns to Versailles with the key in his pocket,—having, as was said, merited preferment.

As for this Parlement of Paris, now turned out to the street, we will without reluctance leave it there. The Beds of Justice it had to undergo, in the coming fortnight, at Versailles, in registering, or rather refusing to register, those new-hatched Edicts; and how it assembled in taverns and tap-rooms there, for the purpose of Protesting, (*Weber, i. 299-303.*) or hovered disconsolate, with outspread skirts, not knowing where to assemble; and was reduced to lodge Protest 'with a Notary;' and in the end, to sit still (*in a state of forced 'vacation'*), and do nothing; all this, natural now, as the burying of the dead after battle, shall not concern us. The Parlement of Paris has as good as performed its part; doing and misdoing, so far, but hardly further, could it stir the world.

Lomenie has removed the evil then? Not at all: not so much as the symptom of the evil; scarcely the twelfth part of the symptom, and exasperated the other eleven! The Intendants of Provinces, the Military Commandants are at their posts, on the appointed 8th of May: but in no Parlement, if not in the single one of Douai, can these new Edicts get registered. Not peaceable signing with ink; but browbeating, bloodshedding, appeal to primary club-law! Against these Bailliages, against this Plenary Court, exasperated Themis everywhere shows face of battle; the Provincial Noblesse are of her party, and whoever hates Lomenie and the evil time; with her attorneys and Tipstaves, she enlists and operates down even to the populace. At Rennes in Brittany, where the historical Bertrand de Moleville is Intendant, it has passed from fatal continual duelling, between the military and gentry, to street-fighting; to stone-volleys and musket-shot: and still the Edicts remained unregistered. The afflicted Bretons send remonstrance to Lomenie, by a Deputation of Twelve; whom, however, Lomenie, having heard them, shuts up in the Bastille. A second larger deputation he meets, by his scouts, on the road, and persuades or frightens back. But now a third largest Deputation is indignantly sent by many roads: refused audience on arriving, it meets to take council; invites Lafayette and all Patriot Bretons in Paris to assist; agitates itself; becomes the Breton Club, first germ of—the Jacobins' Society. (*A. F. de Bertrand-Moleville, Memoires Particuliers (Paris, 1816), I. ch. i. Marmontel, Memoires, iv. 27.*)

So many as eight Parlements get exiled: (*Montgaillard, i. 308.*) others might need that remedy, but it is one not always easy of appliance. At Grenoble, for instance, where a Mounier, a Barnave have not been idle, the Parlement had due order (*by Lettres-de-Cachet*) to depart, and exile itself: but on the morrow, instead of coaches getting yoked, the alarm-bell bursts forth, ominous; and peals and booms all day: crowds of mountaineers rush down, with axes, even with firelocks,—whom (*most ominous of all!*) the soldiery shows no eagerness to deal with. 'Axe over head,' the poor General has to sign capitulation; to engage that the Lettres-de-Cachet shall remain unexecuted, and a beloved Parlement stay where it is. Besancon, Dijon, Rouen, Bourdeaux, are not what they should be! At Pau in Bearn, where the old Commandant had failed, the new one (*a Grammont, native to them*) is met by a Procession of townsmen with the Cradle of Henri Quatre, the Palladium of their Town; is conjured as he venerates this old Tortoise-shell, in which the great Henri was rocked, not to trample on Bearnese liberty; is informed, withal, that his Majesty's cannon are all safe—in the keeping of his Majesty's faithful Burghers of Pau, and do now lie pointed on the walls there; ready for action! (*Besenal, iii. 348.*)

At this rate, your Grand Bailliages are like to have a stormy infancy. As for the Plenary Court, it has literally expired in the birth. The very Courtiers looked shy at it; old Marshal Broglie declined the honour of sitting therein. Assaulted by a universal storm of mingled ridicule and execration, (*La Cour Plenièrè, heroi-tragi-comédie en trois actes et en prose; jouée le 14 Juillet 1788, par une société d'amateurs dans un Château aux environs de Versailles; par M. l'Abbe de Vermond, Lecteur de la Reine: A Bavière (Lamoignon's Country-house), et se trouve à Paris, chez la Veuve Liberté, à l'enseigne de la Révolution, 1788.—La Passion, la Mort et la Résurrection du Peuple: Imprime à*

