

A Residence in France During the Years 1792, 1793, 1794 and 1795, Part III., 1794 eBook

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Page 1

Produced by Mary Munarin and David Widger

A residence in France,
during the years
1792, 1793, 1794, and 1795;

Described in A series of letters
from an English lady;
With General And Incidental Remarks
On The French Character And Manners.

Prepared for the Press
By John Gifford, Esq.
Author of the History of France, Letter to Lord
Lauderdale, Letter to the Hon. T. Erskine, &c.

Second Edition.

Plus je vis l'Etranger plus j'aimai ma Patrie. —Du Belloy.

London: Printed for T. N. Longman, Paternoster Row. 1797.

1794

January 6, 1794.

If I had undertaken to follow the French revolution through all its absurdities and iniquities, my indolence would long since have taken the alarm, and I should have relinquished a task become too difficult and too laborious. Events are now too numerous and too complicated to be described by occasional remarks; and a narrator of no more pretensions than myself may be allowed to shrink from an abundance of matter which will hereafter perplex the choice and excite the wonder of the historian.— Removed from the great scene of intrigues, we are little acquainted with them—we begin to suffer almost before we begin to conjecture, and our solicitude to examine causes is lost in the rapidity with which we feel their effects.

Amidst the more mischievous changes of a philosophic revolution, you will have learned from the newspapers, that the French have adopted a new aera and a new calendar, the one dating from the foundation of their republic, and other descriptive of the climate of Paris, and the productions of the French territory. I doubt, however, if these new almanack-makers will create so much confusion as might be supposed, or as they may desire, for I do not find as yet that their system has made its way beyond the public offices, and the country people are particularly refractory, for they persist in holding their fairs, markets, &c. as usual, without any regard to the hallowed decade of their

legislators. As it is to be presumed that the French do not wish to relinquish all commercial intercourse with other nations, they mean possibly to tack the republican calendar to the rights of man, and send their armies to propagate them together; otherwise the correspondence of a Frenchman will be as difficult to interpret with mercantile exactness as the characters of the Chinese.

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The vanity of these philosophers would, doubtless, be gratified by forcing the rest of Europe and the civilized world to adopt their useless and chimerical innovations, and they might think it a triumph to see the inhabitant of the Hebrides date "*Vendemiaire*," [Alluding to the vintage.] or the parched West-Indian "*Nivose*;" but vanity is not on this, as it is on many other occasions, the leading principle.—It was hoped that a new arrangement of the year, and a different nomenclature of the months, so as to banish all the commemorations of Christianity, might prepare the way for abolishing religion itself, and, if it were possible to impose the use of the new calendar so far as to exclude the old one, this might certainly assist their more serious atheistical operations; but as the success of such an introduction might depend on the will of the people, and is not within the competence of the bayonet, the old year will maintain its ground, and these pedantic triflers find that they have laboured to no more extensive a purpose, than to furnish a date to the newspapers, or to their own decrees, which no one will take the pains to understand.

Mankind are in general more attached to customs than principles. The useful despotism of Peter, which subdued so many of the prejudices of his countrymen, could not achieve the curtailment of their beards; and you must not imagine that, with all the endurance of the French, these continual attempts at innovation pass without murmurs: partial revolts happen very frequently; but, as they are the spontaneous effect of personal suffering, not of political manoeuvre, they are without concert or union, of course easily quelled, and only serve to strengthen the government.—The people of Amiens have lately, in one of these sudden effusions of discontent, burnt the tree of liberty, and even the representative, Dumont, has been menaced; but these are only the blows of a coward who is alarmed at his own temerity, and dreads the chastisement of it.*

* The whole town of Bedouin, in the south of France, was burnt pursuant to a decree of the convention, to expiate the imprudence of some of its inhabitants in having cut down a dead tree of liberty. Above sixty people were guillotined as accomplices, and their bodies thrown into pits, dug by order of the representative, Magnet, (then on mission,) before their death. These executions were succeeded by a conflagration of all the houses, and the imprisonment or dispersion of their possessors. It is likewise worthy of remark, that many of these last were obliged, by express order of Maignet, to be spectators of the murder of their friends and relations.

This crime in the revolutionary code is of a very serious nature; and however trifling it may appear to you, it depends only on the will of Dumont to sacrifice many lives on the occasion. But Dumont, though erected by circumstances into a tyrant, is not sanguinary—he



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is by nature and education passionate and gross, and in other times might only have been a good natured Polisson. Hitherto he has contented himself with alarming, and making people tired of their lives, but I do not believe he has been the direct or intentional cause of anyone's death. He has so often been the hero of my adventures, that I mention him familiarly to you, without reflecting, that though the delegate of more than monarchical power here, he is too insignificant of himself to be known in England. But the history of Dumont is that of two-thirds of the Convention. He was originally clerk to an attorney at Abbeville, and afterwards set up for himself in a neighbouring village. His youth having been marked by some digressions from the "haviour of reputation," his profession was far from affording him a subsistence; and the revolution, which seems to have called forth all that was turbulent, unprincipled, or necessitous in the country, naturally found a partizan in an attorney without practice.—At the election of 1792, when the King's fall and the domination of the Jacobins had spread so general a terror that no man of character could be prevailed upon to be a candidate for a public situation, Dumont availed himself of this timidity and supineness in those who ought to have become the representatives of the people; and, by a talent for intrigue, and a coarse facility of phrase-making, (for he has no pretensions to eloquence,) prevailed on the mob to elect him. His local knowledge, active disposition, and subservient industry, render him an useful kind of drudge to any prevailing party, and, since the overthrow of the Brissotines, he has been entrusted with the government of this and some of the neighbouring departments. He professes himself a zealous republican, and an apostle of the doctrine of universal equality, yet unites in his person all the attributes of despotism, and lives with more luxury and expence than most of the *ci-devant* gentry. His former habitation at Oisemont is not much better than a good barn; but patriotism is more profitable here than in England, and he has lately purchased a large mansion belonging to an emigrant.

* "Britain no longer pays her patriots with her spoils:" and perhaps it is matter of congratulation to a country, when the profession of patriotism is not lucrative. Many agreeable inferences may be made from it—the sentiment may have become too general for reward, Ministers too virtuous to fear, or even the people too enlightened to be deceived.

—His mode of travelling, which used at best to be in the *coche d'eau* [Passage-boat.] or the diligence, is now in a coach and four, very frequently accompanied by a led horse, and a party of dragoons. I fear some of your patriots behold this with envy, and it is not to be wondered at that they should wish to see a similar revolution in England. What a seducing prospect for the assertors of liberty,



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to have the power of imprisoning and guillotining all their countrymen! What halcyon days, when the aristocratic palaces* shall be purified by solacing the fatigues of republican virtue, and the levellers of all distinction travel with four horses and a military escort!—But, as Robespierre observes, you are two centuries behind the French in patriotism and information; and I doubt if English republicanism will ever go beyond a dinner, and toasting the manes of Hampden and Sydney. I would, therefore, seriously advise any of my compatriots who may be enamoured of a government founded on the rights of man, to quit an ungrateful country which seems so little disposed to reward their labours, and enjoy the supreme delight of men a systeme, that of seeing their theories in action.

* Many of the emigrants' houses were bought by members of the Convention, or people in office. At Paris, crowds of inferior clerks, who could not purchase, found means to get lodged in the most superb national edifices: Monceaux was the villa of Robespierre—St. Just occasionally amused himself at Raincy—Couthon succeeded the Comte d'Artois at Bagatelle—and Vliatte, a jurymen of the Revolutionary Tribunal, was lodged at the pavillion of Flora, in the Tuilleries, which he seems to have occupied as a sort of Maitre d'Hotel to the Comite de Salut Public.

A propos—a decree of the Convention has lately passed to secure the person of Mr. Thomas Paine, and place seals on his papers. I hope, however, as he has been installed in all the rights of a French citizen, in addition to his representative inviolability, that nothing more than a temporary retreat is intended for him. Perhaps even his personal sufferings may prove a benefit to mankind. He may, like Raleigh, “in his prison hours enrich the world,” and add new proselytes to the cause of freedom. Besides, human evils are often only blessings in a questionable form—Mr. Paine's persecutions in England made him a legislator in France. Who knows but his persecutions in France may lead to some new advancement, or at least add another line to the already crowded title-pages that announce his literary and political distinctions!

—Yours.

January, 1794.

The total suppression of all religious worship in this country is an event of too singular and important a nature not to have been commented upon largely by the English papers; but, though I have little new to add on the subject, my own reflections have been too much occupied in consequence for me to pass it over in silence.

I am yet in the first emotions of wonder: the vast edifice which had been raised by the blended efforts of religion and superstition, which had been consecrated by time, endeared by national taste, and become necessary by habit, has now disappeared, and scarcely left a vestige of its ruins. To those who revert only to the genius of the Catholic religion, and to former periods of the history of France, this

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event must seem incredible; and nothing but constant opportunities of marking its gradual approach can reconcile it to probability. The pious christian and the insidious philosopher have equally contributed to the general effect, though with very different intentions: the one, consulting only his reason, wished to establish a pure and simple mode of worship, which, divested of the allurements of splendid processions and imposing ceremonies, should teach the people their duty, without captivating their senses; the other, better acquainted with French character, knew how little these views were compatible with it, and hoped, under the specious pretext of banishing the too numerous ornaments of the Catholic practice, to shake the foundations of Christianity itself. Thus united in their efforts, though dissimilar in their motives, all parties were eager at the beginning of the revolution for a reform in the Church: the wealth of the Clergy, the monastic establishments, the supernumerary saints, were devoted and attacked without pity, and without regret; and, in the zeal and hurry of innovation, the decisive measure, which reduced ecclesiastics to small pensions dependent on the state, was carried, before those who really meant well were aware of its consequences. The next step was, to make the receiving these pensions subject to an oath, which the selfish philosopher, who can coldly calculate on, and triumph in, the weakness of human nature, foresaw would be a brand of discord, certain to destroy the sole force which the Clergy yet possessed—their union, and the public opinion.

Unfortunately, these views were not disappointed: conviction, interest, or fear, prevailed on many to take the oath; while doubt, worldly improvidence, or a scrupulous piety, deterred others. A schism took place between the jurors and nonjurors—the people became equally divided, and adhered either to the one or the other, as their habits or prepossessions directed them. Neither party, as it may be imagined, could see themselves deprived of any portion of the public esteem, without concern, perhaps without rancour; and their mutual animosity, far from gaining proselytes to either, contributed only to the immediate degradation and future ruin of both. Those, however, who had not taken the prescribed oath, were in general more popular than what were called the constitutionalists, and the influence they were supposed to exert in alienating the minds of their followers from the new form of government, supplied the republican party with a pretext for proposing their banishment.*

The King's exertion of the power vested in him by the constitution, by putting a temporary negative on this decree, it is well known, was one of the pretexts for dethroning him.



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At the King's deposition this decree took place, and such of the nonjuring priests as were not massacred in the prisons, or escaped the search, were to be embarked for Guiana. The wiser and better part of those whose compliances entitled them to remain, were, I believe, far from considering this persecution of their opponents as a triumph—to those who did, it was of short duration. The Convention, which had hitherto attempted to disguise its hatred of the profession by censure and abuse of a part of its members, began now to ridicule the profession itself: some represented it as useless—others as pernicious and irreconcilable with political freedom; and a discourse* was printed, under the sanction of the Assembly, to prove, that the only feasible republic must be supported by pure atheism.

