

# Book IV. States-General

## Chapter 1. The Notables Again.

The universal prayer, therefore, is to be fulfilled! Always in days of national perplexity, when wrong abounded and help was not, this remedy of States-General was called for; by a Malesherbes, nay by a Fenelon; (*Montgaillard, i. 461.*) even Parlements calling for it were 'escorted with blessings.' And now behold it is vouchsafed us; States-General shall verily be!

To say, let States-General be, was easy; to say in what manner they shall be, is not so easy. Since the year of 1614, there have no States-General met in France, all trace of them has vanished from the living habits of men. Their structure, powers, methods of procedure, which were never in any measure fixed, have now become wholly a vague possibility. Clay which the potter may shape, this way or that:—say rather, the twenty-five millions of potters; for so many have now, more or less, a vote in it! How to shape the States-General? There is a problem. Each Body-corporate, each privileged, each organised Class has secret hopes of its own in that matter; and also secret misgivings of its own,—for, behold, this monstrous twenty-million Class, hitherto the dumb sheep which these others had to agree about the manner of shearing, is now also arising with hopes! It has ceased or is ceasing to be dumb; it speaks through Pamphlets, or at least brays and growls behind them, in unison,—increasing wonderfully their volume of sound.

As for the Parlement of Paris, it has at once declared for the 'old form of 1614.' Which form had this advantage, that the Tiers Etat, Third Estate, or Commons, figured there as a show mainly: whereby the Noblesse and Clergy had but to avoid quarrel between themselves, and decide unobstructed what they thought best. Such was the clearly declared opinion of the Paris Parlement. But, being met by a storm of mere hooting and howling from all men, such opinion was blown straightway to the winds; and the popularity of the Parlement along with it,—never to return. The Parlements part, we said above, was as good as played. Concerning which, however, there is this further to be noted: the proximity of dates. It was on the 22nd of September that the Parlement returned from 'vacation' or 'exile in its estates;' to be reinstalled amid boundless jubilee from all Paris. Precisely next day it was, that this same Parlement came to its 'clearly declared opinion:' and then on the morrow after that, you behold it covered with outrages; its outer court, one vast sibilation, and the glory departed from it for evermore. (*Weber, i. 347.*) A popularity of twenty-four hours was, in those times, no uncommon allowance.

On the other hand, how superfluous was that invitation of Lomenie's: the invitation to thinkers! Thinkers and unthinkers, by the million, are spontaneously at their post, doing what is in them. Clubs labour: Societe Publicole; Breton Club; Enraged Club, Club des Enrages. Likewise Dinner-parties in the Palais Royal; your Mirabeaus, Talleyrands dining there, in company with Chamforts, Morellets, with Duponts and hot Parlementeers, not without object! For a certain Neckerean Lion's-provider, whom one could name, assembles them there; (*Ibid. i. 360.*)—or even their own private determination to have dinner does it. And then as to Pamphlets—in figurative language; 'it is a sheer snowing of pamphlets; like to snow up the Government thoroughfares!' Now is the time for Friends of Freedom; sane, and even insane.

Count, or self-styled Count, d'Aintrigues, 'the young Languedocian gentleman,' with perhaps Chamfort the Cynic to help him, rises into furor almost Pythic; highest, where many are high. (*Memoire sur les Etats-Generaux. See Montgaillard, i. 457-9.*) Foolish young Languedocian gentleman; who himself so soon, 'emigrating among the foremost,' must fly indignant over the marches, with the Contrat Social in his pocket,—towards outer darkness, thankless intrigues, ignis-fatuuus hoverings, and death by the stiletto! Abbe Sieyes has left Chartres Cathedral, and canonry and book-shelves there; has let his tonsure grow, and come to Paris with a secular head, of the most irrefragable sort, to ask three questions, and answer them: What is the Third Estate? All.—What has it hitherto been in our form of government? Nothing.—What does it want? To become Something.

D'Orleans,—for be sure he, on his way to Chaos, is in the thick of this,—promulgates his Deliberations; (*Deliberations a prendre pour les Assemblies des Bailliages.*) fathered by him, written by Laclos of the Liaisons Dangereuses. The result of which comes out simply: 'The Third Estate is the Nation.' On the other hand, Monseigneur d'Artois, with other Princes of the Blood, publishes, in solemn Memorial to the King, that if such things be listened to, Privilege, Nobility, Monarchy, Church, State and Strongbox are in danger. (*Memoire presente au Roi, par Monseigneur Comte d'Artois, M. le Prince de Conde, M. le Duc de Bourbon, M. le Duc d'Enghien, et M. le Prince de Conti.* (Given in Hist. Parl. i. 256.)) In danger truly: and yet if you do not listen, are they out of danger? It is the voice of all France, this sound that rises. Immeasurable, manifold; as the sound of outbreking waters: wise were he who knew what to do in it,—if not to fly to the mountains, and hide himself?

How an ideal, all-seeing Versailles Government, sitting there on such principles, in such an environment, would have determined to demean itself at this new juncture, may even yet be a question. Such a Government would have felt too well that its long task was now drawing to a close; that, under the guise of these States-General, at length inevitable, a new omnipotent Unknown of Democracy was coming into being; in presence of which no Versailles Government either could or should, except in a provisory character, continue extant. To enact which provisory character, so unspeakably important, might its whole faculties but have sufficed; and so a peaceable, gradual, well-conducted Abdication and Domine-dimittas have been the issue!

This for our ideal, all-seeing Versailles Government. But for the actual irrational Versailles Government? Alas, that is a Government existing there only for its own behoof: without right, except possession; and now also without might. It foresees nothing, sees nothing; has not so much as a purpose, but has only purposes,—and the instinct whereby all that exists will struggle to keep existing. Wholly a vortex; in which vain counsels, hallucinations, falsehoods, intrigues, and imbecilities whirl; like withered rubbish in the meeting of winds! The Oeil-de-Boeuf has its irrational hopes, if also its fears. Since hitherto all States-General have done as good as nothing, why should these do more? The Commons, indeed, look dangerous; but on the whole is not revolt, unknown now for five generations, an impossibility? The Three Estates can, by management, be set against each other; the Third will, as heretofore, join with the King; will, out of mere spite and self-interest, be eager to tax and vex the other two. The other two are thus delivered bound into our hands, that we may fleece them likewise. Whereupon, money being got, and the Three Estates all in quarrel, dismiss them, and let the future go as it can! As good Archbishop Lomenie was wont to say: "There are so many accidents; and it needs but one to save us."—How many to destroy us?

Poor Necker in the midst of such an anarchy does what is possible for him. He looks into it with obstinately hopeful face; lauds the known rectitude of the kingly mind; listens indulgent-like to the known perverseness of the queenly and courtly;—emits if any proclamation or regulation, one

favouring the Tiers Etat; but settling nothing; hovering afar off rather, and advising all things to settle themselves. The grand questions, for the present, have got reduced to two: the Double Representation, and the Vote by Head. Shall the Commons have a 'double representation,' that is to say, have as many members as the Noblesse and Clergy united? Shall the States-General, when once assembled, vote and deliberate, in one body, or in three separate bodies; 'vote by head, or vote by class,'—ordre as they call it? These are the moot-points now filling all France with jargon, logic and eleutheromania. To terminate which, Necker bethinks him, Might not a second Convocation of the Notables be fittest? Such second Convocation is resolved on.

On the 6th of November of this year 1788, these Notables accordingly have reassembled; after an interval of some eighteen months. They are Calonne's old Notables, the same Hundred and Forty-four,—to show one's impartiality; likewise to save time. They sit there once again, in their Seven Bureaus, in the hard winter weather: it is the hardest winter seen since 1709; thermometer below zero of Fahrenheit, Seine River frozen over. (*Marmontel, Memoires* (London, 1805), iv. 33. *Hist. Parl. &c.*) Cold, scarcity and eleutheromaniac clamour: a changed world since these Notables were 'organed out,' in May gone a year! They shall see now whether, under their Seven Princes of the Blood, in their Seven Bureaus, they can settle the moot-points.