*Jerusalem, &c. &c.*—See *Montgaillard, i. 407.*) this poor Plenary Court met once, and never any second time. Distracted country! Contention hisses up, with forked hydra-tongues, wheresoever poor Lomenie sets his foot. 'Let a Commandant, a Commissioner of the King,' says Weber, 'enter one of these Parlements to have an Edict registered, the whole Tribunal will disappear, and leave the Commandant alone with the Clerk and First President. The Edict registered and the Commandant gone, the whole Tribunal hastens back, to declare such registration null. The highways are covered with Grand Deputations of Parlements, proceeding to Versailles, to have their registers expunged by the King's hand; or returning home, to cover a new page with a new resolution still more audacious.' (*Weber, i. 275.*)

Such is the France of this year 1788. Not now a Golden or Paper Age of Hope; with its horse-racings, balloon-flyings, and finer sensibilities of the heart: ah, gone is that; its golden effulgence paled, bedarkened in this singular manner,—brewing towards preternatural weather! For, as in that wreck-storm of Paul et Virginie and Saint-Pierre,—'One huge motionless cloud' (*say, of Sorrow and Indignation*) 'girdles our whole horizon; streams up, hairy, copper-edged, over a sky of the colour of lead.' Motionless itself; but 'small clouds' (*as exiled Parlements and suchlike*), 'parting from it, fly over the zenith, with the velocity of birds:—till at last, with one loud howl, the whole Four Winds be dashed together, and all the world exclaim, There is the tornado! Tout le monde s'ecria, Voila l'ouragan!

For the rest, in such circumstances, the Successive Loan, very naturally, remains unfilled; neither, indeed, can that impost of the Second Twentieth, at least not on 'strict valuation,' be levied to good purpose: 'Lenders,' says Weber, in his hysterical vehement manner, 'are afraid of ruin; tax-gatherers of hanging.' The very Clergy turn away their face: convoked in Extraordinary Assembly, they afford no gratuitous gift (*don gratuit*),—if it be not that of advice; here too instead of cash is clamour for States-General. (*Lameth, Assemb. Const. (Introd.) p. 87.*)

O Lomenie-Brienne, with thy poor flimsy mind all bewildered, and now 'three actual cauteries' on thy worn-out body; who art like to die of inflammation, provocation, milk-diet, dartres vives and maladie—(*best untranslated*); (*Montgaillard, i. 424.*) and presidest over a France with innumerable actual cauteries, which also is dying of inflammation and the rest! Was it wise to quit the bosky verdures of Brienne, and thy new ashlar Chateau there, and what it held, for this? Soft were those shades and lawns; sweet the hymns of Poetasters, the blandishments of high-rouged Graces: (*See Memoires de Morellet.*) and always this and the other Philosophe Morellet (*nothing deeming himself or thee a questionable Sham-Priest*) could be so happy in making happy:—and also (*hadst thou known it*), in the Military School hard by there sat, studying mathematics, a dusky-complexioned taciturn Boy, under the name of: NAPOLEON BONAPARTE!—With fifty years of effort, and one final dead-lift struggle, thou hast made an exchange! Thou hast got thy robe of office,—as Hercules had his Nessus'-shirt.

On the 13th of July of this 1788, there fell, on the very edge of harvest, the most frightful hailstorm; scattering into wild waste the Fruits of the Year; which had otherwise suffered grievously by drought. For sixty leagues round Paris especially, the ruin was almost total. (*Marmontel, iv. 30.*) To so many other evils, then, there is to be added, that of dearth, perhaps of famine.

Some days before this hailstorm, on the 5th of July; and still more decisively some days after it, on the 8th of August,—Lomenie announces that the States-General are actually to meet in the following month of May. Till after which period, this of the Plenary Court, and the rest, shall remain postponed.