* Extracts from the Report of Anacharsis Cloots, member of the Committee of Public Instruction, printed by order of the National Convention:

“Our *Sans-culottes* want no other sermon but the rights of man, no other doctrine but the constitutional precepts and practice, nor any other church than where the section or the club hold their meetings, &c.“The propagation of the rights of man ought to be presented to the astonished world pure and without stain. It is not by offering strange gods to our neighbours that we shall operate their conversion. We can never raise them from their abject state by erecting one altar in opposition to another. A trifling heresy is infinitely more revolting than having no religion at all. Nature, like the sun, diffuses her light without the assistance of priests and vestals. While we were constitutional heretics, we maintained an army of an hundred thousand priests, who waged war equally with the Pope and the disciples of Calvin. We crushed the old priesthood by means of the new, and while we compelled every sect to contribute to the payment of a pretended national religion, we became at once the abhorrence of all the Catholics and Protestants in Europe. The repulsion of our religious belief counteracted the attraction of our political principles.—But truth is at length triumphant, and all the ill-intentioned shall no more be able to detach our neighbours from the dominion of the rights of man, under pretext of a religious dominion which no longer exists.—The purpose of religion is no how so well answered as by presenting carte blanche to the abused world. Every one will then be at liberty to form his spiritual regimen to his own taste, till in the end the invincible ascendant of reason shall teach him that the Supreme Being, the Eternal Being, is no other than Nature uncreated and uncreatable; and that the only Providence is the association of mankind in freedom and equality!— This sovereign providence affords comfort to the afflicted, rewards the good, and punishes the wicked. It exercises no unjust partialities, like the



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providence of knaves and fools. Man, when free, wants no other divinity than himself. This god will not cost us a single farthing, not a single tear, nor a drop of blood. From the summit of our mountain he hath promulgated his laws, traced in evident characters on the tables of nature. From the East to the West they will be understood without the aid of interpreters, comments, or miracles. Every other ritual will be torn in pieces at the appearance of that of reason. Reason dethrones both the Kings of the earth, and the Kings of heaven.—No monarch above, if we wish to preserve our republic below.“Volumes have been written to determine whether or no a republic of Atheists could exist. I maintain that every other republic is a chimera. If you once admit the existence of a heavenly Sovereign, you introduce the wooden horse within your walls! —What you adore by day will be your destruction at night.

“A people of theists necessarily become revelationists, that is to say, slaves of priests, who are but religious go-betweens, and physicians of damned souls.

“If I were a scoundrel, I should make a point of exclaiming against atheism, for a religious mask is very convenient to a traitor.

“The intolerance of truth will one day proscribe the very name of temple ‘fanum,’ the etymology of fanaticism.

“We shall instantly see the monarchy of heaven condemned in its turn by the revolutionary tribunal of victorious Reason; for Truth, exalted on the throne of Nature, is sovereignly intolerant.

“The republic of the rights of man is, properly speaking, neither theistical nor atheistical—it is nihilistical.”

Many of the most eminent conforming Prelates and Clergy were arrested, and even individuals, who had the reputation of being particularly devout, were marked as objects of persecution. A new calendar was devised, which excluded the ancient festivals, and limited public worship to the decade, or tenth day, and all observance of the Sabbath was interdicted. The prisons were crowded with sufferers in the cause of religion, and all who had not the zeal or the courage of martyrs, abstained from manifesting any attachment to the Christian faith.

While this consternation was yet recent, the Deputies on mission in the departments shut up the churches entirely: the refuse of low clubs were paid and encouraged to break the windows and destroy the monuments; and these outrages, which, it was previously concerted, should at first assume the appearance of popular tumult, were soon regulated and directed by the mandates of the Convention themselves. The churches were again opened, an atheistic ritual, and licentious homilies,* were

substituted for the proscribed service—and an absurd and ludicrous imitation of the Greek mythology was exhibited, under the title of the Religion of Reason.—



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* I have read a discourse pronounced in a church at Paris, on the decade, so indecent and profane, that the most humble audience of a country-puppet show in England would not have tolerated it.

On the principal church of every town was inscribed, "The Temple of Reason;" and a tutelary goddess was installed with a ceremony equally pedantic, ridiculous, and profane.*

* At Havre, the goddess of Reason was drawn on a car by four cart-horses, and as it was judged necessary, to prevent accidents, that the horses should be conducted by those they were accustomed to, the carters were likewise put in requisition and furnished with cuirasses a l'antique from the theatre. The men, it seems, being neither martial nor learned, were not au fait at this equipment, and concluding it was only a waistcoat of ceremony, invested themselves with the front behind, and the back part laced before, to the great amusement of the few who were sensible of the mistake.

Yet the philosophers did not on this occasion disdain those adventitious aids, the use of which they had so much declaimed against while they were the auxiliaries of Christianity.*

* Mr. Gibbon reproaches the Christians with their adoption of the allurements of the Greek mythology.—The Catholics have been more hostilely despoiled by their modern persecutors, and may retort that the religion of reason is a more gross appeal to the senses than the darkest ages of superstition would have ventured on.

Music, processions, and decorations, which had been banished from the ancient worship, were introduced in the new one, and the philosophical reformer, even in the very attempt to establish a religion purely metaphysical, found himself obliged to inculcate it by a gross and material idolatry.*—

* The French do not yet annex any other idea to the religion of reason than that of the female who performs the part of the goddess.

Thus, by submitting his abstractions to the genius of the people, and the imperfections of our nature, perhaps the best apology was offered for the errors of that worship which had been proscribed, persecuted, and ridiculed.

Previous to the tenth day, on which a celebration of this kind was to take place, a Deputy arrived, accompanied by the female goddess:* that is, (if the town itself did not produce one for the purpose,) a Roman dress of white satin was hired from the theatre, with which she was invested—her head covered with a red cap, ornamented with oak leaves— one arm was reclined on a plough, the other grasped a spear—and her feet were supported by a globe, and environed by mutilated emblems of seodality. [It is not possible to explain this costume as appropriate.]



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* The females who personated the new divinity were usually selected from amongst those who “might make sectaries of whom they bid but follow,” but who were more conspicuous for beauty than any other celestial attribute.—The itinerant goddess of the principal towns in the department de la Somme was the mistress of one Taillefer, a republican General, brother to the Deputy of the same name.—I know not, in this military government, whether the General’s services on the occasion were included in his other appointments. At Amiens, he not only provided the deity, but commanded the detachment that secured her a submissive adoration.

Thus equipped, the divinity and her appendages were borne on the shoulders of Jacobins “en bonnet rouge,” and escorted by the National Guard, Mayor, Judges, and all the constituted authorities, who, whether diverted or indignant, were obliged to preserve a respectful gravity of exterior. When the whole cavalcade arrived at the place appointed, the goddess was placed on an altar erected for the occasion, from whence she harangued the people, who, in return, proffered their adoration, and sung the Carmagnole, and other republican hymns of the same kind. They then proceeded in the same order to the principal church, in the choir of which the same ceremonies were renewed: a priest was procured to abjure his faith and avow the whole of Christianity an imposture;* and the festival concluded with the burning of prayer-books, saints, confessionals, and every thing appropriated to the use of public worship.**—

*It must be observed, in justice to the French Clergy, that it was seldom possible to procure any who would consent to this infamy. In such cases, the part was exhibited by a man hired and dressed for the purpose.—The end of degrading the profession in the eyes of the people was equally answered.** In many places, valuable paintings and statues were burnt or disfigured. The communion cups, and other church plate, were, after being exorcised in Jacobin revels, sent to the Convention, and the gold and silver, (as the author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire invidiously expresses himself,) the pearls and jewels, were wickedly converted to the service of mankind; as if any thing whose value is merely fictitious, could render more service to mankind than when dedicated to an use which is equally the solace of the rich and the poor—which gratifies the eye without exciting cupidity, soothes the bed of sickness, and heals the wounds of conscience. Yet I am no advocate for the profuse decorations of Catholic churches; and if I seem to plead in their behalf, it is that I recollect no instance where the depredators of them have appropriated the spoil to more laudable purposes.

The greater part of the attendants looked on in silent terror and astonishment; whilst others, intoxicated, or probably paid to act this scandalous farce, danced round the flames with an appearance of frantic and savage mirth.—It is not to be forgotten, that representatives of the people often presided as the high priests of these rites; and their official dispatches to the convention, in which these ceremonies were minutely described, were always heard with bursts of applause, and sanctioned by decrees of insertion in the bulletin.*



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* A kind of official newspaper distributed periodically at the expence of Government in large towns, and pasted up in public places—it contained such news as the convention chose to impart, which was given with the exact measure of truth or falsehood that suited the purpose of the day.

I have now conducted you to the period in which I am contemplating France in possession of all the advantages which a total dereliction of religious establishments can bestow—at that consummation to which the labours of modern philosophers have so long tended.

Ye Shaftesburys, Bolingbrokes, Voltaires, and must I add the name of Gibbon,* behold yourselves inscribed on the registers of fame with a Laplanche, a Chenier, an Andre Dumont, or a Fouché!**—

* The elegant satirist of Christianity will smile at the presumption of so humble a censor.—It is certain, the misapplication only of such splendid talents could embolden me to mention the name of the possessor with diminished respect.

** These are names too contemptible for notice, but for the mischief to which they were instrumental—they were among the first and most remarkable persecutors of religion.

Do not blush at the association; your views have been the same; and the subtle underminer of man's best comfort in the principles of his religion, is even more criminal than him who prohibits the external exercise of it. Ridicule of the sacred writings is more dangerous than burning them, and a sneer at the miracles of the gospel more mischievous than disfiguring the statues of the evangelists; and it must be confessed that these Anti-christian Iconoclasts themselves might probably have been content to "believe and say their prayers," had not the intolerance of philosophy made them atheists and persecutors.—The coarse legend of "death is the sleep of eternity,"* is only a compendium of the fine-drawn theories of the more elaborate materialist, and the depositaries of the dead will not corrupt more by the exhibition of this desolating standard, than the libraries of the living by the volumes which hold out the same oblivion to vice, and discouragement to virtue.—

* Posts, bearing the inscription "la mort est un sommeil eternel," were erected in many public burying-grounds.—No other ceremony is observed with the dead than enclosing the body in some rough boards, and sending it off by a couple of porters, (in their usual garb,) attended by a municipal officer. The latter inscribes on a register the name of the deceased, who is thrown into a grave generally prepared for half a score, and the whole business is finished.

The great experiment of governing a civilized people without religion will now be made; and should the morals, the manners, or happiness of the French, be improved by it, the

sectaries of modern philosophy may triumph. Should it happen otherwise, the Christian will have an additional motive for cherishing his faith: but even the afflictions of humanity will not, I fear, produce either regret or conviction in his adversary; for the prejudices of philosophers and systemists are incorrigible.*



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* *"Ce ne sont point les philosophes qui connoissent le mieux les hommes. Ils ne les voient qu'à travers les prejuges, et je ne fache aucun etat ou l'on en ait tant."*—J. J. Rousseau. ["It is not among philosophers that we are to look for the most perfect knowledge of human nature.—They view it only through the prejudices of philosophy, and I know of no profession where prejudices are more abundant."]

Providence, Jan. 29.

We are now quite domesticated here, though in a very miserable way, without fire, and with our mattresses, on the boards; but we nevertheless adopt the spirit of the country, and a total absence of comfort does not prevent us from amusing ourselves. My friend knits, and draws landscapes on the backs of cards; and I have established a correspondence with an old bookseller, who sends me treatises of chemistry and fortifications, instead of poetry and memoirs. I endeavoured at first to borrow books of our companions, but this resource was soon exhausted, and the whole prison supplied little more than a novel of Florian's, *Le Voyage du jeune Anarcharsis*, and some of the philosophical romances of Voltaire.—They say it ennues them to read; and I observe, that those who read at all, take their books into the garden, and prefer the most crowded walks. These studious persons, who seem to surpass Crambe himself in the faculty of abstraction, smile and bow at every comma, without any appearance of derangement from such frequent interruptions.