To the surprise of Patriotism, these Notables, once so patriotic, seem to incline the wrong way; towards the anti-patriotic side. They stagger at the Double Representation, at the Vote by Head: there is not affirmative decision; there is mere debating, and that not with the best aspects. For, indeed, were not these Notables themselves mostly of the Privileged Classes? They clamoured once; now they have their misgivings; make their dolorous representations. Let them vanish, ineffectual; and return no more! They vanish after a month's session, on this 12th of December, year 1788: the last terrestrial Notables, not to reappear any other time, in the History of the World.

And so, the clamour still continuing, and the Pamphlets; and nothing but patriotic Addresses, louder and louder, pouting in on us from all corners of France,—Necker himself some fortnight after, before the year is yet done, has to present his Report, (*Rapport fait au Roi dans son Conseil, le 27 Decembre 1788.*) recommending at his own risk that same Double Representation; nay almost enjoining it, so loud is the jargon and eleutheromania. What dubitating, what circumambulating! These whole six noisy months (*for it began with Brienne in July,*) has not Report followed Report, and one Proclamation flown in the teeth of the other? (*5th July; 8th August; 23rd September, &c. &c.*)

However, that first moot-point, as we see, is now settled. As for the second, that of voting by Head or by Order, it unfortunately is still left hanging. It hangs there, we may say, between the Privileged Orders and the Unprivileged; as a ready-made battle-prize, and necessity of war, from the very first: which battle-prize whosoever seizes it—may thenceforth bear as battle-flag, with the best omens!

But so, at least, by Royal Edict of the 24th of January, (*Reglement du Roi pour la Convocation des Etats-Generaux a Versailles.* (Reprinted, wrong dated, in *Histoire Parlementaire*, i. 262.)) does it finally, to impatient expectant France, become not only indubitable that National Deputies are to meet, but possible (*so far and hardly farther has the royal Regulation gone*) to begin electing them.

## Chapter 2. The Election.

Up, then, and be doing! The royal signal-word flies through France, as through vast forests the rushing of a mighty wind. At Parish Churches, in Townhalls, and every House of Convocation; by Bailliages, by Seneschalsies, in whatsoever form men convene; there, with confusion enough, are Primary Assemblies forming. To elect your Electors; such is the form prescribed: then to draw up your 'Writ of Complaints and Grievances (*Cahier de plaintes et doleances*)', of which latter there is no lack.

With such virtue works this Royal January Edict; as it rolls rapidly, in its leathern mails, along these frostbound highways, towards all the four winds. Like some fiat, or magic spell-word;—which such things do resemble! For always, as it sounds out 'at the market-cross,' accompanied with trumpet-blast; presided by Bailli, Seneschal, or other minor Functionary, with beef-eaters; or, in country churches is droned forth after sermon, 'au prone des messes paroissiales;' and is registered, posted and let fly over all the world,—you behold how this multitudinous French People, so long simmering and buzzing in eager expectancy, begins heaping and shaping itself into organic groups. Which organic groups, again, hold smaller organic grouplets: the inarticulate buzzing becomes articulate speaking and acting. By Primary Assembly, and then by Secondary; by 'successive elections,' and infinite elaboration and scrutiny, according to prescribed process—shall the genuine 'Complaints and Grievances' be at length got to paper; shall the fit National Representative be at length laid hold of.

How the whole People shakes itself, as if it had one life; and, in thousand-voiced rumour, announces that it is awake, suddenly out of long death-sleep, and will thenceforth sleep no more! The long looked-for has come at last; wondrous news, of Victory, Deliverance, Enfranchisement, sounds magical through every heart. To the proud strong man it has come; whose strong hands shall no more be gyved; to whom boundless unconquered continents lie disclosed. The weary day-drudge has heard of it; the beggar with his crusts moistened in tears. What! To us also has hope reached; down even to us? Hunger and hardship are not to be eternal? The bread we extorted from the rugged glebe, and, with the toil of our sinews, reaped and ground, and kneaded into loaves, was not wholly for another, then; but we also shall eat of it, and be filled? Glorious news (*answer the prudent elders*), but all-too unlikely!—Thus, at any rate, may the lower people, who pay no money-taxes and have no right to vote, (*Reglement du Roi in Histoire Parlementaire, as above, i. 267-307.*) assiduously crowd round those that do; and most Halls of Assembly, within doors and without, seem animated enough.

Paris, alone of Towns, is to have Representatives; the number of them twenty. Paris is divided into Sixty Districts; each of which (*assembled in some church, or the like*) is choosing two Electors. Official deputations pass from District to District, for all is inexperience as yet, and there is endless consulting. The streets swarm strangely with busy crowds, pacific yet restless and loquacious; at intervals, is seen the gleam of military muskets; especially about the Palais, where Parlement, once more on duty, sits querulous, almost tremulous.

Busy is the French world! In those great days, what poorest speculative craftsman but will leave his workshop; if not to vote, yet to assist in voting? On all highways is a rustling and bustling. Over the wide surface of France, ever and anon, through the spring months, as the Sower casts his corn abroad upon the furrows, sounds of congregating and dispersing; of crowds in deliberation, acclamation, voting by ballot and by voice,—rise discrepant towards the ear of Heaven. To which political phenomena add this economical one, that Trade is stagnant, and also Bread getting dear; for before the rigorous winter there was, as we said, a rigorous summer, with drought, and on the 13th of July with destructive hail. What a fearful day! all cried while that tempest fell. Alas, the next anniversary of it will be a worse. (*Bailly, Memoires, i. 336.*) Under such aspects is France electing National Representatives.

The incidents and specialties of these Elections belong not to Universal, but to Local or Parish History: for which reason let not the new troubles of Grenoble or Besancon; the bloodshed on the streets of Rennes, and consequent march thither of the Breton 'Young Men' with Manifesto by their 'Mothers, Sisters and Sweethearts;' (*Protestation et Arrete des Jeunes Gens de la Ville de Nantes, du 28 Janvier 1789, avant leur depart pour Rennes. Arrete des Jeunes Gens de la Ville d'Angers, du 4 Fevrier 1789. Arrete des Meres, Soeurs, Epouses et Amantes des Jeunes Citoyens d'Angers, du 6 Fevrier 1789.* (Reprinted in *Histoire Parlementaire*, i. 290-3.)) nor suchlike, detain us here. It is the same sad history everywhere; with superficial variations. A reinstated Parlement (*as at Besancon*), which stands astonished at this Behemoth of a States-General it had itself evoked, starts forward, with more or less audacity, to fix a thorn in its nose; and, alas, is instantaneously struck down, and hurled quite out,—for the new popular force can use not only arguments but brickbats! Or else, and perhaps combined with this, it is an order of Noblesse (*as in Brittany*), which will beforehand tie up the Third Estate, that it harm not the old privileges. In which act of tying up, never so skilfully set about, there is likewise no possibility of prospering; but the Behemoth-Briareus snaps your cords like green rushes. Tie up? Alas, Messieurs! And then, as for your chivalry rapiers, valour and wager-of-battle, think one moment, how can that answer? The plebeian heart too has red life in it, which changes not to paleness at glance even of you; and 'the six hundred Breton gentlemen assembled in arms, for seventy-two hours, in the Cordeliers' Cloister, at Rennes,'—have to come out again, wiser than they entered. For the Nantes Youth, the Angers Youth, all Brittany was astir; 'mothers, sisters and sweethearts' shrieking after them, March! The Breton Noblesse must even let the mad world have its way. (*Hist. Parl. i. 287. Deux Amis de la Liberte, i. 105-128.*)

In other Provinces, the Noblesse, with equal goodwill, finds it better to stick to Protests, to well-redacted 'Cahiers of grievances,' and satirical writings and speeches. Such is partially their course in Provence; whither indeed Gabriel Honore Riquetti Comte de Mirabeau has rushed down from Paris, to speak a word in season. In Provence, the Privileged, backed by their Aix Parlement, discover that such novelties, enjoined though they be by Royal Edict, tend to National detriment; and what is still more indisputable, 'to impair the dignity of the Noblesse.' Whereupon Mirabeau protesting aloud, this same Noblesse, amid huge tumult within doors and without, flatly determines to expel him from their Assembly. No other method, not even that of successive duels, would answer with him, the obstreperous fierce-glaring man. Expelled he accordingly is.