Further, as in Lomenie there is no plan of forming or holding these most desirable States-General, 'thinkers are invited' to furnish him with one,—through the medium of discussion by the public press!

What could a poor Minister do? There are still ten months of respite reserved: a sinking pilot will fling out all things, his very biscuit-bags, lead, log, compass and quadrant, before flinging out himself. It is on this principle, of sinking, and the incipient delirium of despair, that we explain likewise the almost miraculous 'invitation to thinkers.' Invitation to Chaos to be so kind as build, out of its tumultuous drift-wood, an Ark of Escape for him! In these cases, not invitation but command has usually proved serviceable.—The Queen stood, that evening, pensive, in a window, with her face turned towards the Garden. The Chef de Gobelet had followed her with an obsequious cup of coffee; and then retired till it were sipped. Her Majesty beckoned Dame Campan to approach: "Grand Dieu!" murmured she, with the cup in her hand, "what a piece of news will be made public to-day! The King grants States-General." Then raising her eyes to Heaven (*if Campan were not mistaken*), she added: "'Tis a first beat of the drum, of ill-omen for France. This Noblesse will ruin us." (*Campan, iii. 104, 111.*)

During all that hatching of the Plenary Court, while Lamoignon looked so mysterious, Besenval had kept asking him one question: Whether they had cash? To which as Lamoignon always answered (*on the faith of Lomenie*) that the cash was safe, judicious Besenval rejoined that then all was safe. Nevertheless, the melancholy fact is, that the royal coffers are almost getting literally void of coin. Indeed, apart from all other things this 'invitation to thinkers,' and the great change now at hand are enough to 'arrest the circulation of capital,' and forward only that of pamphlets. A few thousand gold louis are now all of money or money's worth that remains in the King's Treasury. With another movement as of desperation, Lomenie invites Necker to come and be Controller of Finances! Necker has other work in view than controlling Finances for Lomenie: with a dry refusal he stands taciturn; awaiting his time.

What shall a desperate Prime Minister do? He has grasped at the strongbox of the King's Theatre: some Lottery had been set on foot for those sufferers by the hailstorm; in his extreme necessity, Lomenie lays hands even on this. (*Besenval, iii. 360.*) To make provision for the passing day, on any terms, will soon be impossible.—On the 16th of August, poor Weber heard, at Paris and Versailles, hawkers, 'with a hoarse stifled tone of voice (*voix etouffee, sourde*)' drawling and snuffling, through the streets, an Edict concerning Payments (*such was the soft title Rivarol had contrived for it*): all payments at the Royal Treasury shall be made henceforth, three-fifths in Cash, and the remaining two-fifths—in Paper bearing interest! Poor Weber almost swooned at the sound of these cracked voices, with their bodeful raven-note; and will never forget the effect it had on him. (*Weber, i. 339.*)

But the effect on Paris, on the world generally? From the dens of Stock-brokerage, from the heights of Political Economy, of Neckerism and Philosophism; from all articulate and inarticulate throats, rise hootings and howlings, such as ear had not yet heard. Sedition itself may be imminent! Monseigneur d'Artois, moved by Duchess Polignac, feels called to wait upon her Majesty; and explain frankly what crisis matters stand in. 'The Queen wept;' Brienne himself wept;—for it is now visible and palpable that he must go.

Remains only that the Court, to whom his manners and garrulities were always agreeable, shall make his fall soft. The grasping old man has already got his Archbishopship of Toulouse exchanged for the richer one of Sens: and now, in this hour of pity, he shall have the Coadjutorship for his nephew (*hardly yet of due age*); a Dameship of the Palace for his niece; a Regiment for her husband; for himself

a red Cardinal's-hat, a Coupe de Bois (*cutting from the royal forests*), and on the whole 'from five to six hundred thousand livres of revenue:' (*Weber, i. 341.*) finally, his Brother, the Comte de Brienne, shall still continue War-minister. Buckled-round with such bolsters and huge featherbeds of Promotion, let him now fall as soft as he can!