Time passes sorrowly, rather than slowly; and my thoughts, without being amused, are employed. The novelty of our situation, the past, the future, all offer so many subjects of reflection, that my mind has more occasion for repose than amusement. My only external resource is conversing with our fellow-prisoners, and learning the causes of their detention. These relations furnish me with a sort of "abstract of the times," and mark the character of the government better than circumstances of more apparent consequence; for what are battles, sieges, and political machinations, but as they ultimately affect the happiness of society? And when I learn that the lives, the liberty, and property of no class are secure from violation, it is not necessary one should be at Paris to form an opinion of this period of the revolution, and of those who conduct it.

The persecution which has hitherto been chiefly directed against the Noblesse, has now a little subsided, and seems turned against religion and commerce. People are daily arrested for assisting at private masses, concealing images, or even for being possessors of religious books. Merchants are sent here as monopolizers, and retailers, under various pretexts, in order to give the committees an opportunity of pillaging their shops. It is not uncommon to see people of the town who are our guards one day, become our fellow-prisoners the next; and a few weeks since, the son of an old gentleman who has been some time here, after being on guard the whole day, instead of being relieved at the usual hour, was joined by his wife and children, under the escort of a couple of dragoons, who delivered the whole family into the custody of our keeper;

and this appears to have happened without any other motive than his having presented a petition to Dumont in behalf of his father.

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An old man was lately taken from his house in the night, and brought here, because he was said to have worn the cross of St. Louis.—The fact is, however, that he never did wear this obnoxious distinction; and though his daughter has proved this incontrovertibly to Dumont, she cannot obtain his liberty: and the poor young woman, after making two or three fruitless journeys to Paris, is obliged to content herself with seeing her father occasionally at the gate.

The refectory of the convent is inhabited by hospital nuns. Many of the hospitals in France had a sort of religious order annexed to them, whose business it was to attend the sick; and habit, perhaps too the association of the offices of humanity with the duties of religion, had made them so useful in their profession, that they were suffered to remain, even after the abolition of the regular monasteries. But the devastating torrent of the revolution at length reached them: they were accused of bestowing a more tender solicitude on their aristocratic patients than on the wounded volunteers and republicans; and, upon these curious charges, they have been heaped into carts, without a single necessary, almost without covering, sent from one department to another, and distributed in different prisons, where they are perishing with cold, sickness, and want! Some people are here only because they happened to be accidentally at a house when the owner was arrested;* and we have one family who were taken at dinner, with their guests, and the plate they were using!

* It was not uncommon for a mandate of arrest to direct the taking
“Citizen Such-a-one, and all persons found in his house.”

A grand-daughter of the celebrated De Witt, who resided thirty leagues from hence, was arrested in the night, put in an open cart, without any regard to her age, her sex, or her infirmities, though the rain fell in torrents; and, after sleeping on straw in different prisons on the road, was deposited here. As a Fleming, the law places her in the same predicament with a very pretty young woman who has lived some months at Amiens; but Dumont, who is at once the maker, the interpreter, and executor of the laws, has exempted the latter from the general proscription, and appears daily with her in public; whereas poor Madame De Witt is excluded from such indulgence, being above seventy years old— and is accused, moreover, of having been most exemplarily charitable, and, what is still worse, very religious.—I have given these instances not as any way remarkable, and only that you may form some idea of the pretexts which have served to cover France with prisons, and to conduct so many of its inhabitants to the scaffold.

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It is impossible to reflect on a country in such a situation, without abhorring the authors of it, and dreading the propagation of their doctrines. I hope they neither have imitators nor admirers in England; yet the convention in their debates, the Jacobins, and all the French newspapers, seem so sanguine in their expectation, and so positive in their assertions of an English revolution, that I occasionally, and in spite of myself, feel a vague but serious solicitude, which I should not have supposed the apprehension of any political evil could inspire. I know the good sense and information of my countrymen offer a powerful resource against the love of change and metaphysical subtleties; but, it is certain, the French government have much depended on the spirit of party, and the zeal of their propagandists. They talk of a British convention, of a conventional army, and, in short, all France seem prepared to see their neighbours involved in the same disastrous system with themselves. The people are not a little supported in this error by the extracts that are given them from your orators in the House of Commons, which teem with nothing but complaints against the oppression of their own country, and enthusiastic admiration of French liberty. We read and wonder—collate the Bill of Rights with the Code Revolutionnaire, and again fear what we cannot give credit to.

Since the reports I allude to have gained ground, I have been forcibly stricken by a difference in the character of the two nations. At the prospect of a revolution, all the French who could conveniently leave the country, fled; and those that remained (except adventurers and the banditti that were their accomplices) studiously avoided taking any part. But so little are our countrymen affected with this selfish apathy, that I am told there is scarcely one here who, amidst all his present sufferings, does not seem to regret his absence from England, more on account of not being able to oppose this threatened attack on our constitution, than for any personal motive.—The example before them must, doubtless, tend to increase this sentiment of genuine patriotism; for whoever came to France with but a single grain of it in his composition, must return with more than enough to constitute an hundred patriots, whose hatred of despotism is only a principle, and who have never felt its effects.—Adieu.

February 2, 1794.

The factions which have chosen to give France the appellation of a republic, seem to have judged, and with some reason, that though it might answer their purpose to amuse the people with specious theories of freedom, their habits and ideas were far from requiring that these fine schemes should be carried into practice. I know of no example equal to the submission of the French at this moment; and if “departed spirits were permitted to review the world,” the shades of Richelieu or Louvois might hover with envy round the Committee of Public Welfare, and regret the undaring moderation of their own politics.



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How shall I explain to an Englishman the doctrine of universal requisition? I rejoice that you can imagine nothing like it.—After establishing, as a general principle, that the whole country is at the disposal of government, succeeding decrees have made specific claims on almost every body, and every thing. The tailors, shoemakers,* bakers, smiths, sadlers, and many other trades, are all in requisition—carts, horses, and carriages of every kind, are in requisition—the stables and cellars are put in requisition for the extraction of saltpetre, and the houses to lodge soldiers, or to be converted into prisons.

* In order to prevent frauds, the shoemakers were obliged to make only square-toed shoes, and every person not in the army was forbidden to wear them of this form. Indeed, people of any pretensions to patriotism (that is to say, who were much afraid) did not venture to wear any thing but wooden shoes; as it had been declared anti-civique, if not suspicious, to walk in leather.

—Sometimes shopkeepers are forbidden to sell their cloth, nails, wine, bread, meat, &c. There are instances where whole towns have been kept without the necessaries of life for several days together, in consequence of these interdictions; and I have known it proclaimed by beat of drum, that whoever possessed two uniforms, two hats, or two pair of shoes, should relinquish one for the use of the army! Yet with all these efforts of despotism, the republican troops are in many respects ill supplied, the produce being too often converted to the use of the agents of government, who are all Jacobins, and whose peculations are suffered with impunity, because they are too necessary, or perhaps too formidable for punishment.

These proceedings, which are not the less mischievous for being absurd, must end in a total destruction of commerce: the merchant will not import what he may be obliged to sell exclusively to government at an arbitrary and inadequate valuation.—Those who are not imprisoned, and have it in their power, are for the most part retired from business, or at least avoid all foreign speculations; so that France may in a few months depend only on her internal resources. The same measures which ruin one class, serve as a pretext to oppress and levy contributions on the rest.—In order to make this right of seizure still more productive, almost every village has its spies, and the domiciliary visits are become so frequent, that a man is less secure in his own house, than in a desert amidst Arabs. On these occasions, a band of Jacobins, with a municipal officer at their head, enter sans ceremonie, over-run your apartments, and if they find a few pounds of sugar, soap, or any other article which they choose to judge more than sufficient for immediate consumption, they take possession of the whole as a monopoly, which they claim for the use of the republic, and the terrified owner, far from expostulating, thinks himself happy if he escapes



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so well.—But this is mere vulgar tyranny: a less powerful despotism might invade the security of social life, and banish its comforts. We are prone to suffer, and it requires often little more than the will to do evil to give us a command over the happiness of others. The Convention are more original, and, not satisfied with having reduced the people to the most abject slavery, they exact a semblance of content, and dictate at stated periods the chastisement which awaits those who refuse to smile.

The splendid ceremonies at Paris, which pass for popular rejoicings, merit that appellation less than an auto de fe. Every movement is previously regulated by a Commissioner appointed for the purpose, (to whom en passant these fetes are very lucrative jobs,) a plan of the whole is distributed, in which is prescribed with great exactness, that at such and such parts the people are to “melt into tears,” at others they are to be seized with a holy enthusiasm, and at the conclusion of the whole they are to rend the air with the cry of “Vive la Convention!” —These celebrations are always attended by a military force, sufficient to ensure their observance, besides a plentiful mixture of spies to notice refractory countenances or faint acclamations.

The departments which cannot imitate the magnificence of Paris, are obliged, nevertheless, to manifest their satisfaction. At every occasion on which a rejoicing is ordered, the same kind of discipline is preserved; and the aristocrats, whose fears in general overcome their principles, are often not the least zealous attendants.

At the retaking of Toulon, when abandoned by our countrymen, the National Guards were every where assembled to participate in the festivity, under a menace of three days imprisonment. Those persons who did not illuminate their houses were to be considered as suspicious, and treated as such: yet, even with all these precautions, I am informed the business was universally cold, and the balls thinly attended, except by aristocrats and relations of emigrants, who, in some places, with a baseness not excused even by their terrors, exhibited themselves as a public spectacle, and sang the defeats of that country which was armed in their defence.

I must here remark to you a circumstance which does still less honour to the French character; and which you will be unwilling to believe. In several towns the officers and others, under whose care the English were placed during their confinement, were desirous sometimes on account of the peculiar hardship of their situation as foreigners, to grant them little indulgences, and even more liberty than to the French prisoners; and in this they were justified on several considerations, as well as that of humanity.—They knew an Englishman could not escape, whatever facility might be given him, without being immediately retaken; and that if his imprisonment were made severe, he had fewer external resources and alleviations than the natives of the country: but these favourable dispositions were of no avail—for whenever any of our countrymen obtained an accommodation, the jealousy of the French took umbrage, and they were obliged to

relinquish it, or hazard the drawing embarrassment on the individual who had served them.



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You are to notice, that the people in general, far from being averse to seeing the English treated with a comparative indulgence, were even pleased at it; and the invidious comparisons and complaints which prevented it, proceeded from the gentry, from the families of those who had found refuge in England, and who were involved in the common persecution.—I have, more than once, been reproached by a female aristocrat with the ill success of the English army; and many, with whom I formerly lived on terms of intimacy, would refuse me now the most trifling service.—I have heard of a lady, whose husband and brother are both in London, who amuses herself in teaching a bird to repeat abuse of the English.

It has been said, that the day a man becomes a slave, he loses half his virtue; and if this be true as to personal slavery, judging from the examples before me, I conclude it equally so of political bondage.—The extreme despotism of the government seems to have confounded every principle of right and wrong, every distinction of honour and dishonour and the individual, of whatever class, alive only to the sense of personal danger, embraces without reluctance meanness or disgrace, if it insure his safety.—A tailor or shoemaker, whose reputation perhaps is too bad to gain him a livelihood by any trade but that of a patriot, shall be besieged by the flatteries of people of rank, and have levees as numerous as Choiseul or Calonne in their meridian of power.

When a Deputy of the Convention is sent to a town on mission, sadness takes possession of every heart, and gaiety of every countenance. He is beset with adulatory petitions, and propitiating gifts; the Noblesse who have escaped confinement form a sort of court about his person; and thrice happy is the owner of that habitation at which he condescends to reside.—*

* When a Deputy arrives, the gentry of the town contend with jealous rivalry for the honour of lodging him; and the most eloquent eulogist of republican simplicity in the Convention does not fail to prefer a large house and a good table, even though the unhallowed property of an aristocrat.—It is to be observed, that these Missionaries travel in a very patriarchal style, accompanied by their wives, children, and a numerous train of followers, who are not delicate in availing themselves of this hospitality, and are sometimes accused of carrying off the linen, or any thing else portable—even the most decent behave on these occasions as though they were at an inn.