'In all countries, in all times,' exclaims he departing, 'the Aristocrats have implacably pursued every friend of the People; and with tenfold implacability, if such a one were himself born of the Aristocracy. It was thus that the last of the Gracchi perished, by the hands of the Patricians. But he, being struck with the mortal stab, flung dust towards heaven, and called on the Avenging Deities; and from this dust there was born Marius,—Marius not so illustrious for exterminating the Cimbri, as for overturning in Rome the tyranny of the Nobles.' (*Fils Adoptif*, v. 256.) Casting up which new curious handful of dust (*through the Printing-press*), to breed what it can and may, Mirabeau stalks forth into the Third Estate.

That he now, to ingratiate himself with this Third Estate, 'opened a cloth-shop in Marseilles,' and for moments became a furnishing tailor, or even the fable that he did so, is to us always among the pleasant memorabilities of this era. Stranger Clothier never wielded the ell-wand, and rent webs for men, or fractional parts of men. The Fils Adoptif is indignant at such disparaging fable, (*Memoires de Mirabeau*, v. 307.)—which nevertheless was widely believed in those days. (*Marat, Ami-du-Peuple Newspaper* (in *Histoire Parlementaire*, ii. 103), &c.) But indeed, if Achilles, in the heroic ages, killed mutton, why should not Mirabeau, in the unheroic ones, measure broadcloth?

More authentic are his triumph-progresses through that disturbed district, with mob jubilee, flaming torches, 'windows hired for two louis,' and voluntary guard of a hundred men. He is Deputy Elect, both of Aix and of Marseilles; but will prefer Aix. He has opened his far-sounding voice, the depths of his far-sounding soul; he can quell (*such virtue is in a spoken word*) the pride-tumults of the rich, the hunger-tumults of the poor; and wild multitudes move under him, as under the moon do billows of the sea: he has become a world compeller, and ruler over men.

One other incident and specialty we note; with how different an interest! It is of the Parlement of Paris; which starts forward, like the others (*only with less audacity, seeing better how it lay*), to nose-ring that Behemoth of a States-General. Worthy Doctor Guillotin, respectable practitioner in Paris, has drawn up his little 'Plan of a Cahier of doleances;'—as had he not, having the wish and gift, the clearest liberty to do? He is getting the people to sign it; whereupon the surly Parlement summons him to give an account of himself. He goes; but with all Paris at his heels; which floods the outer courts, and copiously signs the Cahier even there, while the Doctor is giving account of himself within! The Parlement cannot too soon dismiss Guillotin, with compliments; to be borne home shoulder-high. (*Deux Amis de la Liberte, i. 141.*) This respectable Guillotin we hope to behold once more, and perhaps only once; the Parlement not even once, but let it be engulfed unseen by us.

Meanwhile such things, cheering as they are, tend little to cheer the national creditor, or indeed the creditor of any kind. In the midst of universal portentous doubt, what certainty can seem so certain as money in the purse, and the wisdom of keeping it there? Trading Speculation, Commerce of all kinds, has as far as possible come to a dead pause; and the hand of the industrious lies idle in his bosom. Frightful enough, when now the rigour of seasons has also done its part, and to scarcity of work is added scarcity of food! In the opening spring, there come rumours of forestalment, there come King's Edicts, Petitions of bakers against millers; and at length, in the month of April—troops of ragged Lackalls, and fierce cries of starvation! These are the thrice-famed Brigands: an actual existing quotify of persons: who, long reflected and reverberated through so many millions of heads, as in concave multiplying mirrors, become a whole Brigand World; and, like a kind of Supernatural Machinery wondrously move the Epos of the Revolution. The Brigands are here: the Brigands are there; the Brigands are coming! Not otherwise sounded the clang of Phoebus Apollos's silver bow, scattering pestilence and pale terror; for this clang too was of the imagination; preternatural; and it too walked in formless immeasurability, having made itself like to the Night (*Greek.*)!

But remark at least, for the first time, the singular empire of Suspicion, in those lands, in those days. If poor famishing men shall, prior to death, gather in groups and crowds, as the poor fieldfares and plovers do in bitter weather, were it but that they may chirp mournfully together, and misery look in the eyes of misery; if famishing men (*what famishing fieldfares cannot do*) should discover, once congregated, that they need not die while food is in the land, since they are many, and with empty wallets have right hands: in all this, what need were there of Preternatural Machinery? To most people none; but not to French people, in a time of Revolution. These Brigands (*as Turgot's also were, fourteen years ago*) have all been set on; enlisted, though without tuck of drum,—by Aristocrats, by Democrats, by D'Orleans, D'Artois, and enemies of the public weal. Nay Historians, to this day, will prove it by one argument: these Brigands pretending to have no victual, nevertheless contrive to drink, nay, have been seen drunk. (*Lacretelle, 18me Siecle, ii. 155.*) An unexampled fact! But on the whole, may we not predict that a people, with such a width of Credulity and of Incredulity (*the proper union of which makes Suspicion, and indeed unreason generally*), will see Shapes enough of Immortals fighting in its battle-ranks, and never want for Epical Machinery?

Be this as it may, the Brigands are clearly got to Paris, in considerable multitudes: (*Besenal, iii. 385, &c.*) with sallow faces, lank hair (*the true enthusiast complexion*), with sooty rags; and also with large clubs, which they smite angrily against the pavement! These mingle in the Election tumult; would fain sign Guillotin's Cahier, or any Cahier or Petition whatsoever, could they but write. Their enthusiast complexion, the smiting of their sticks bodes little good to any one; least of all to rich master-manufacturers of the Suburb Saint-Antoine, with whose workmen they consort.

## Chapter 3. Grown Electric.

But now also National Deputies from all ends of France are in Paris, with their commissions, what they call *pouvoirs*, or powers, in their pockets; inquiring, consulting; looking out for lodgings at Versailles. The States-General shall open there, if not on the First, then surely on the Fourth of May, in grand procession and gala. The Salle des Menus is all new-carpentered, bedizened for them; their very costume has been fixed; a grand controversy which there was, as to 'slouch-hats or slouched-hats,' for the Commons Deputies, has got as good as adjusted. Ever new strangers arrive; loungers, miscellaneous persons, officers on furlough,—as the worthy Captain Dampmartin, whom we hope to be acquainted with: these also, from all regions, have repaired hither, to see what is toward. Our Paris Committees, of the Sixty Districts, are busier than ever; it is now too clear, the Paris Elections will be late.

On Monday, the 27th of April, Astronomer Bailly notices that the *Sieur Reveillon* is not at his post. The *Sieur Reveillon*, 'extensive Paper Manufacturer of the Rue St. Antoine;' he, commonly so punctual, is absent from the Electoral Committee;—and even will never reappear there. In those 'immense Magazines of velvet paper' has aught befallen? Alas, yes! Alas, it is no Montgolfier rising there to-day; but Drudgery, Rascality and the Suburb that is rising! Was the *Sieur Reveillon*, himself once a journeyman, heard to say that 'a journeyman might live handsomely on fifteen sous a-day?' Some sevenpence halfpenny: 'tis a slender sum! Or was he only thought, and believed, to be heard saying it? By this long chafing and friction it would appear the National temper has got electric.