And so Lomenie departs: rich if Court-titles and Money-bonds can enrich him; but if these cannot, perhaps the poorest of all extant men. 'Hissed at by the people of Versailles,' he drives forth to Jardi; southward to Brienne,—for recovery of health. Then to Nice, to Italy; but shall return; shall glide to and fro, tremulous, faint-twinkling, fallen on awful times: till the Guillotine—snuff out his weak existence? Alas, worse: for it is blown out, or choked out, foully, pitiably, on the way to the Guillotine! In his Palace of Sens, rude Jacobin Bailiffs made him drink with them from his own wine-cellars, feast with them from his own larder; and on the morrow morning, the miserable old man lies dead. This is the end of Prime Minister, Cardinal Archbishop Lomenie de Brienne. Flimsier mortal was seldom fated to do as weighty a mischief; to have a life as despicable-envied, an exit as frightful. Fired, as the phrase is, with ambition: blown, like a kindled rag, the sport of winds, not this way, not that way, but of all ways, straight towards such a powder-mine,—which he kindled! Let us pity the hapless Lomenie; and forgive him; and, as soon as possible, forget him.

## Chapter 9. Burial with Bonfire.

Besenal, during these extraordinary operations, of Payment two-fifths in Paper, and change of Prime Minister, had been out on a tour through his District of Command; and indeed, for the last months, peacefully drinking the waters of Contrexeville. Returning now, in the end of August, towards Moulins, and 'knowing nothing,' he arrives one evening at Langres; finds the whole Town in a state of uproar (*grande rumeur*). Doubtless some sedition; a thing too common in these days! He alights nevertheless; inquires of a 'man tolerably dressed,' what the matter is?—"How?" answers the man, "you have not heard the news? The Archbishop is thrown out, and M. Necker is recalled; and all is going to go well!" (*Besenal, iii. 366.*)

Such rumeur and vociferous acclaim has risen round M. Necker, ever from 'that day when he issued from the Queen's Apartments,' a nominated Minister. It was on the 24th of August: 'the galleries of the Chateau, the courts, the streets of Versailles; in few hours, the Capital; and, as the news flew, all France, resounded with the cry of Vive le Roi! Vive M. Necker!' (*Weber, i. 342.*) In Paris indeed it unfortunately got the length of turbulence.' Petards, rockets go off, in the Place Dauphine, more than enough. A 'wicker Figure (*Mannequin d'osier*),' in Archbishop's stole, made emblematically, three-fifths of it satin, two-fifths of it paper, is promenaded, not in silence, to the popular judgment-bar; is doomed; shriven by a mock Abbe de Vermond; then solemnly consumed by fire, at the foot of Henri's Statue on the Pont Neuf;—with such petarding and huzzaing that Chevalier Dubois and his City-watch see good finally to make a charge (*more or less ineffectual*); and there wanted not burning of sentry-boxes, forcing of guard-houses, and also 'dead bodies thrown into the Seine over-night,' to avoid new effervescence. (*Histoire Parlementaire de la Revolution Francaise; ou Journal des Assemblees Nationales depuis 1789* (Paris, 1833 et seqq.), i. 253. *Lameth, Assemblée Constituante, i. (Introd.) p. 89.*)

Parlements therefore shall return from exile: Plenary Court, Payment two-fifths in Paper have vanished; gone off in smoke, at the foot of Henri's Statue. States-General (*with a Political Millennium*) are now certain; nay, it shall be announced, in our fond haste, for January next: and all, as the Langres

man said, is 'going to go.'

To the prophetic glance of Besenval, one other thing is too apparent: that Friend Lamoignon cannot keep his Keepership. Neither he nor War-minister Comte de Brienne! Already old Foulon, with an eye to be war-minister himself, is making underground movements. This is that same Foulon named *ame damnee du Parlement*; a man grown gray in treachery, in griping, projecting, intriguing and iniquity: who once when it was objected, to some finance-scheme of his, "What will the people do?"—made answer, in the fire of discussion, "The people may eat grass:" hasty words, which fly abroad irrevocable,—and will send back tidings!