—A Representative of gallantry has no reason to envy either the authority of the Grand Signor, or the licence of his seraglio—he is arbiter of the fate of every woman that pleases him; and, it is supposed, that many a fair captive has owed her liberty to her charms, and that the philosophy of a French husband has sometimes opened the doors of his prison.



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Dumont, who is married, and has besides the countenance of a white Negro, never visits us without occasioning a general commotion amongst all the females, especially those who are young and pretty. As soon as it is known that he is expected, the toilettes are all in activity, a renovation of rouge and an adjustment of curls take place, and, though performed with more haste, not with less solicitude, than the preparatory splendour of a first introduction.—When the great man arrives, he finds the court by which he enters crowded by these formidable prisoners, and each with a petition in her hand endeavours, with the insidious coquetry of plaintive smiles and judicious tears, that brighten the eye without deranging the features, to attract his notice and conciliate his favour. Happy those who obtain a promise, a look of complacency, or even of curiosity!—But the attention of this apostle of republicanism is not often bestowed, except on high rank, or beauty; and a woman who is old, or ill dressed, that ventures to approach him, is usually repulsed with vulgar brutality—while the very sight of a male suppliant renders him furious. The first half hour he walks about, surrounded by his fair cortege, and is tolerably civil; but at length, fatigued, I suppose by continual importunity, he loses his temper, departs, and throws all the petitions he has received unopened into the fire.

Adieu—the subject is too humiliating to dwell on. I feel for myself, I feel for human nature, when I see the fastidiousness of wealth, the more liberal pride of birth, and the yet more allowable pretensions of beauty, degraded into the most abject submission to such a being as Dumont. Are our principles every where the mere children of circumstance, or is it in this country only that nothing is stable? For my own part I love inflexibility of character; and pride, even when ill founded, seems more respectable while it sustains itself, than concessions which, refused to the suggestions of reason, are yielded to the dictates of fear.—Yours.

February 12, 1794.

I was too much occupied by my personal distresses to make any remarks on the revolutionary government at the time of its adoption. The text of this political phenomenon must be well known in England—I shall, therefore, confine myself to giving you a general idea of its spirit and tendency,—It is, compared to regular government, what force is to mechanism, or the usual and peaceful operations of nature to the ravages of a storm—it substitutes violence for conciliation, and sweeps with precipitate fury all that opposes its devastating progress. It refers every thing to a single principle, which is in itself not susceptible of definition, and, like all undefined power, is continually vibrating between despotism and anarchy. It is the execrable shape of Milton's Death, "which shape hath none," and which can be described only by its effects.—For instance, the revolutionary tribunal condemns without evidence, the revolutionary committees imprison without a charge, and whatever assumes the title of revolutionary is exonerated from all subjection to humanity, decency, reason, or justice.—Drowning the insurgents, their wives and children, by boatloads, is called, in the dispatch to the Convention, a revolutionary measure—*



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* The detail of the horrors committed in La Vendee and at Nantes were not at this time fully known. Carrier had, however, acknowledged, in a report read to the Convention, that a boat-load of refractory priests had been drowned, and children of twelve years old condemned by a military commission! One Fabre Marat, a republican General, wrote, about the same period, I think from Angers, that the Guillotine was too slow, and powder scarce, so that it was concluded more expedient to drown the rebels, which he calls a patriotic baptism!—The following is a copy of a letter addressed to the Mayor of Paris by a Commissary of the Government:

“You will give us pleasure by transmitting the details of your fete at Paris last decade, with the hymns that were sung. Here we all cried *“Vive la Republique!”* as we ever do, when our holy mother Guillotine is at work. Within these three days she has shaved eleven priests, one *ci-devant* noble, a nun, a general, and a superb Englishman, six feet high, and as he was too tall by a head, we have put that into the sack! At the same time eight hundred rebels were shot at the Pont du Ce, and their carcasses thrown into the Loire!—I understand the army is on the track of the runaways. All we overtake we shoot on the spot, and in such numbers that the ways are heaped with them!”

—At Lyons, it is revolutionary to chain three hundred victims together before the mouths of loaded cannon, and massacre those who escape the discharge with clubs and bayonets;* and at Paris, revolutionary juries guillotine all who come before them.—**

* The Convention formally voted their approbation of this measure, and Collot d’Herbois, in a report on the subject, makes a kind of apostrophical panegyric on the humanity of his colleagues. “Which of you, Citizens, (says he,) would not have fired the cannon? Which of you would not joyfully have destroyed all these traitors at a blow?”

** About this time a woman who sold newspapers, and the printer of them, were guillotined for paragraphs deemed incivique.

—Yet this government is not more terrible than it is minutely vexations. One’s property is as little secure as one’s existence. Revolutionary committees every where sequestrate in the gross, in order to plunder in detail.*

* The revolutionary committees, when they arrested any one, pretended to affix seals in form. The seal was often, however, no other than the private one of some individual employed—sometimes only a button or a halfpenny, which was broken as often as the Committee wanted access to the wine or other effects. Camille Desmoulins, in an address to Freron, his fellow-deputy, describes with some humour the mode of proceeding of these revolutionary pilferers:

“Avant hier, deux Commissaires de la section de Mutius Scaevola, montent chez lui—ils trouvent



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dans la bibliotheque des livres de droit; et non-obstant le decret qui porte qu'on ne touchera point Domat ni a Charles Dumoulin, bien qu'ils traitent de matieres feodales, ils sont main basse sur la moitie de la bibliotheque, et chargent deux Chrocheteurs des livres paternels. Ils trouvent une pendule, don't la pointe de Paiguille etoit, comme la plupart des pointes d'aiguilles, terminee en trefle: il leur semble que cette pointe a quelque chose d'approchant d'une fleur de lys; et non-obstant le decret qui ordonne de respecter les monumens des arts, il confisquent la pendule.—Notez bien qu'il y avoit a cote une malle sur laquelle etoit l'adresse fleurdelisee du marchand.—Ici il n'y avoit pas moyen de aier que ce fut une belle et bonne fleur de lys; mais comme la malle ne valoit pas un corset, les Commissaires se contentent de rayer les lys, au lieu que la malheureuse pendule, qui vaut bien 1200 livres, est, malgre son trefle, emportee par eux-memes, qui ne se fioient pas aux Chrocheteurs d'un poid si precieux—et ce, en vertu du droit que Barrere a appelle si heureusement le droit de prehension, quoique le decret s'opposat, dans l'espece, a l'application de ce droit.—Enfin, notre decemvirat sectionnaire, qui se mettoit ainsi au-dessus des decrets, trouve le brevet de pension de mon beau-pere, qui, comme tous les brevets de pension, n'etant pas de nature a etre porte sur le grand livre de la republique, etoit demeure dans le porte-feuille, et qui, comme tous les brevets de pension possibles, commençoit par ce protocole; Louis, &c. Ciel! s'ecrient les Commissaires, le nom du tyran!—Et apres avoir retrouve leur haleine, suffoquee d'abord par l'indignation, ils mettent en poche le brevet de pension, c'est a dire 1000 livres de rente, et emportent la marmite. Autre crime, le Citoyen Duplessis, qui etoit premier commis des finances, sous Clugny, avoit conserve, comme c'etait l'usage, la cachet du controle general d'alors—un vieux porte-feuille de commis, qui etoit au rebut, oublie au dessus d'une armoire, dans un tas de poussiere, et auquel il n'avoit pas touche ne meme pense depuis dix ans peutetre, et sur le quel on parvint a decouvrir l'empreinte de quelques fleurs de lys, sous deux doigts de crasse, acheva de completer la preuve que le Citoyen Duplessis etoit suspect—et la voila, lui, enferme jusqu'a la paix, et le scelle mis sur toutes les portes de cette campagne, ou, tu te souviens, mon cher Freroa—que, decretes tous deux de prise de corps, apres le massacre du Champ de Mars, nous trouvions un asyle que le tyran n'osoit violer."

"The day before yesterday, two Commissaries belonging to the section of Mutius Scaevola, entered my father-in-law's apartments; they found some law-books in the library, and, notwithstanding the decree which exempts from seizure the works of Domat and Charles Dumouin, (although they treat of feudal matters,) they proceeded to lay violent hands on one half of the collection, and loaded two porters with

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paternal spoils. The next object that attracted their attention was a clock, the hand of which, like the hands of most other clocks, terminated in a point, in the form of a trefoil, which seemed to them to bear some resemblance to a fleur de lys; and, notwithstanding the decree which ordains that the monuments of the arts shall be respected, they immediately passed sentence of confiscation on the clock. I should observe to you, that hard by lay a portmanteau, having on it the maker's address, encircled with lilies.— Here there was no disputing the fact, but as the trunk was not worth five livres, the Commissaries contented themselves with erasing the lilies; but the unfortunate clock, being worth twelve hundred, was, notwithstanding its trefoil, carried off by themselves, for they would not trust the porters with so precious a load.—And all this was done in virtue of the law, which Barrere aptly denominated the law of prehension, and which, according to the terms of the decree itself, was not applicable to the case in question.

“At length our sectionary decemvirs, who thus placed themselves above the law, discovered the grant of my father-in-law's pension, which, like all similar grants, being excluded from the privilege of inscription on the great register of public debts, had been left in his port-folio; and which began, as all such grants necessarily must, with the words, Louis, &c. “Heaven!” exclaimed the Commissaries, “here is the very name of the tyrant!” And, as soon as they recovered their breaths, which had been nearly stopped by the violence of the indignation, they coolly pocketed the grant, that is to say, an annuity of one thousand livres, and sent off the porridge-pot. Nor did these constitute all the crimes of Citizen Duplessis, who, having served as first clerk of the revenue board under Clugny, had, as was usual, kept the official seal of that day. An old port-folio, which had been thrown aside, and long forgotten, under a wardrobe, where it was buried in dust, and had, in all probability, not been touched for ten years, but, which with much difficulty, was discovered to bear the impression of a fleur de lys, completed the proof that Citizen Duplessis was a suspicious character. And now behold him shut up in a prison until peace shall be concluded, and the seals put upon all the doors of that country seat, where, you may remember, my dear Freron, that at the time when warrants were issued for apprehending us both, after the massacre in the Champ de Mars, we found an asylum which the tyrant did not dare to violate.”

—In a word, you must generally understand, that the revolutionary system supersedes law, religion, and morality; and that it invests the Committees of Public Welfare and General Safety, their agents, the Jacobin clubs, and subsidiary banditti, with the disposal of the whole country and its inhabitants.



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This gloomy aera of the revolution has its frivolities as well as the less disastrous periods, and the barbarism of the moment is rendered additionally disgusting by a mixture of levity and pedantry.—It is a fashion for people at present to abandon their baptismal and family names, and to assume that of some Greek or Roman, which the debates of the Convention have made familiar.—France swarms with Gracchus's and Publicolas, who by imaginary assimilations of acts, which a change of manners has rendered different, fancy themselves more than equal to their prototypes.*

* The vicissitudes of the revolution, and the vengeance of party, have brought half the sages of Greece, and patriots of Rome, to the Guillotine or the pillory. The Newgate Calendar of Paris contains as many illustrious names as the index to Plutarch's Lives; and I believe there are now many Brutus's and Gracchus's in durance vile, besides a Mutius Scaevola condemned to twenty years imprisonment for an unskilful theft.—A man of Amiens, whose name is Le Roy, signified to the public, through the channel of a newspaper, that he had adopted that of Republic.