Down in those dark dens, in those dark heads and hungry hearts, who knows in what strange figure the new Political Evangel may have shaped itself; what miraculous 'Communion of Drudges' may be getting formed! Enough: grim individuals, soon waxing to grim multitudes, and other multitudes crowding to see, beset that Paper-Warehouse; demonstrate, in loud ungrammatical language (*addressed to the passions too*), the insufficiency of sevenpence halfpenny a-day. The City-watch cannot dissipate them; broils arise and bellowings; *Reveillon*, at his wits' end, entreats the Populace, entreats the authorities. *Besenal*, now in active command, Commandant of Paris, does, towards evening, to *Reveillon's* earnest prayer, send some thirty Gardes Francaises. These clear the street, happily without firing; and take post there for the night in hope that it may be all over. (*Besenal, iii. 385-8.*)

Not so: on the morrow it is far worse. Saint-Antoine has arisen anew, grimmer than ever;—reinforced by the unknown Tatterdemalion Figures, with their enthusiast complexion and large sticks. The City, through all streets, is flowing thitherward to see: 'two cartloads of paving-stones, that happened to pass that way' have been seized as a visible godsend. Another detachment of Gardes Francaises must be sent; *Besenal* and the Colonel taking earnest counsel. Then still another; they hardly, with bayonets and menace of bullets, penetrate to the spot. What a sight! A street choked up, with lumber, tumult and the endless press of men. A Paper-Warehouse eviscerated by axe and fire: mad din of Revolt; musket-

volleys responded to by yells, by miscellaneous missiles; by tiles raining from roof and window,—tiles, execrations and slain men!

The Gardes Francaises like it not, but have to persevere. All day it continues, slackening and rallying; the sun is sinking, and Saint-Antoine has not yielded. The City flies hither and thither: alas, the sound of that musket-volleying booms into the far dining-rooms of the Chaussee d'Antin; alters the tone of the dinner-gossip there. Captain Dampmartin leaves his wine; goes out with a friend or two, to see the fighting. Unwashed men growl on him, with murmurs of "A bas les Aristocrates (*Down with the Aristocrats*);" and insult the cross of St. Louis? They elbow him, and hustle him; but do not pick his pocket;—as indeed at Reveillon's too there was not the slightest stealing. (*Evenemens qui se sont passes sous mes yeux pendant la Revolution Francaise, par A. H. Dampmartin* (Berlin, 1799), i. 25-27.)

At fall of night, as the thing will not end, Besenval takes his resolution: orders out the Gardes Suisses with two pieces of artillery. The Swiss Guards shall proceed thither; summon that rabble to depart, in the King's name. If disobeyed, they shall load their artillery with grape-shot, visibly to the general eye; shall again summon; if again disobeyed, fire,—and keep firing 'till the last man' be in this manner blasted off, and the street clear. With which spirited resolution, as might have been hoped, the business is got ended. At sight of the lit matches, of the foreign red-coated Switzers, Saint-Antoine dissipates; hastily, in the shades of dusk. There is an encumbered street; there are 'from four to five hundred' dead men. Unfortunate Reveillon has found shelter in the Bastille; does therefrom, safe behind stone bulwarks, issue, plaint, protestation, explanation, for the next month. Bold Besenval has thanks from all the respectable Parisian classes; but finds no special notice taken of him at Versailles,—a thing the man of true worth is used to. (*Besenval*, iii. 389.)

But how it originated, this fierce electric sputter and explosion? From D'Orleans! cries the Court-party: he, with his gold, enlisted these Brigands,—surely in some surprising manner, without sound of drum: he raked them in hither, from all corners; to ferment and take fire; evil is his good. From the Court! cries enlightened Patriotism: it is the cursed gold and wiles of Aristocrats that enlisted them; set them upon ruining an innocent Sieur Reveillon; to frighten the faint, and disgust men with the career of Freedom.

Besenval, with reluctance, concludes that it came from 'the English, our natural enemies.' Or, alas, might not one rather attribute it to Diana in the shape of Hunger? To some twin Dioscuri, OPPRESSION and REVENGE; so often seen in the battles of men? Poor Lackalls, all betoiled, besoiled, encrusted into dim defacement; into whom nevertheless the breath of the Almighty has breathed a living soul! To them it is clear only that eleutheromaniac Philosophism has yet baked no bread; that Patrioti Committee-men will level down to their own level, and no lower. Brigands, or whatever they might be, it was bitter earnest with them. They bury their dead with the title of *Defenseurs de la Patrie*, Martyrs of the good Cause.

Or shall we say: Insurrection has now served its Apprenticeship; and this was its proof-stroke, and no inconclusive one? Its next will be a master-stroke; announcing indisputable Mastership to a whole astonished world. Let that rock-fortress, Tyranny's stronghold, which they name Bastille, or Building, as if there were no other building,—look to its guns!



But, in such wise, with primary and secondary Assemblies, and Cahiers of Grievances; with motions, congregations of all kinds; with much thunder of froth-eloquence, and at last with thunder of platoon-musquetry,—does agitated France accomplish its Elections. With confused winnowing and sifting, in this rather tumultuous manner, it has now (*all except some remnants of Paris*) sifted out the true wheat-grains of National Deputies, Twelve Hundred and Fourteen in number; and will forthwith open its States-General.

## Chapter 4. The Procession.

On the first Saturday of May, it is gala at Versailles; and Monday, fourth of the month, is to be a still greater day. The Deputies have mostly got thither, and sought out lodgings; and are now successively, in long well-ushered files, kissing the hand of Majesty in the Chateau. Supreme Usher de Breze does not give the highest satisfaction: we cannot but observe that in ushering Noblesse or Clergy into the anointed Presence, he liberally opens both his folding-doors; and on the other hand, for members of the Third Estate opens only one! However, there is room to enter; Majesty has smiles for all.

The good Louis welcomes his Honourable Members, with smiles of hope. He has prepared for them the Hall of Menus, the largest near him; and often surveyed the workmen as they went on. A spacious Hall: with raised platform for Throne, Court and Blood-royal; space for six hundred Commons Deputies in front; for half as many Clergy on this hand, and half as many Noblesse on that. It has lofty galleries; wherefrom dames of honour, splendent in gaze d'or; foreign Diplomacies, and other gilt-edged white-frilled individuals to the number of two thousand,—may sit and look. Broad passages flow through it; and, outside the inner wall, all round it. There are committee-rooms, guard-rooms, robing-rooms: really a noble Hall; where upholstery, aided by the subject fine-arts, has done its best; and crimson tasseled cloths, and emblematic fleurs-de-lys are not wanting.

The Hall is ready: the very costume, as we said, has been settled; and the Commons are not to wear that hated slouch-hat (*chapeau clabaud*), but one not quite so slouched (*chapeau rabattu*). As for their manner of working, when all dressed: for their 'voting by head or by order' and the rest,—this, which it were perhaps still time to settle, and in few hours will be no longer time, remains unsettled; hangs dubious in the breast of Twelve Hundred men.

But now finally the Sun, on Monday the 4th of May, has risen;—unconcerned, as if it were no special day. And yet, as his first rays could strike music from the Memnon's Statue on the Nile, what tones were these, so thrilling, tremulous of preparation and foreboding, which he awoke in every bosom at Versailles! Huge Paris, in all conceivable and inconceivable vehicles, is pouring itself forth; from each Town and Village come subsidiary rills; Versailles is a very sea of men. But above all, from the Church of St. Louis to the Church of Notre-Dame: one vast suspended-billow of Life,—with spray scattered even to the chimney-pots! For on chimney-tops too, as over the roofs, and up thitherwards on every lamp-iron, sign-post, breakneck coign of vantage, sits patriotic Courage; and every window bursts with patriotic Beauty: for the Deputies are gathering at St. Louis Church; to march in procession to Notre-Dame, and hear sermon.