Foulon, to the relief of the world, fails on this occasion; and will always fail. Nevertheless it steads not M. de Lamoignon. It steads not the doomed man that he have interviews with the King; and be 'seen to return *radieux*,' emitting rays. Lamoignon is the hated of Parlements: Comte de Brienne is Brother to the Cardinal Archbishop. The 24th of August has been; and the 14th September is not yet, when they two, as their great Principal had done, descend,—made to fall soft, like him.

And now, as if the last burden had been rolled from its heart, and assurance were at length perfect, Paris bursts forth anew into extreme jubilee. The Basoche rejoices aloud, that the foe of Parlements is fallen; Nobility, Gentry, Commonalty have rejoiced; and rejoice. Nay now, with new emphasis, Rascality itself, starting suddenly from its dim depths, will arise and do it,—for down even thither the new Political Evangel, in some rude version or other, has penetrated. It is Monday, the 14th of September 1788: Rascality assembles anew, in great force, in the Place Dauphine; lets off petards, fires blunderbusses, to an incredible extent, without interval, for eighteen hours. There is again a wicker Figure, 'Mannequin of osier:' the centre of endless howlings. Also Necker's Portrait snatched, or purchased, from some Printshop, is borne processionally, aloft on a perch, with huzzas;—an example to be remembered.

But chiefly on the Pont Neuf, where the Great Henri, in bronze, rides sublime; there do the crowds gather. All passengers must stop, till they have bowed to the People's King, and said audibly: *Vive Henri Quatre*; *au diable Lamoignon*! No carriage but must stop; not even that of his Highness d'Orleans. Your coach-doors are opened: Monsieur will please to put forth his head and bow; or even, if refractory, to alight altogether, and kneel: from Madame a wave of her plumes, a smile of her fair face, there where she sits, shall suffice;—and surely a coin or two (*to buy fusees*) were not unreasonable from the Upper Classes, friends of Liberty? In this manner it proceeds for days; in such rude horse-play,—not without kicks. The City-watch can do nothing; hardly save its own skin: for the last twelve-month, as we have sometimes seen, it has been a kind of pastime to hunt the Watch. Besenval indeed is at hand with soldiers; but they have orders to avoid firing, and are not prompt to stir.

On Monday morning the explosion of petards began: and now it is near midnight of Wednesday; and the 'wicker Mannequin' is to be buried,—apparently in the Antique fashion. Long rows of torches, following it, move towards the Hotel Lamoignon; but 'a servant of mine' (*Besenval's*) has run to give warning, and there are soldiers come. Gloomy Lamoignon is not to die by conflagration, or this night; not yet for a year, and then by gunshot (*suicidal or accidental is unknown*). (*Histoire de la Revolution, par Deux Amis de la Liberte, i. 50.*) Foiled Rascality burns its 'Mannikin of osier,' under his windows; 'tears up the sentry-box,' and rolls off: to try Brienne; to try Dubois Captain of the Watch. Now, however, all is bestirring itself; Gardes Francaises, Invalides, Horse-patrol: the Torch Procession is

met with sharp shot, with the thrusting of bayonets, the slashing of sabres. Even Dubois makes a charge, with that Cavalry of his, and the cruelest charge of all: 'there are a great many killed and wounded.' Not without clangour, complaint; subsequent criminal trials, and official persons dying of heartbreak! (*Histoire de la Revolution, par Deux Amis de la Liberte, i. 58.*) So, however, with steel-besom, Rascality is brushed back into its dim depths, and the streets are swept clear.

Not for a century and half had Rascality ventured to step forth in this fashion; not for so long, showed its huge rude lineaments in the light of day. A Wonder and new Thing: as yet gamboling merely, in awkward Brobdingnag sport, not without quaintness; hardly in anger: yet in its huge half-vacant laugh lurks a shade of grimness,—which could unfold itself!

However, the thinkers invited by Lomenie are now far on with their pamphlets: States-General, on one plan or another, will infallibly meet; if not in January, as was once hoped, yet at latest in May. Old Duke de Richelieu, moribund in these autumn days, opens his eyes once more, murmuring, "What would Louis Fourteenth" (*whom he remembers*) "have said!"—then closes them again, forever, before the evil time.

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