—A man who solicits to be the executioner of his own brother ycleps himself Brutus, and a zealous preacher of the right of universal pillage cites the Agrarian law, and signs himself Lycurgus. Some of the Deputies have discovered, that the French mode of dressing is not characteristic of republicanism, and a project is now in agitation to drill the whole country into the use of a Roman costume.—You may perhaps suspect, that the Romans had at least more bodily sedateness than their imitators, and that the shrugs, jerks, and carracoles of a French petit maitre, however republicanized, will not assort with the grave drapery of the toga. But on your side of the water you have a habit of reasoning and deliberating —here they have that of talking and obeying.

Our whole community are in despair to-day. Dumont has been here, and those who accosted him, as well as those who only ventured to interpret his looks, all agree in their reports that he is in a "bad humour."—The brightest eyes in France have supplicated in vain—not one grace of any sort has been accorded—and we begin to cherish even our present situation, in the apprehension that it may become worse.—Alas! you know not of what evil portent is the "bad humour" of a Representant. We are half of us now, like the Persian Lord, feeling if our heads are still on our shoulders.—I could add much to the conclusion of one of my last letters. Surely this incessant solicitude for mere existence debilitates the mind, and impairs even its passive faculty of suffering. We intrigue for the favour of the keeper, smile complacently at the gross pleasantries of a Jacobin, and tremble at the frown of a Dumont.—I am ashamed to be the chronicler of such humiliation: but, "tush, Hal; men, mortal men!" I can add no better apology, and quit you to moralize on it.—Yours.



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[No date given.]

Were I a mere spectator, without fear for myself or compassion for others, the situation of this country would be sufficiently amusing. The effects produced (many perhaps unavoidably) by a state of revolution—the strange remedies devised to obviate them—the alternate neglect and severity with which the laws are executed—the mixture of want and profusion that distinguish the lower classes of people—and the distress and humiliation of the higher; all offer scenes so new and unaccountable, as not to be imagined by a person who has lived only under a regular government, where the limits of authority are defined, the necessaries of life plentiful, and the people rational and subordinate. The consequences of a general spirit of monopoly, which I formerly described, have lately been so oppressive, that the Convention thought it necessary to interfere, and in so extraordinary a way, that I doubt if (as usual) “the distemper of their remedies” will not make us regret the original disease. Almost every article, by having passed through a variety of hands, had become enormously dear; which, operating with a real scarcity of many things, occasioned by the war, had excited universal murmurings and inquietude. The Convention, who know the real source of the evil (the discredit of assignats) to be unattainable, and who are more solicitous to divert the clamours of the people, than to supply their wants, have adopted a measure which, according to the present appearances, will ruin one half of the nation, and starve the other. A maximum, or highest price, beyond which nothing is to be sold, is now promulgated under very severe penalties for all who shall infringe it. Such a regulation as this, must, in its nature, be highly complex, and, by way of simplifying it, the price of every kind of merchandise is fixed at a third above what it bore in 1791: but as no distinction is made between the produce of the country, and articles imported—between the small retailer, who has purchased perhaps at double the rate he is allowed to sell at, and the wholesale speculator, this very simplification renders the whole absurd and inexecutable.—The result was such as might have been expected; previous to the day on which the decree was to take place, shopkeepers secreted as many of their goods as they could; and, when the day arrived, the people laid siege to them in crowds, some buying at the maximum, others less ceremonious, and in a few hours little remained in the shop beyond the fixtures. The farmers have since brought neither butter nor eggs to market, the butchers refuse to kill as usual, and, in short, nothing is to be purchased openly. The country people, instead of selling provisions publicly, take them to private houses; and, in addition to the former exorbitant prices, we are taxed for the risk that is incurred by evading the law. A dozen of eggs, or a leg of mutton, are now conveyed from house to house with as much mystery, as a case of fire-arms, or a treasonable correspondence; the whole republic is in a sort of training like the Spartan youth; and we are obliged to have recourse to dexterity and intrigue to procure us a dinner.



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Our legislators, aware of what they term the “aristocratie marchande,”— that is to say, that tradesmen would naturally shut up their shops when nothing was to be gained— provided, by a clause in the above law, that no one should do this in less time than a year; but as the injunction only obliged them to keep the shops open, and not to have goods to sell, every demand is at first always answered in the negative, till a sort of intelligence becomes established betwixt the buyer and seller, when the former, if he may be trusted, is informed in a low key, that certain articles may be had, but not au maximum.—Thus even the rich cannot obtain the necessaries of life without difficulty and submitting to imposition—and the decent poor, who will not pillage nor intimidate the tradesmen, are more embarrassed than ever.

The above species of contraband commerce is carried on, indeed, with great circumspection, and no avowed hostilities are attempted in the towns. The great war of the maximum was waged with the farmers and higlers, as soon as it was discovered that they took their commodities privily to such people as they knew would buy at any price, rather than not be supplied. In consequence, the guards were ordered to stop all refractory butter-women at the gates, and conduct them to the town-house, where their merchandize was distributed, without pity or appeal, au maximum, to those of the populace who could clamour loudest.

These proceedings alarmed the peasants, and our markets became deserted. New stratagems, on one side, new attacks on the other. The servants were forced to supply themselves at private rendezvous in the night, until some were fined, and others arrested; and the searching all comers from the country became more intolerable than the vexations of the ancient Gabelle.—Detachments of dragoons are sent to scour the farm-yards, arrest the farmers, and bring off in triumph whatever the restive housewives have amassed, to be more profitably disposed of.

In this situation we remain, and I suppose shall remain, while the law of the maximum continues in force. The principle of it was certainly good, but it is found impossible to reduce it to practice so equitably as to affect all alike: and as laws which are not executed are for the most part rather pernicious than nugatory, informations, arrests, imposition, and scarcity are the only ends which this measure seems to have answered.

The houses of detention, before insupportable, are now yet more crouded with farmers and shopkeepers suspected of opposing the law.—Many of the former are so ignorant, as not to conceive that any circumstances ought to deprive them of the right to sell the produce of their farms at the highest price they can get, and regard the maximum much in the same light as they would a law to authorize robbing or housebreaking: as for the latter, they are chiefly small dealers, who bought dearer than they have sold,



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and are now imprisoned for not selling articles which they have not got. An informer by trade, or a personal enemy, lodges an accusation against a particular tradesman for concealing goods, or not selling au maximum; and whether the accusation be true or false, if the accused is not in office, or a Jacobin, he has very little chance of escaping imprisonment.—It is certain, that if the persecution of these classes of people continue, and commerce (already nearly annihilated by the war) be thus shackled, an absolute want of various articles of primary consumption must ensue; but if Paris and the armies can be supplied, the starving the departments will be a mere pleasurable experiment to their humane representatives!

March 1, 1794.

The freedom of the press is so perfectly well regulated, that it is not surprizing we are indulged with the permission of seeing the public papers: yet this indulgence is often, I assure you, a source of much perplexity to me—our more intimate associates know that I am a native of England, and as often as any debates of our House of Commons are published, they apply to me for explanations which it is not always in my power to give them. I have in vain endeavoured to make them comprehend the nature of an opposition from system, so that when they see any thing advanced by a member exactly the reverse of truth, they are wondering how he can be so ill informed, and never suspect him of saying what he does not believe himself. It must be confessed, however, that our extracts from the English papers often form so complete a contrast with facts, that a foreigner unacquainted with the tactics of professional patriotism, may very naturally read them with some surprize. A noble Peer, for example, (whose wisdom is not to be disputed, since the Abbe Mably calls him the English Socrates,*) asserts that the French troops are the best clothed in Europe; yet letters, of nearly the same date with the Earl's speech, from two Generals and a Deputy at the head of different armies intreat a supply of covering for their denudated legions, and add, that they are obliged to march in wooden shoes!**

* It is surely a reflection on the English discernment not to have adopted this happy appellation, in which, however, as well as in many other parts of "the rights of Man and the Citizen," the Abbe seems to have consulted his own zeal, rather than the noble Peer's modesty.** If the French troops are now better clothed, it is the effect of requisitions and pre-emptions, which have ruined the manufacturers. —Patriots of the North, would you wish to see our soldiers clothed by the same means?

—On another occasion, your British Sage describes, with great eloquence, the enthusiasm with which the youth of France "start to arms at the call of the Convention;" while the peaceful citizen anticipates, with equal eagerness, the less glorious injunction to extract saltpetre.—The



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revolts, and the coercion, necessary to enforce the departure of the first levies (however fear, shame, and discipline, may have since made them soldiers, though not republicans) might have corrected the ardour of the orator's inventive talents; and the zeal of the French in manufacturing saltpetre, has been of so slow a growth, that any reference to it is peculiarly unlucky. For several months the Convention has recommended, invited, intreated, and ordered the whole country to occupy themselves in the process necessary for obtaining nitre; but the republican enthusiasm was so tardy, that scarcely an ounce appeared, till a long list of sound penal laws, with fines and imprisonments in every line, roused the public spirit more effectually.*

* Two years imprisonment was the punishment assigned to a Citizen who should be found to obstruct in any way the fabricating saltpetre. If you had a house that was adjudged to contain the materials required, and expostulated against pulling it down, the penalty was incurred.—I believe something of this kind existed under the old government, the abuses of which are the only parts the republic seems to have preserved.

—Another cause also has much favoured the extension of this manufacture: the necessity of procuring gunpowder at any rate has secured an exemption from serving in the army to those who shall be employed in making it.—*

* Many, under this pretext, even procured their discharge from the army; and it was eventually found requisite to stop this commutation of service by a decree.

—On this account vast numbers of young men, whose martial propensities are not too vehement for calculation, considering the extraction of saltpetre as more safe than the use of it, have seriously devoted themselves to the business. Thus, between fear of the Convention and of the enemy, has been produced that enthusiasm which seems so grateful to Lord S _____. Yet, if the French are struck by the dissimilitude of facts with the language of your English patriots, there are other circumstances which appear still more unaccountable to them. I acknowledge the word patriotism is not perfectly understood any where in France, nor do my prison-associates abound in it; but still they find it difficult to reconcile the love of their country, so exclusively boasted by certain senators, with their eulogiums on a government, and on men who avow an implacable hatred to it, and are the professed agents of its future destruction. The Houses of Lords and Commons resound with panegyrics on France; the Convention with "*delenda est Carthate*"—"ces vils Insulaires"—*de peuple marchand, boutiquier*"—"ces laches Anglois"—&c. &c. ("Carthage must be destroyed"—"those vile Islanders"—"that nation of shopkeepers"—"those cowardly Englishmen"—&c.)

The efforts of the English patriots overtly tend to the consolidation of the French republic, while the demagogues of France are yet more strenuous for the abolition of monarchy in England. The virtues of certain people called Muir and Palmer,* are at



once the theme of Mr. Fox and Robespierre,** of Mr. Grey and Barrere,***, of Collot d'Herbois**** and Mr. Sheridan; and their fate is lamented as much at the Jacobins as at St. Stephen's.*****



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* If I have not mentioned these gentlemen with the respect due to their celebrity, their friends must pardon me. To say truth, I did not at this time think of them with much complacency, as I had heard of them only from the Jacobins, by whom they were represented as the leaders of a Convention, which was to arm ninety thousand men, for the establishment of a system similar to that existing in France.**The French were so much misled by the eloquence of these gentlemen in their favour, that they were all exhibited on the stage in red caps and cropped heads, welcoming the arrival of their Gallic friends in England, and triumphing in the overthrow of the British constitution, and the dethronement of the King.*** If we may credit the assertions of Barrere, the friendship of the Committee of Public Welfare was not merely verbal. He says, the secret register of the Committee furnishes proofs of their having sent three frigates to intercept these distinguished victims, whom their ungrateful country had so ignominiously banished.**** This humane and ingenious gentleman, by profession a player, is known likewise as the author of several farces and vaudevilles, and of the executions at Lyons.—It is asserted, that many of the inhabitants of this unfortunate city expiated under the Guillotine the crime of having formerly hissed Collot's successful attempts on the stage.***** The printing of a particular speech was interdicted on account of its containing allusions to certain circumstances, the knowledge of which might be of disservice to their unfortunate friends during their trial.