Yes, friends, ye may sit and look: boldly or in thought, all France, and all Europe, may sit and look; for it is a day like few others. Oh, one might weep like Xerxes:—So many serried rows sit perched there; like winged creatures, alighted out of Heaven: all these, and so many more that follow them, shall have wholly fled aloft again, vanishing into the blue Deep; and the memory of this day still be fresh. It is the

baptism-day of Democracy; sick Time has given it birth, the numbered months being run. The extreme-unction day of Feudalism! A superannuated System of Society, decrepit with toils (*for has it not done much; produced you, and what ye have and know!*)—and with thefts and brawls, named glorious-victories; and with profligacies, sensualities, and on the whole with dotage and senility,—is now to die: and so, with death-throes and birth-throes, a new one is to be born. What a work, O Earth and Heavens, what a work! Battles and bloodshed, September Massacres, Bridges of Lodi, retreats of Moscow, Waterloos, Peterloos, Tenpound Franchises, Tarbarrels and Guillotines;—and from this present date, if one might prophesy, some two centuries of it still to fight! Two centuries; hardly less; before Democracy go through its due, most baleful, stages of Quackocracy; and a pestilential World be burnt up, and have begun to grow green and young again.

Rejoice nevertheless, ye Versailles multitudes; to you, from whom all this is hid, and glorious end of it is visible. This day, sentence of death is pronounced on Shams; judgment of resuscitation, were it but far off, is pronounced on Realities. This day it is declared aloud, as with a Doom-trumpet, that a Lie is unbelievable. Believe that, stand by that, if more there be not; and let what thing or things soever will follow it follow. 'Ye can no other; God be your help!' So spake a greater than any of you; opening his Chapter of World-History.

Behold, however! The doors of St. Louis Church flung wide; and the Procession of Processions advancing towards Notre-Dame! Shouts rend the air; one shout, at which Grecian birds might drop dead. It is indeed a stately, solemn sight. The Elected of France, and then the Court of France; they are marshalled and march there, all in prescribed place and costume. Our Commons 'in plain black mantle and white cravat;' Noblesse, in gold-worked, bright-dyed cloaks of velvet, resplendent, rustling with laces, waving with plumes; the Clergy in rochet, alb, or other best pontificalibus: lastly comes the King himself, and King's Household, also in their brightest blaze of pomp,—their brightest and final one. Some Fourteen Hundred Men blown together from all winds, on the deepest errand.

Yes, in that silent marching mass there lies Futurity enough. No symbolic Ark, like the old Hebrews, do these men bear: yet with them too is a Covenant; they too preside at a new Era in the History of Men. The whole Future is there, and Destiny dim-brooding over it; in the hearts and unshaped thoughts of these men, it lies illegible, inevitable. Singular to think: they have it in them; yet not they, not mortal, only the Eye above can read it,—as it shall unfold itself, in fire and thunder, of siege, and field-artillery; in the rustling of battle-banners, the tramp of hosts, in the glow of burning cities, the shriek of strangled nations! Such things lie hidden, safe-wrapt in this Fourth day of May;—say rather, had lain in some other unknown day, of which this latter is the public fruit and outcome. As indeed what wonders lie in every Day,—had we the sight, as happily we have not, to decipher it: for is not every meanest Day 'the conflux of two Eternities!'

Meanwhile, suppose we too, good Reader, should, as now without miracle Muse Clio enables us—take our station also on some coign of vantage; and glance momentarily over this Procession, and this Life-sea; with far other eyes than the rest do, namely with prophetic? We can mount, and stand there, without fear of falling.

As for the Life-sea, or onlooking unnumbered Multitude, it is unfortunately all-too dim. Yet as we gaze fixedly, do not nameless Figures not a few, which shall not always be nameless, disclose themselves; visible or presumable there! Young Baroness de Stael—she evidently looks from a window; among older honourable women. (*Madame de Stael, Considerations sur la Revolution*

*Francaise* (London, 1818), i. 114-191.) Her father is Minister, and one of the gala personages; to his own eyes the chief one. Young spiritual Amazon, thy rest is not there; nor thy loved Father's: 'as Malebranche saw all things in God, so M. Necker sees all things in Necker,'—a theorem that will not hold.

But where is the brown-locked, light-behaved, fire-hearted Demoiselle Theroigne? Brown eloquent Beauty; who, with thy winged words and glances, shalt thrill rough bosoms, whole steel battalions, and persuade an Austrian Kaiser,—pike and helm lie provided for thee in due season; and, alas, also strait-waistcoat and long lodging in the Salpetriere! Better hadst thou staid in native Luxemburg, and been the mother of some brave man's children: but it was not thy task, it was not thy lot.

Of the rougher sex how, without tongue, or hundred tongues, of iron, enumerate the notabilities! Has not Marquis Valadi hastily quitted his quaker broadbrim; his Pythagorean Greek in Wapping, and the city of Glasgow? (*Founders of the French Republic* (London, 1798), *para Valadi*.) De Morande from his *Courrier de l'Europe*; Linguet from his *Annales*, they looked eager through the London fog, and became Ex-Editors,—that they might feed the guillotine, and have their due. Does Louvet (*of Faublas*) stand a-tiptoe? And Brissot, hight De Warville, friend of the Blacks? He, with Marquis Condorcet, and Claviere the Genevese 'have created the *Moniteur* Newspaper,' or are about creating it. Able Editors must give account of such a day.

Or seest thou with any distinctness, low down probably, not in places of honour, a Stanislas Maillard, riding-tipstaff (*huissier a cheval*) of the Chatelet; one of the shiftiest of men? A Captain Hulin of Geneva, Captain Elie of the Queen's Regiment; both with an air of half-pay? Jourdan, with tile-coloured whiskers, not yet with tile-beard; an unjust dealer in mules? He shall be, in a few months, Jourdan the Headsman, and have other work.

Surely also, in some place not of honour, stands or sprawls up querulous, that he too, though short, may see,—one squalidest bleared mortal, redolent of soot and horse-drugs: Jean Paul Marat of Neuchatel! O Marat, Renovator of Human Science, Lecturer on Optics; O thou remarkablest Horseleech, once in D'Artois' Stables,—as thy bleared soul looks forth, through thy bleared, dull-acrid, wo-stricken face, what sees it in all this? Any faintest light of hope; like dayspring after Nova-Zembla night? Or is it but blue sulphur-light, and spectres; woe, suspicion, revenge without end?

Of Draper Lecointre, how he shut his cloth-shop hard by, and stepped forth, one need hardly speak. Nor of Santerre, the sonorous Brewer from the Faubourg St. Antoine. Two other Figures, and only two, we signalise there. The huge, brawny, Figure; through whose black brows, and rude flattened face (*figure ecrasee*), there looks a waste energy as of Hercules not yet furibund,—he is an esurient, unprovided Advocate; Danton by name: him mark. Then that other, his slight-built comrade and craft-brother; he with the long curling locks; with the face of dingy blackguardism, wondrously irradiated with genius, as if a naphtha-lamp burnt within it: that Figure is Camille Desmoulins. A fellow of infinite shrewdness, wit, nay humour; one of the sprightliest clearest souls in all these millions. Thou poor Camille, say of thee what they may, it were but falsehood to pretend one did not almost love thee, thou headlong lightly-sparkling man! But the brawny, not yet furibund Figure, we say, is Jacques Danton; a name that shall be 'tolerably known in the Revolution.' He is President of the electoral Cordeliers District at Paris, or about to be it; and shall open his lungs of brass.

We dwell no longer on the mixed shouting Multitude: for now, behold, the Commons Deputies are at hand!

Which of these Six Hundred individuals, in plain white cravat, that have come up to regenerate France, might one guess would become their king? For a king or leader they, as all bodies of men, must have: be their work what it may, there is one man there who, by character, faculty, position, is fittest of all to do it; that man, as future not yet elected king, walks there among the rest. He with the thick black locks, will it be? With the hure, as himself calls it, or black boar's-head, fit to be 'shaken' as a senatorial portent? Through whose shaggy beetle-brows, and rough-hewn, seamed, carbuncled face, there look natural ugliness, small-pox, incontinence, bankruptcy,—and burning fire of genius; like comet-fire glaring fuliginous through murkiest confusions? It is Gabriel Honore Riquetti de Mirabeau, the world-compeller; man-ruling Deputy of Aix! According to the Baroness de Stael, he steps proudly along, though looked at askance here, and shakes his black chevelure, or lion's-mane; as if prophetic of great deeds.

Yes, Reader, that is the Type-Frenchman of this epoch; as Voltaire was of the last. He is French in his aspirations, acquisitions, in his virtues, in his vices; perhaps more French than any other man;—and intrinsically such a mass of manhood too. Mark him well. The National Assembly were all different without that one; nay, he might say with the old Despot: "The National Assembly? I am that."

Of a southern climate, of wild southern blood: for the Riquettis, or Arighettis, had to fly from Florence and the Guelfs, long centuries ago, and settled in Provence; where from generation to generation they have ever approved themselves a peculiar kindred: irascible, indomitable, sharp-cutting, true, like the steel they wore; of an intensity and activity that sometimes verged towards madness, yet did not reach it. One ancient Riquetti, in mad fulfilment of a mad vow, chains two Mountains together; and the chain, with its 'iron star of five rays,' is still to be seen. May not a modern Riquetti unchain so much, and set it drifting,—which also shall be seen?

Destiny has work for that swart burly-headed Mirabeau; Destiny has watched over him, prepared him from afar. Did not his Grandfather, stout Col. d'Argent (*Silver-Stock, so they named him*), shattered and slashed by seven-and-twenty wounds in one fell day lie sunk together on the Bridge at Casano; while Prince Eugene's cavalry galloped and regalloped over him,—only the flying sergeant had thrown a camp-kettle over that loved head; and Vendome, dropping his spyglass, moaned out, 'Mirabeau is dead, then!' Nevertheless he was not dead: he awoke to breathe, and miraculous surgery;—for Gabriel was yet to be. With his silver stock he kept his scarred head erect, through long years; and wedded; and produced tough Marquis Victor, the Friend of Men. Whereby at last in the appointed year 1749, this long-expected rough-hewn Gabriel Honore did likewise see the light: roughest lion's-whelp ever littered of that rough breed. How the old lion (*for our old Marquis too was lion-like, most unconquerable, kingly-genial, most perverse*) gazed wonderingly on his offspring; and determined to train him as no lion had yet been! It is in vain, O Marquis! This cub, though thou slay him and flay him, will not learn to draw in dogcart of Political Economy, and be a Friend of Men; he will not be Thou, must and will be Himself, another than Thou. Divorce lawsuits, 'whole family save one in prison, and three-score Lettres-de-Cachet' for thy own sole use, do but astonish the world.

Our Luckless Gabriel, sinned against and sinning, has been in the Isle of Rhe, and heard the Atlantic from his tower; in the Castle of If, and heard the Mediterranean at Marseilles. He has been in the Fortress of Joux; and forty-two months, with hardly clothing to his back, in the Dungeon of

Vincennes;—all by Lettre-de-Cachet, from his lion father. He has been in Pontarlier Jails (*self-constituted prisoner*); was noticed fording estuaries of the sea (*at low water*), in flight from the face of men. He has pleaded before Aix Parlements (*to get back his wife*); the public gathering on roofs, to see since they could not hear: "the clatter-teeth (*claque-dents*)!" snarles singular old Mirabeau; discerning in such admired forensic eloquence nothing but two clattering jaw-bones, and a head vacant, sonorous, of the drum species.

But as for Gabriel Honore, in these strange wayfarings, what has he not seen and tried! From drill-sergeants, to prime-ministers, to foreign and domestic booksellers, all manner of men he has seen. All manner of men he has gained; for at bottom it is a social, loving heart, that wild unconquerable one:—more especially all manner of women. From the Archer's Daughter at Saintes to that fair young Sophie Madame Monnier, whom he could not but 'steal,' and be beheaded for—in effigy! For indeed hardly since the Arabian Prophet lay dead to Ali's admiration, was there seen such a Love-hero, with the strength of thirty men. In War, again, he has helped to conquer Corsica; fought duels, irregular brawls; horsewhipped calumnious barons. In Literature, he has written on Despotism, on Lettres-de-Cachet; Erotics Sapphic-Wertereian, Obscenities, Profanities; Books on the Prussian Monarchy, on Cagliostro, on Calonne, on the Water Companies of Paris:—each book comparable, we will say, to a bituminous alarum-fire; huge, smoky, sudden! The firepan, the kindling, the bitumen were his own; but the lumber, of rags, old wood and nameless combustible rubbish (*for all is fuel to him*), was gathered from huckster, and ass-panniers, of every description under heaven. Whereby, indeed, hucksters enough have been heard to exclaim: Out upon it, the fire is mine!

Nay, consider it more generally, seldom had man such a talent for borrowing. The idea, the faculty of another man he can make his; the man himself he can make his. "All reflex and echo (*tout de reflet et de reverbere*)!" snarls old Mirabeau, who can see, but will not. Crabbed old Friend of Men! it is his sociality, his aggregative nature; and will now be the quality of all for him. In that forty-years 'struggle against despotism,' he has gained the glorious faculty of self-help, and yet not lost the glorious natural gift of fellowship, of being helped. Rare union! This man can live self-sufficing—yet lives also in the life of other men; can make men love him, work with him: a born king of men!

But consider further how, as the old Marquis still snarls, he has "made away with (*hume, swallowed*) all Formulas;"—a fact which, if we meditate it, will in these days mean much. This is no man of system, then; he is only a man of instincts and insights. A man nevertheless who will glare fiercely on any object; and see through it, and conquer it: for he has intellect, he has will, force beyond other men. A man not with logic-spectacles; but with an eye! Unhappily without Decalogue, moral Code or Theorem of any fixed sort; yet not without a strong living Soul in him, and Sincerity there: a Reality, not an Artificiality, not a Sham! And so he, having struggled 'forty years against despotism,' and 'made away with all formulas,' shall now become the spokesman of a Nation bent to do the same. For is it not precisely the struggle of France also to cast off despotism; to make away with her old formulas,—having found them naught, worn out, far from the reality? She will make away with such formulas;—and even go bare, if need be, till she have found new ones.

Towards such work, in such manner, marches he, this singular Riquetti Mirabeau. In fiery rough figure, with black Samson-locks under the slouch-hat, he steps along there. A fiery fuliginous mass, which could not be choked and smothered, but would fill all France with smoke. And now it has got air; it will burn its whole substance, its whole smoke-atmosphere too, and fill all France with flame. Strange lot! Forty years of that smouldering, with foul fire-damp and vapour enough, then victory over that;—and like a burning mountain he blazes heaven-high; and, for twenty-three resplendent months,

pours out, in flame and molten fire-torrents, all that is in him, the Pharos and Wonder-sign of an amazed Europe;—and then lies hollow, cold forever! Pass on, thou questionable Gabriel Honore, the greatest of them all: in the whole National Deputies, in the whole Nation, there is none like and none second to thee.

But now if Mirabeau is the greatest, who of these Six Hundred may be the meanest? Shall we say, that anxious, slight, ineffectual-looking man, under thirty, in spectacles; his eyes (*were the glasses off*) troubled, careful; with upturned face, snuffing dimly the uncertain future-time; complexion of a multiplex atrabiliar colour, the final shade of which may be the pale sea-green. (*See De Stael, Considerations* (ii. 142); *Barbaroux, Memoires, &c.*) That greenish-coloured (*verdâtre*) individual is an Advocate of Arras; his name is Maximilien Robespierre. The son of an Advocate; his father founded mason-lodges under Charles Edward, the English Prince or Pretender. Maximilien the first-born was thriftily educated; he had brisk Camille Desmoulins for schoolmate in the College of Louis le Grand, at Paris. But he begged our famed Necklace-Cardinal, Rohan, the patron, to let him depart thence, and resign in favour of a younger brother. The strict-minded Max departed; home to paternal Arras; and even had a Law-case there and pleaded, not unsuccessfully, 'in favour of the first Franklin thunder-rod.' With a strict painful mind, an understanding small but clear and ready, he grew in favour with official persons, who could foresee in him an excellent man of business, happily quite free from genius. The Bishop, therefore, taking counsel, appoints him Judge of his diocese; and he faithfully does justice to the people: till behold, one day, a culprit comes whose crime merits hanging; and the strict-minded Max must abdicate, for his conscience will not permit the dooming of any son of Adam to die. A strict-minded, strait-laced man! A man unfit for Revolutions? Whose small soul, transparent wholesome-looking as small ale, could by no chance ferment into virulent alegar,—the mother of ever new alegar; till all France were grown acetous virulent? We shall see.