—The conduct of Mr. Pitt is not more acrimoniously discussed at the Palais National than by a part of his colleagues; and the censure of the British government, which is now the order of the day at the Jacobins, is nearly the echo of your parliamentary debates.*

* Allowing for the difference of education in the orators, a journeyman shoemaker was, I think, as eloquent, and not more abusive, than the facetious *ci-devant* protege of Lord T____d.

—All this, however, does not appear to me out of the natural order of things; it is the sorry history of opposition for a century and an half, and our political rectitude, I fear, is not increasing: but the French, who are in their way the most corrupt people in Europe, have not hitherto, from the nature of their government, been familiar with this particular mode of provoking corruption, nor are they at present likely to become so. Indeed, I must here observe, that your English Jacobins, if they are wise, should not attempt to introduce the revolutionary system; for though the total possession of such a government is very alluring, yet the prudence, which looks to futurity, and the incertitude of sublunary events, must acknowledge it is “Caesar or nothing;”



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and that it offers no resource in case of those segregations, which the jealousy of power, or the appropriation of spoil, may occasion, even amongst the most virtuous associates.—The eloquence of a discontented orator is here silenced, not by a pension, but by a mandat d'arret; and the obstinate patriotism, which with you could not be softened with less than a participation of authority, is more cheaply secured by the Guillotine. A menace is more efficacious than a bribe, and in this respect I agree with Mr. Thomas Paine,* that a republic is undoubtedly more economical than a monarchy; besides, that being conducted on such principles, it has the advantage of simplifying the science of government, as it consults neither the interests nor weaknesses of mankind; and, disdaining to administer either to avarice or vanity, subdues its enemies by the sole influence of terror.—*

* This gentleman's fate is truly to be pitied. After rejecting, as his friends assert, two hundred a year from the English Ministry, he is obliged now to be silent gratis, with the additional desagrément of occupying a corner in the Luxembourg.

—Adieu!—Heaven knows how often I may have to repeat the word thus unmeaningly. I sit here, like Pope's bard "lulled by soft zephyrs through the broken pane," and scribbling high-sounding phrases of monarchy, patriotism, and republics, while I forget the humbler subject of our wants and embarrassments. We can scarcely procure either bread, meat, or any thing else: the house is crowded by an importation of prisoners from Abbeville, and we are more strictly guarded than ever. My friend ennuyes as usual, and I grow impatient, not having sang froid enough for a true French ennue in a situation that would tempt one to hang one's self.

March, 1794.

The aspect of the times promises no change in our favour; on the contrary, every day seems to bring its attendant evil. The gentry who had escaped the comprehensive decree against suspected people, are now swept away in this and the three neighbouring departments by a private order of the representatives, St. Just, Lebas, and Dumont.*

* The order was to arrest, without exception, all the ci-devant Noblesse, men, women, and children, in the departments of the Somme, North, and Pas de Calais, and to exclude them rigorously from all external communication—(mettre au secret).

—A severer regimen is to be adopted in the prisons, and husbands are already separated from their wives, and fathers from their daughters, for the purpose, as it is alledged, of preserving good morals. Both this place and the Bicetre being too full to admit of more inhabitants, two large buildings in the town are now appropriated to the male prisoners.— My friends continue at Arras, and, I fear, in extreme distress. I understand they have been plundered of what things they had with them, and the little supply I was able to send them was intercepted by some of the harpies of the prisons.



Mrs. D____'s health has not been able to sustain these accumulated misfortunes, and she is at present at the hospital. All this is far from enlivening, even had I a larger share of the national philosophy; and did I not oftener make what I observe, than what I suffer, the subject of my letters, I should tax your patience as much by repetition, as I may by dullness.



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When I enumerated in my last letters a few of the obligations the French have to their friends in England, I ought also to have observed, with how little gratitude they behave to those who are here. Without mentioning Mr. Thomas Paine, whose persecution will doubtless be recorded by abler pens, nothing, I assure you, can be more unpleasant than the situation of one of these Anglo-Gallican patriots. The republicans, supposing that an Englishman who affects a partiality for them can be only a spy, execute all the laws, which concern foreigners, upon him with additional rigour;* and when an English Jacobin arrives in prison, far from meeting with consolation or sympathy, his distresses are beheld with triumph, and his person avoided with abhorrence. They talk much here of a gentleman, of very democratic principles, who left the prison before I came. It seems, that, notwithstanding Dumont condescended to visit at his house, and was on terms of intimacy with him, he was arrested, and not distinguished from the rest of his countrymen, except by being more harshly treated. The case of this unfortunate gentleman was rendered peculiarly amusing to his companions, and mortifying to himself, by his having a very pretty mistress, who had sufficient influence over Dumont to obtain any thing but the liberation of her protector. The Deputy was on this head inflexible; doubtless, as a proof of his impartial observance of the laws, and to show that, like the just man in Horace, he despised the clamour of the vulgar, who did not scruple to hint, that the crime of our countryman was rather of a moral than a political nature—that he was unaccommodating, and recalcitrant—addicted to suspicions and jealousies, which it was thought charitable to cure him of, by a little wholesome seclusion. In fact, the summary of this gentleman's history is not calculated to tempt his fellow societists on your side of the water to imitate his example.—After taking refuge in France from the tyranny and disappointments he experienced in England, and purchasing a large national property to secure himself the rights of a citizen, he is awakened from his dream of freedom, to find himself lodged in a prison, his estate under sequestration, and his mistress in requisition.—Let us leave this Coriolanus among the Volscians—it is a persecution to make converts, rather than martyrs, and

*"Quand le malheur ne seroit bon, "Qu'a mettre un sot a la raison, "Toujours seroit-ce a juste cause "Qu'on le dit bon a quelque chose."**

* If calamity were only good to restore a fool to his senses, still we might justly say, "that it was good for some thing."

Yours, &c.

March 5, 1794.



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Of what strange influence is this word revolution, that it should thus, like a talisman of romance, keep chained, as it were, the reasoning faculties of twenty millions of people! France is at this moment looking for the decision of its fate in the quarrels of two miserable clubs, composed of individuals who are either despised or detested. The municipality of Paris favours the Cordeliers, the Convention the Jacobins; and it is easy to perceive, that in this cafe the auxiliaries are principals, and must shortly come to such an open rupture, as will end in the destruction of either one or the other. The world would be uninhabitable, could the combinations of the wicked be permanent; and it is fortunate for the tranquil and upright part of mankind, that the attainment of the purposes for which such combinations are formed, is usually the signal of their dissolution.

The municipality of Paris had been the iniquitous drudges of the Jacobin party in the legislative assembly—they were made the instruments of massacring the prisoners,* of dethroning and executing the king,** and successively of destroying the Brissotine faction,*** filling the prisons with all who were obnoxious to the republicans,**** and of involving a repentant nation in the irremediable guilt of the Queen's death.—*****

* It is well known that the assassins were hired and paid by the municipality, and that some of the members presided at these horrors in their scarfs of office.

** The whole of what is called the revolution of the 10th of August may very justly be ascribed to the municipality of Paris—I mean the active part of it. The planning and political part has been so often disputed by different members of the Convention, that it is not easy to decide on any thing, except that the very terms of these disputes fully evince, that the people at large, and more particularly the departments, were both innocent, and, until it took place, ignorant of an event which has plunged the country into so many crimes and calamities.*** A former imprisonment of Hebert formed a principal charge against the Brissotines, and, indeed, the one that was most insisted on at their trial, if we except that of having precipitated France into a war with England.—It must be difficult for the English Jacobins to decide on this occasion between the virtues of their dead friends and those of their living ones.

**** The famous definition of suspected persons originated with the municipality of Paris.

***** It is certain that those who, deceived by the calumnies of faction, permitted, if not assented to, the King's death, at this time regretted it; and I believe I have before observed, that one of the reasons urged in support of the expediency of putting the Queen to death, was, that it would make the army and people decisive, by banishing all hope of peace or accommodation.

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See the *Moniteur* of that time, which, as I have elsewhere observed, may be always considered as official.

—These services being too great for adequate reward, were not rewarded at all; and the municipality, tired of the odium of crime, without the participation of power, has seized on its portion of tyranny; while the convention, at once jealous and timid, exasperated and doubtful, yet menaces with the trepidation of a rival, rather than with the security of a conqueror.

Hebert, the Deputy-solicitor for the commune of Paris, appears on this occasion as the opponent of the whole legislature; and all the temporizing eloquence of Barrere, and the mysterious phraseology of Robespierre, are employed to decry his morals, and to reproach the ministers with the sums which have been the price of his labours.—*

* Five thousand pounds, two thousand pounds, and other considerable sums, were paid to Hebert for supplying the army with his paper, called “La Pere Duchene.” Let whoever has read one of them, conceive the nature of a government to which such support was necessary, which supposed its interests promoted by a total extinction of morals, decency, and religion. I could almost wish, for the sake of exhibiting vice under its most odious colours, that my sex and my country permitted me to quote one.

—Virtuous republicans! the morals of Hebert were pure when he outraged humanity in his accusations of the Queen—they were pure when he prostrated the stupid multitude at the feet of a Goddess of Reason;* they were pure while his execrable paper served to corrupt the army, and to eradicate every principle which yet distinguished the French as a civilized people.

* Madame Momoro, the unfortunate woman who exposed herself in this pageant, was guillotined as an accomplice of Hebert, together with the wives of Hebert and Camille Desmoulins.

—Yet, atrocious as his crimes are, they form half the Magna Charta of the republic,* and the authority of the Convention is still supported by them.

* What are the death of the King, and the murders of August and September, 1792, but the Magna Charta of the republicans?

—It is his person, not his guilt, that is proscribed; and if the one be threatened with the scaffold, the fruits of the other are held sacred. He will fall a sacrifice—not to offended religion or morality, but to the fears and resentment of his accomplices!

Amidst the dissensions of two parties, between which neither reason nor humanity can discover a preference, a third seems to have formed itself, equally inimical to, and hated



by both. At the head of it are Danton, Camille Desmoulins, Philipeaux, &c.—I own I have no better opinion of the integrity of these, than of the rest; but they profess themselves the advocates of a system of mildness and moderation, and, situated as this country is at present, even the affectation



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of virtue is captivating.— As far as they dare, the people are partial to them: bending beneath the weight of a sanguinary and turbulent despotism, if they sigh not for freedom, they do for repose; and the harassed mind, bereft of its own energy, looks up with indolent hope for relief from a change of factions. They forget that Danton is actuated by ambitious jealousy, that Camille Desmoulins is hacknied in the atrocities of the revolution, and that their partizans are adventurers, with neither honour nor morals. Yet, after all, if they will destroy a few of the guillotines, open our bastilles, and give us at least the security of servitude, we shall be content to leave these retrospections to posterity, and be thankful that in this our day the wicked sometimes perceive it their interest to do good.

In this state of seclusion, when I remark to you the temper of the public at any important crisis, you are, perhaps, curious to know my sources of intelligence; but such details are unnecessary. I might, indeed, write you a manuel des prisons, and, like Trenck or Latude, by a vain display of ingenuity, deprive some future victim of a resource. It is enough, that Providence itself seems to aid our invention, when its object is to elude tyranny; besides that a constant accession of prisoners from all parts, who are too numerous to be kept separate, necessarily circulates among us whatever passes in the world.