Between which two extremes of grandest and meanest, so many grand and mean roll on, towards their several destinies, in that Procession! There is Cazales, the learned young soldier; who shall become the eloquent orator of Royalism, and earn the shadow of a name. Experienced Mounier, experienced Malouet; whose Presidential Parliamentary experience the stream of things shall soon leave stranded. A Petion has left his gown and briefs at Chartres for a stormier sort of pleading; has not forgotten his violin, being fond of music. His hair is grizzled, though he is still young: convictions, beliefs, placid-unalterable are in that man; not hindmost of them, belief in himself. A Protestant-clerical Rabaut-St.-Etienne, a slender young eloquent and vehement Barnave, will help to regenerate France. There are so many of them young. Till thirty the Spartans did not suffer a man to marry: but how many men here under thirty; coming to produce not one sufficient citizen, but a nation and a world of such! The old to heal up rents; the young to remove rubbish:—which latter, is it not, indeed, the task here?

Dim, formless from this distance, yet authentically there, thou noticest the Deputies from Nantes? To us mere clothes-screens, with slouch-hat and cloak, but bearing in their pocket a Cahier of doleances with this singular clause, and more such in it: 'That the master wigmakers of Nantes be not troubled with new gild-brethren, the actually existing number of ninety-two being more than sufficient!' (*Histoire Parlementaire*, i. 335.) The Rennes people have elected Farmer Gerard, 'a man of natural sense and rectitude, without any learning.' He walks there, with solid step; unique, 'in his rustic farmer-clothes;' which he will wear always; careless of short-cloaks and costumes. The name Gerard, or 'Pere Gerard, Father Gerard,' as they please to call him, will fly far; borne about in endless banter; in Royalist satires, in Republican didactic Almanacks. (*Actes des Apotres* (by Peltier and others); *Almanach du Pere Gerard* (by Collot d'Herbois) &c. &c.) As for the man Gerard, being asked once, what he did, after trial of it, candidly think of this Parliamentary work,—"I think," answered he, "that

there are a good many scoundrels among us." so walks Father Gerard; solid in his thick shoes, whithersoever bound.

And worthy Doctor Guillotin, whom we hoped to behold one other time? If not here, the Doctor should be here, and we see him with the eye of prophecy: for indeed the Parisian Deputies are all a little late. Singular Guillotin, respectable practitioner: doomed by a satiric destiny to the strangest immortal glory that ever kept obscure mortal from his resting-place, the bosom of oblivion! Guillotin can improve the ventilation of the Hall; in all cases of medical police and hygiene be a present aid: but, greater far, he can produce his 'Report on the Penal Code;' and reveal therein a cunningly devised Beheading Machine, which shall become famous and world-famous. This is the product of Guillotin's endeavours, gained not without meditation and reading; which product popular gratitude or levity christens by a feminine derivative name, as if it were his daughter: La Guillotine! "With my machine, Messieurs, I whisk off your head (*vous fais sauter la tete*) in a twinkling, and you have no pain;"—whereat they all laugh. (*Moniteur Newspaper, of December 1st, 1789* (in *Histoire Parlementaire*.) Unfortunate Doctor! For two-and-twenty years he, unguillotined, shall near nothing but guillotine, see nothing but guillotine; then dying, shall through long centuries wander, as it were, a disconsolate ghost, on the wrong side of Styx and Lethe; his name like to outlive Caesar's.

See Bailly, likewise of Paris, time-honoured Historian of Astronomy Ancient and Modern. Poor Bailly, how thy serenely beautiful Philosophising, with its soft moonshiny clearness and thinness, ends in foul thick confusion—of Presidency, Mayorship, diplomatic Officiality, rabid Triviality, and the throat of everlasting Darkness! Far was it to descend from the heavenly Galaxy to the Drapeau Rouge: beside that fatal dung-heap, on that last hell-day, thou must 'tremble,' though only with cold, 'de froid.' Speculation is not practice: to be weak is not so miserable; but to be weaker than our task. Wo the day when they mounted thee, a peaceable pedestrian, on that wild Hippogriff of a Democracy; which, spurning the firm earth, nay lashing at the very stars, no yet known Astolpho could have ridden!

In the Commons Deputies there are Merchants, Artists, Men of Letters; three hundred and seventy-four Lawyers; (*Bouille, Memoires sur la Revolution Francaise* (London, 1797), i. 68.) and at least one Clergyman: the Abbe Sieyes. Him also Paris sends, among its twenty. Behold him, the light thin man; cold, but elastic, wiry; instinct with the pride of Logic; passionless, or with but one passion, that of self-conceit. If indeed that can be called a passion, which, in its independent concentrated greatness, seems to have soared into transcendentalism; and to sit there with a kind of godlike indifference, and look down on passion! He is the man, and wisdom shall die with him. This is the Sieyes who shall be System-builder, Constitution-builder General; and build Constitutions (*as many as wanted*) skyhigh,—which shall all unfortunately fall before he get the scaffolding away. "La Politique," said he to Dumont, "Polity is a science I think I have completed (*achevee*)." (*Dumont, Souvenirs sur Mirabeau, p. 64.*) What things, O Sieyes, with thy clear assiduous eyes, art thou to see! But were it not curious to know how Sieyes, now in these days (*for he is said to be still alive*) (A.D. 1834.) looks out on all that Constitution masonry, through the rheumy soberness of extreme age? Might we hope, still with the old irrefragable transcendentalism? The victorious cause pleased the gods, the vanquished one pleased Sieyes (*victa Catoni*).

Thus, however, amid skyrending vivats, and blessings from every heart, has the Procession of the Commons Deputies rolled by.

Next follow the Noblesse, and next the Clergy; concerning both of whom it might be asked, What they specially have come for? Specially, little as they dream of it, to answer this question, put in a voice of thunder: What are you doing in God's fair Earth and Task-garden; where whosoever is not working is begging or stealing? Wo, wo to themselves and to all, if they can only answer: Collecting tithes, Preserving game!—Remark, meanwhile, how D'Orleans affects to step before his own Order, and mingle with the Commons. For him are vivats: few for the rest, though all wave in plumed 'hats of a feudal cut,' and have sword on thigh; though among them is D'Antraigues, the young Languedocian gentleman,—and indeed many a Peer more or less noteworthy.

There are Liancourt, and La Rochefoucault; the liberal Anglomaniac Dukes. There is a filially pious Lally; a couple of liberal Lameths. Above all, there is a Lafayette; whose name shall be Cromwell-Grandison, and fill the world. Many a 'formula' has this Lafayette too made away with; yet not all formulas. He sticks by the Washington-formula; and by that he will stick;—and hang by it, as by sure bower-anchor hangs and swings the tight war-ship, which, after all changes of wildest weather and water, is found still hanging. Happy for him; be it glorious or not! Alone of all Frenchmen he has a theory of the world, and right mind to conform thereto; he can become a hero and perfect character, were it but the hero of one idea. Note further our old Parliamentary friend, Crispin-Catiline d'Espremeni. He is returned from the Mediterranean Islands, a redhot royalist, repentant to the finger-ends;—unsettled-looking; whose light, dusky-glowing at best, now flickers foul in the socket; whom the National Assembly will by and by, to save time, 'regard as in a state of distraction.' Note lastly that globular Younger Mirabeau; indignant that his elder Brother is among the Commons: it is Viscomte Mirabeau; named oftener Mirabeau Tonneau (*Barrel Mirabeau*), on account of his rotundity, and the quantities of strong liquor he contains.