The Convention has lately made a sort of *pas retrogade* [Retrogade movement.] in the doctrine of holy equality, by decreeing, that every officer who has a command shall be able to read and write, though it cannot be denied that their reasons for this lese democratie are of some weight. All gentlemen, or, as it is expressed here, noblesse, have been recalled from the army, and replaced by officers chosen by the soldiers themselves, [Under the rank of field-officers.] whose affections are often conciliated by qualities not essentially military, though sometimes professional. A buffoon, or a pot-companion, is, of course, often more popular than a disciplinarian; and the brightest talents lose their influence when put in competition with a head that can bear a greater number of bottles.*

* Hence it happened, that a post was sometimes confided to one who could not read the parole and countersign; expeditions failed, because commanding officers mistook on the map a river for a road, or woods for mountains; and the most secret orders were betrayed through the inability of those to whom they were entrusted to read them.

—Yet this reading and writing are a sort of aristocratic distinctions, and not among the primeval rights of man; so that it is possible your English patriots will not approve of any regulations founded on them. But this is not the only point on which there is an apparent discordance between them and their friends here—the severity of Messrs. Muir and Palmer's sentence is pathetically lamented



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in the House of Commons, while the Tribunal Revolutionnaire (in obedience to private orders) is petitioning, that any disrespect towards the convention shall be punished with death. In England, it is asserted, that the people have a right to decide on the continuation of the war—here it is proposed to declare suspicious, and treat accordingly, all who shall dare talk of peace.—Mr. Fox and Robespierre must settle these trifling variations at the general congress of republicans, when the latter shall (as they profess) have dethroned all the potentates in Europe!

Do you not read of cart-loads of patriotic gifts,* bales of lint and bandages, and stockings, knit by the hands of fair citizens, for the use of the soldiers?

* A sum of money was at this time publicly offered to the Convention for defraying the expences and repairs of the guillotine.—I know not if it were intended patriotically or correctionally; but the legislative delicacy was hurt, and the bearer of the gift ordered for examination to the Committee of General Safety, who most probably sent him to expiate either his patriotism or his pleasantry in a prison.

—Do you not read, and call me calumniator, and ask if these are proofs that there is no public spirit in France? Yes, the public spirit of an eastern tributary, who offers, with apprehensive devotion, a part of the wealth which he fears the hand of despotism may ravish entirely.—The wives and daughters of husbands and fathers, who are pining in arbitrary confinement, are employed in these feeble efforts, to deprecate the malice of their persecutors; and these voluntary tributes are but too often proportioned, not to the abilities, but the miseries of the donor.*

* A lady, confined in one of the state prisons, made an offering, through the hands of a Deputy, of ten thousand livres; but the Convention observed, that this could not properly be deemed a gift— for, as she was doubtless a suspicious person, all she had belonged of right to the republic: "*Elle doit etre a moi, dit il, et la raison, "C'est que je m'appelle Lion "A cela l'on n'a rien a dire."* — La Fontaine. Sometimes these *dons patriotiques* were collected by a band of Jacobins, at others regularly assessed by a Representative on mission; but on all occasions the aristocrats were most assiduous and most liberal:

"Urg'd by th' imperious soldier's fierce command,
"The groaning Greeks break up their golden caverns,
"The accumulated wealth of toiling ages;

.....

"That wealth, too sacred for their country's use;
"That wealth, too pleasing to be lost for freedom,
"That wealth, which, granted to their weeping Prince,
"Had rang'd embattled nations at their gates."

— Johnson.



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Or, what is still better, have relieved the exigencies of the state, without offering a pretext for the horrors of a revolution.—O selfish luxury, impolitic avarice, how are ye punished? robbed of your enjoyments and your wealth—glad even to commute both for a painful existence!

—The most splendid sacrifices that fill the bulletin of the Convention, and claim an honourable mention in their registers, are made by the enemies of the republican government—by those who have already been the objects of persecution, or are fearful of becoming such.—Ah, your prison and guillotine are able financiers: they raise, feed, and clothe an army, in less time than you can procure a tardy vote from the most complaisant House of Commons!—Your, &c.

March 17, 1794.

After some days of agitation and suspense, we learn that the popularity of Robespierre is victorious, and that Hebert and his partizans are arrested. Were the intrinsic claims of either party considered, without regard to the circumstances of the moment, it might seem strange I should express myself as though the result of a contest between such men could excite a general interest: yet a people sadly skilled in the gradations of evil, and inured to a choice only of what is bad, learn to prefer comparatively, with no other view than that of adopting what may be least injurious to themselves; and the merit of the object is out of the question. Hence it is, that the public wish was in favour of Robespierre; for, besides that his cautious character has given him an advantage over the undisguised profligacy of Hebert, it is conjectured by many, that the more merciful politics professed by Camille Desmoulins, are secretly suggested, or, at least assented to, by the former.*

* This was the opinion of many.—The Convention and the Jacobins had taken alarm at a paper called “The Old Cordelier,” written by Camille Desmoulins, apparently with a view to introduce a milder system of government. The author had been censured at the one, expelled the other, and defended by Robespierre, who seems not to have abandoned him until he found the Convention resolved to persist in the sanguinary plan they had adopted. Robespierre afterwards sacrificed his friends to retrieve his influence; but could his views have been answered by humane measures, as certainly as by cruel ones, I think he would have preferred the first; for I repeat, that the Convention at large were averse from any thing like reason or justice, and Robespierre more than once risked his popularity by professions of moderation.—The most eloquent speech I have seen of his was previous to the death of Danton, and it seems evidently intended to sound the principles of his colleagues as to a change of system.—Camille Desmoulins has excited some interest, and has been deemed a kind of martyr to humanity. Perhaps nothing marks the horrors of the time more than such a partiality.—Camille

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Desmoulins, under an appearance of simplicity, was an adventurer, whose pen had been employed to mislead the people from the beginning of the revolution. He had been very active on the 10th of August; and even in the papers which have given him a comparative reputation, he is the panegyrist of Marat, and recommends “une Guillotine economique;” that is, a discrimination in favour of himself and his party, who now began to fear they might themselves be sacrificed by the Convention and deserted by Robespierre—after being the accomplices and tools of both.

The vicissitudes of the revolution have hitherto offered nothing but a change of vices and of parties; nor can I regard this defeat of the municipality of Paris as any thing more: the event is, however, important, and will probably have great influence on the future.

After having so long authorized, and profited by, the crimes of those they have now sacrificed, the Convention are willing to have it supposed they were themselves held in subjection by Hebert and the other representatives of the Parisian mob.—Admitting this to be true, having regained their independence, we ought naturally to expect a more rational and humane system will take place; but this is a mere hope, and the present occurrences are far from justifying it. We hear much of the guilt of the fallen party, and little of remedying its effects—much of punishment, and little of reform; and the people are excited to vengeance, without being permitted to claim redress. In the meanwhile, fearful of trusting to the cold preference which they owe to a superior abhorrence of their adversaries, the Convention have ordered their colleagues on mission to glean the few arms still remaining in the hands of the National Guard, and to arrest all who may be suspected of connection with the adverse party.—Dumont has performed this service here very diligently; and, by way of supererogation, has sent the Commandant of Amiens to the Bicetre, his wife, who was ill, to the hospital, and two young children to this place.

As usual, these proceedings excite secret murmurs, but are nevertheless yielded to with perfect submission.

One can never, on these occasions, cease admiring the endurance of the French character. In other countries, at every change of party, the people are flattered with the prospect of advantage, or conciliated by indulgences; but here they gain nothing by change, except an accumulation of oppression—and the success of a new party is always the harbinger of some new tyranny. While the fall of Hebert is proclaimed as the triumph of freedom, all the citizens are disarmed by way of collateral security; and at the instant he is accused by the Convention of atheism and immorality,* a militant police is sent forth to devastate the churches, and punish those who are detected in observing the Sabbath—“*mais plutot souffrir que mourir, c’est la devise des Francois.*” [“To suffer rather than die is the motto of Frenchmen.”]



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* It is remarkable, that the persecution of religion was never more violent than at the time when the Convention were anathematizing Hebert and his party for athiesm.

—Brissot and his companions died singing a paraphrase of my quotation:

*"Plutot la mort que l'esclavage,
"C'est la devise des Francois."*

["Death before slavery, is the Frenchman's motto."]

—Let those who reflect on what France has submitted to under them and their successors decide, whether the original be not more apposite.

I hope the act of accusation against Chabot has been published in England, for the benefit of your English patriots: I do not mean by way of warning, but example. It appears, that the said Chabot, and four or five of his colleagues in the Convention, had been bribed to serve a stock-jobbing business at a stipulated sum,* and that the money was to be divided amongst them.

* Chabot, Fabre d'Eglantine, (author of "l'Intrigue Epistolaire," and several other admired dramatic pieces,) Delaunay d'Angers, Julien de Toulouse, and Bazire, were bribed to procure the passing certain decrees, tending to enrich particular people, by defrauding the East India Company.—Delaunay and Julien (both re-elected into the present Assembly) escaped by flight, the rest were guillotined. —It is probable, that these little peculations might have passed unnoticed in patriots of such note, but that the intrigues and popular character of Chabot made it necessary to dispose of him, and his accomplices suffered to give a countenance to the measure.

—Chabot, with great reason, insisted on his claim to an extra share, on account, as he expressed it, of having the reputation of one of the first patriots in Europe. Now this I look upon to be a very useful hint, as it tends to establish a tariff of reputations, rather than of talents. In England, you distinguish too much in favour of the latter; and, in a question of purchase, a Minister often prefers a "commodity" of rhetoricians, to one of "good names."—I confess, I am of Chabot's opinion; and think a vote from a member who has some reputation for honesty, ought to be better paid for than the eloquence which, weakened by the vices of the orator, ceases to persuade. How it is that the patriotic harangues at St. Stephen's serve only to amuse the auditors, who identify the sentiments they express as little with the speaker, as they would those of Cato's soliloquy with the actor who personates the character for the night? I fear the people reason like Chabot, and are "fools to fame." Perhaps it is fortunate for England, that those whose talents and principles would make them most dangerous, are become least so, because both are counteracted by the public contempt. Ought it not to humble the pride, and correct the errors, which too often accompany great genius, that the meanest capacity can distinguish between talents and virtue; and that even in the

moment our wonder is excited by the one, a sort of intrinsic preference is given to the other?—Yours, &c.



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Providence, April 15, 1794.

“The friendship of bad men turns to fear:” and in this single phrase of our popular bard is comprized the history of all the parties who have succeeded each other during the revolution.—Danton has been sacrificed to Robespierre’s jealousy,* and Camille Desmoulins to support his popularity;** and both, after sharing in the crimes, and contributing to the punishment, of Hebert and his associates, have followed them to the same scaffold.

* The ferocious courage of Danton had, on the 10th of August, the 2d of September, the 31st of May, and other occasions, been the ductile instrument of Robespierre; but, in the course of their iniquitous connection, it should seem, they had committed themselves too much to each other. Danton had betrayed a desire of more exclusively profiting by his crimes; and Robespierre’s views been equally ambitious, though less daring, their mutual jealousies had risen to a height which rendered the sacrifice of one party necessary—and Robespierre had the address to secure himself, by striking the first blow. They had supped in the country, and returned together to Paris, on the night Danton was arrested; and, it may be supposed, that in this interview, which was intended to produce a reconciliation, they had been convinced that neither was to be trusted by the other.** There can be no doubt but Robespierre had encouraged Camille Desmoulins to publish his paper, intitled “The Old Cordelier,” in which some translations from Tacitus, descriptive of every kind of tyranny, were applied to the times, and a change of system indirectly proposed. The publication became highly popular, except with the Convention and the Jacobins; these, however, it was requisite for Robespierre to conciliate; and Camille Desmoulins was sacrificed, to prove that he did not favour the obnoxious moderation of his friend.