There then walks our French Noblesse. All in the old pomp of chivalry: and yet, alas, how changed from the old position; drifted far down from their native latitude, like Arctic icebergs got into the Equatorial sea, and fast thawing there! Once these Chivalry Duces (*Dukes, as they are still named*) did actually lead the world,—were it only towards battle-spoil, where lay the world's best wages then: moreover, being the ablest Leaders going, they had their lion's share, those Duces; which none could grudge them. But now, when so many Looms, improved Ploughshares, Steam-Engines and Bills of Exchange have been invented; and, for battle-brawling itself, men hire Drill-Sergeants at eighteen-pence a-day,—what mean these goldmantled Chivalry Figures, walking there 'in black-velvet cloaks,' in high-plumed 'hats of a feudal cut'? Reeds shaken in the wind!

The Clergy have got up; with Cahiers for abolishing pluralities, enforcing residence of bishops, better payment of tithes. (*Hist. Parl. i. 322-27.*) The Dignitaries, we can observe, walk stately, apart from the numerous Undignified,—who indeed are properly little other than Commons disguised in Curate-frocks. Here, however, though by strange ways, shall the Precept be fulfilled, and they that are greatest (*much to their astonishment*) become least. For one example, out of many, mark that plausible Gregoire: one day Cure Gregoire shall be a Bishop, when the now stately are wandering distracted, as Bishops in partibus. With other thought, mark also the Abbe Maury: his broad bold face; mouth accurately primmed; full eyes, that ray out intelligence, falsehood,—the sort of sophistry which is astonished you should find it sophistical. Skilfulest vamped-up of old rotten leather, to make it look like new; always a rising man; he used to tell Mercier, "You will see; I shall be in the Academy before you." (*Mercier, Nouveau Paris.*) Likely indeed, thou skilfullest Maury; nay thou shalt have a Cardinal's Hat, and plush and glory; but alas, also, in the longrun—mere oblivion, like the rest of us; and six feet of earth! What boots it, vamping rotten leather on these terms? Glorious in comparison is the livelihood thy good old Father earns, by making shoes,—one may hope, in a sufficient manner.



Maury does not want for audacity. He shall wear pistols, by and by; and at death-cries of "The Lamp-iron;" answer coolly, "Friends, will you see better there?"

But yonder, halting lamely along, thou noticest next Bishop Talleyrand-Perigord, his Reverence of Autun. A sardonic grimness lies in that irreverent Reverence of Autun. He will do and suffer strange things; and will become surely one of the strangest things ever seen, or like to be seen. A man living in falsehood, and on falsehood; yet not what you can call a false man: there is the specialty! It will be an enigma for future ages, one may hope: hitherto such a product of Nature and Art was possible only for this age of ours,—Age of Paper, and of the Burning of Paper. Consider Bishop Talleyrand and Marquis Lafayette as the topmost of their two kinds; and say once more, looking at what they did and what they were, O Tempus ferax rerum!

On the whole, however, has not this unfortunate Clergy also drifted in the Time-stream, far from its native latitude? An anomalous mass of men; of whom the whole world has already a dim understanding that it can understand nothing. They were once a Priesthood, interpreters of Wisdom, revealers of the Holy that is in Man: a true Clerus (*or Inheritance of God on Earth*): but now?—They pass silently, with such Cahiers as they have been able to redact; and none cries, God bless them.

King Louis with his Court brings up the rear: he cheerful, in this day of hope, is saluted with plaudits; still more Necker his Minister. Not so the Queen; on whom hope shines not steadily any more. Ill-fated Queen! Her hair is already gray with many cares and crosses; her first-born son is dying in these weeks: black falsehood has ineffaceably soiled her name; ineffaceably while this generation lasts. Instead of Vive la Reine, voices insult her with Vive d'Orleans. Of her queenly beauty little remains except its stateliness; not now gracious, but haughty, rigid, silently enduring. With a most mixed feeling, wherein joy has no part, she resigns herself to a day she hoped never to have seen. Poor Marie Antoinette; with thy quick noble instincts; vehement glancings, vision all-too fitful narrow for the work thou hast to do! O there are tears in store for thee; bitterest wailings, soft womanly meltings, though thou hast the heart of an imperial Theresa's Daughter. Thou doomed one, shut thy eyes on the future!—

And so, in stately Procession, have passed the Elected of France. Some towards honour and quick fire-consummation; most towards dishonour; not a few towards massacre, confusion, emigration, desperation: all towards Eternity!—So many heterogeneities cast together into the fermenting-vat; there, with incalculable action, counteraction, elective affinities, explosive developments, to work out healing for a sick moribund System of Society! Probably the strangest Body of Men, if we consider well, that ever met together on our Planet on such an errand. So thousandfold complex a Society, ready to burst-up from its infinite depths; and these men, its rulers and healers, without life-rule for themselves,—other life-rule than a Gospel according to Jean Jacques! To the wisest of them, what we must call the wisest, man is properly an Accident under the sky. Man is without Duty round him; except it be 'to make the Constitution.' He is without Heaven above him, or Hell beneath him; he has no God in the world.

What further or better belief can be said to exist in these Twelve Hundred? Belief in high-plumed hats of a feudal cut; in heraldic scutcheons; in the divine right of Kings, in the divine right of Game-destroyers. Belief, or what is still worse, canting half-belief; or worst of all, mere Macchiavellic pretence-of-belief,—in consecrated dough-wafers, and the godhood of a poor old Italian Man! Nevertheless in that immeasurable Confusion and Corruption, which struggles there so blindly to

become less confused and corrupt, there is, as we said, this one salient point of a New Life discernible: the deep fixed Determination to have done with Shams. A determination, which, consciously or unconsciously, is fixed; which waxes ever more fixed, into very madness and fixed-idea; which in such embodiment as lies provided there, shall now unfold itself rapidly: monstrous, stupendous, unspeakable; new for long thousands of years!—How has the Heaven's light, oftentimes in this Earth, to clothe itself in thunder and electric murkiness; and descend as molten lightning, blasting, if purifying! Nay is it not rather the very murkiness, and atmospheric suffocation, that brings the lightning and the light? The new Evangel, as the old had been, was it to be born in the Destruction of a World?

But how the Deputies assisted at High Mass, and heard sermon, and applauded the preacher, church as it was, when he preached politics; how, next day, with sustained pomp, they are, for the first time, installed in their Salles des Menus (*Hall no longer of Amusements*), and become a States-General,—readers can fancy for themselves. The King from his estrade, gorgeous as Solomon in all his glory, runs his eye over that majestic Hall; many-plumed, many-glancing; bright-tinted as rainbow, in the galleries and near side spaces, where Beauty sits raining bright influence. Satisfaction, as of one that after long voyaging had got to port, plays over his broad simple face: the innocent King! He rises and speaks, with sonorous tone, a conceivable speech. With which, still more with the succeeding one-hour and two-hour speeches of Garde-des-Sceaux and M. Necker, full of nothing but patriotism, hope, faith, and deficiency of the revenue,—no reader of these pages shall be tried.

We remark only that, as his Majesty, on finishing the speech, put on his plumed hat, and the Noblesse according to custom imitated him, our Tiers-Etat Deputies did mostly, not without a shade of fierceness, in like manner clap-on, and even crush on their slouched hats; and stand there awaiting the issue. (*Histoire Parlementaire* (i. 356). *Mercier, Nouveau Paris, &c.*) Thick buzz among them, between majority and minority of Couvrezvous, Decouvrez-vous (*Hats off, Hats on*)! To which his Majesty puts end, by taking off his own royal hat again.

The session terminates without further accident or omen than this; with which, significantly enough, France has opened her States-General.

---

Revision #1

Created 9 August 2019 12:21:41 by Textpedia

Updated 9 August 2019 12:22:06 by Textpedia