I know not if one’s heart gain any thing by this habitual contemplation of successive victims, who ought not to inspire pity, and whom justice and humanity forbid one to regret.—How many parties have fallen, who seem to have laboured only to transmit a dear-bought tyranny, which they had not time to enjoy themselves, to their successors: The French revolutionists may, indeed, adopt the motto of Virgil’s Bees, “Not for ourselves, but for you.” The monstrous powers claimed for the Convention by the Brissotines,* with the hope of exclusively exercising them, were fatal to themselves—the party that overthrew the Brissotines in its turn became insignificant—and a small number of them only, under the description of Committees of Public Welfare and General Safety, gradually usurped the whole authority.



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* The victorious Brissotines, after the 10th of August, availing themselves of the stupor of one part of the people, and the fanaticism of the other, required that the new Convention might be entrusted with unlimited powers. Not a thousandth portion of those who elected the members, perhaps, comprehended the dreadful extent of such a demand, as absurd as it has proved fatal.—*"Tout pouvoir sans bornes ne fauroit etre legitime, parce qu'il n'a jamais pu avoir d'origine legitime, car nous ne pouvons pas donner a un autre plus de pouvoir sur nous que nous n'en avons nous-memes"* [Montesquieu.]:—that is, the power which we accord to others, or which we have over ourselves, cannot exceed the bounds prescribed by the immutable laws of truth and justice. The united voice of the whole French nation could not bestow on their representatives a right to murder or oppress one innocent man.

—Even of these, several have already perished; and in the hands of Robespierre, and half a dozen others of equal talents and equal atrocity, but less cunning, center at present all the fruits of so many miseries, and so many crimes.

In all these conflicts of party, the victory seems hitherto to have remained with the most artful, rather than the most able; and it is under the former title that Robespierre, and his colleagues in the Committee of Public Welfare, are now left inheritors of a power more despotic than that exercised in Japan.—Robespierre is certainly not deficient in abilities, but they are not great in proportion to the influence they have acquired him. They may, perhaps, be more properly called singular than great, and consist in the art of appropriating to his own advantage both the events of chance and the labours of others, and of captivating the people by an exterior of severe virtue, which a cold heart enables him to assume, and which a profligacy, not the effect of strong passions, but of system, is easily subjected to. He is not eloquent, nor are his speeches, as compositions,* equal to those of Collot d'Herbais, Barrere, or Billaud Varennes; but, by contriving to reserve himself for extraordinary occasions, such as announcing plots, victories, and systems of government, he is heard with an interest which finally becomes transferred from his subject to himself.**

* The most celebrated members of the Convention are only readers of speeches, composed with great labour, either by themselves or others; and I think it is distinguishable, that many are manufactured by the same hand. The style and spirit of Lindet, Barrere, and Carnot, seem to be in common.** The following passages, from a speech of Dubois Crance, who may be supposed a competent judge, at once furnish an idea of Robespierre's oratory, exhibit a leading feature in his character, and expose some of the arts by which the revolutionary despotism was maintained: *"Rapportant tout a lui seul, jusqu'a*



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la patrie, il n'en parla jamais que pour s'en designer comme l'unique defenseur: otez de ses longs discours tout ce qui n'a rapport qu'a son personnel, vous n'y trouverez plus que de seches applications de prinipes connus, et surtout de phrases preparees pour amener encore son eloge. Vous l'avez juge timide, parce que son imagination, que l'on croyait ardente, qui n'etait que feroce, parassait exagerer souvent les maux de son pays. C'etait une jonglerie: il ne croyait ni aux conspirations don't il faisait tant d'etalage, ni aux poignards aux-quels il feignoit de sse devouer; mais il vouloit que les citoyens fussent constamment en defiance l'un de l'autre," &c. "Affecting to consider all things, even the fate of the country, as depending on himself alone, he never spoke of it but with a view to point himself out its principal defender.—If you take away from his long harangues all that regards him personally, you will find only dry applications of familiar principles, and, above all, those studied turns, which were artfully prepared to introduce his own eternal panegyric.—You supposed him timid because his imagination (which was not merely ardent, as was supposed, but ferocious) seemed often to exaggerate the misfortunes of his country.—This was a mere trick: he believed neither in the conspiracies he made so great a parade of, nor in the poignards to which he pretended to devote himself as a victim.—His real design was to infuse into the minds of all men an unceasing diffidence of each other."

One cannot study the characters of these men, and the revolution, without wonder; and, after an hour of such scribbling, I wake to the scene around me, and my wonder is not a little increased, at the idea that the fate of such an individual as myself should be at all dependent on either.—My friend Mad. de _____ is ill,* and taken to the hospital, so that having no longer the care of dissipating her ennui, I am at full liberty to indulge my own.

* I have generally made use of the titles and distinctions by which the people I mention were known before the revolution; for, besides that I found it difficult to habituate my pen to the republican system of levelling, the person to whom these letters were addressed would not have known who was meant by the new appellations. It is, however, to be observed, that, except in private aristocratic intercourse, the word Citizen was in general use; and that those who had titles relinquished them and assumed their family names.

—Yet I know not how it is, but, as I have before observed to you, I do not ennuye—my mind is constantly occupied, though my heart is vacant—curiosity serves instead of interest, and I really find it sufficiently amusing to conjecture how long my head may remain on my shoulders.—You will, I dare say, agree with me that any doubts on such a subject are very well calculated to remove the tranquil sort of indifference which produces ennui;



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though, to judge by the greater part of my fellow-prisoners, one would not think so.— There is something surely in the character of the French, which makes them differ both in prosperity and adversity from other people. Here are many amongst us who see little more in the loss of their liberty than a privation of their usual amusements; and I have known some who had the good fortune to obtain their release at noon, exhibit themselves at the theatre at night.—God knows how such minds are constituted: for my part, when some consolatory illusion restores me to freedom, I associate with it no idea of positive pleasure, but long for a sort of intermediate state, which may repose my harassed faculties, and in which mere comfort and security are portrayed as luxuries. After being so long deprived of the decent accommodations of life, secluded from the intercourse which constitutes its best enjoyments, trembling for my own fate, and hourly lamenting that of my friends, the very thoughts of tumult or gaiety seem oppressive, and the desire of peace, for the moment, banishes every other. One must have no heart, after so many sufferings, not to prefer the castle of Indolence to the palace of Armida.

The coarse organs of an Argus at the door, who is all day employed in calling to my high-born companions by the republican appellations of "*Citoyen*," and "*Citoyenne*," has just interrupted me by a summons to receive a letter from my unfortunate friends at Arras.—It was given me open;* of course they say nothing of their situation, though I have reason to believe it is dreadful.

* The opening of letters was now so generally avowed, that people who corresponded on business, and were desirous their letters should be delivered, put them in the post without sealing; otherwise they were often torn in opening, thrown aside, or detained, to save the trouble of perusing.

—They have now written to me for assistance, which I have not the means of affording them. Every thing I have is under sequestration; and the difficulty which attends the negotiating any drafts drawn upon England, has made it nearly impossible to procure money in the usual way, even if I were not confined. The friendship of Mad. de _____ will be little available to me. Her extensive fortune, before frittered to mere competency by the extortions of the revolution, now scarcely supplies her own wants; and her tenants humanely take the opportunity of her present distress to avoid paying their rent.*

* In some instances servants or tenants have been known to seize on portions of land for their own use—in others the country municipalities exacted as the price of a certificate of civism, (without which no release from prison could be obtained,) such leases, lands, or privileges, as they thought the embarrassments of their landlords would induce them to grant. Almost every where the houses of persons arrested were pilfered



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either by their own servants or the agents of the republic. I have known an elegant house put in requisition to erect blacksmiths' forges in for the use of the army, and another filled with tailors employed in making soldiers' clothes.—Houses were likewise not unfrequently abandoned by the servants through fear of sharing the fate of their masters, and sometimes exposed equally by the arrest of those who had been left in charge, in order to extort discoveries of plate, money, &c. the concealment of which they might be supposed privy to.

--So that I have no resource, either for myself or Mrs. D____, but the sale of a few trinkets, which I had fortunately secreted on my first arrest. How are we to exist, and what an existence to be solicitous about! In gayer moments, and, perhaps, a little tinctured by romantic refinement, I have thought Dr. Johnson made poverty too exclusively the subject of compassion: indeed I believe he used to say, it was the only evil he really felt for. This, to one who has known only mental suffering, appears the notion of a coarse mind; but I doubt whether, the first time we are alarmed by the fear of want, the dread of dependence does not render us in part his converts. The opinion of our English sage is more natural than we may at first imagine; or why is it that we are affected by the simple distresses of Jane Shore, beyond those of any other heroine?—Yours.

April 22, 1794.

Our abode becomes daily more crowded; and I observe, that the greater part of those now arrested are farmers. This appears strange enough, when we consider how much the revolutionary persecution has hitherto spared this class of people; and you will naturally enquire why it has at length reached them.

It has been often observed, that the two extremes of society are nearly the same in all countries; the great resemble each other from education, the little from nature. Comparisons, therefore, of morals and manners should be drawn from the intervening classes; yet from this comparison also I believe we must exclude farmers, who are every where the same, and who seem always more marked by professional similitude than national distinction.

The French farmer exhibits the same acuteness in all that regards his own interest, and the same stupidity on most other occasions, as the mere English one; and the same objects which enlarge the understanding and dilate the heart of other people, seem to have a contrary effect on both. They contemplate the objects of nature as the stock-jobber does the vicissitudes of the public funds: "the dews of heaven," and the enlivening orb by which they are dispelled, are to the farmer only objects of avaricious speculation; and the scarcity, which is partially profitable, is but too often more welcome



than a general abundance.—They consider nothing beyond the limits of their own farms, except for the purpose of making envious comparisons with those of their neighbours; and being fed and clothed almost without intermediate commerce, they have little necessity for communication, and are nearly as isolated a part of society as sailors themselves.

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The French revolutionists have not been unobserving of these circumstances, nor scrupulous of profiting by them: they knew they might have discussed for ever their metaphysical definitions of the rights of man, without reaching the comprehension, or exciting the interest, of the country people; but that if they would not understand the propagation of the rights of man, they would very easily comprehend an abolition of the rights of their landlords. Accordingly, the first principle of liberty they were taught from the new code was, that they had a right to assemble in arms, to force the surrender of title-deeds; and their first revolutionary notions of equality and property seem to have been manifested by the burning of chateaux, and refusing to pay their rents. They were permitted to intimidate their landlords, in order to force them to emigration, and either to sell their estates at a low price, or leave them to the mercy of the tenants.

At a time when the necessities of the state had been great enough to be made the pretext of a dreadful revolution, they were not only almost exempt from contributing to its relief, but were enriched by the common distress; and while the rest of their countrymen beheld with unavailing regret their property gradually replaced by scraps of paper, the peasants became insolent and daring by impunity, refused to sell but for specie, and were daily amassing wealth. It is not therefore to be wondered at, that they were partial to the new order of things. The prisons might have overflowed or been thinned by the miseries of those with whom they had been crowded—the Revolutionary Tribunal might have sacrificed half France, and these selfish citizens, I fear, would have beheld it tranquilly, had not the requisition forced their labourers to the army, and the “maximum” lowered the price of their corn. The exigency of the war, and an internal scarcity, having rendered these measures necessary, and it being found impossible to persuade the farmers into a peaceful compliance with them, the government has had recourse to its usual summary mode of expostulation—a prison or the Guillotine.*

* The avarice of the farmers was doubtless to be condemned, but the cruel despotism of the government almost weakened our sense of rectitude; for by confounding error with guilt, and guilt with innocence, they habituated us to indiscriminate pity, and obliged us to transfer our hatred of a crime to those who in punishing it, observed neither mercy nor justice. A farmer was guillotined, because some blades of corn appeared growing in one of his ponds; from which circumstance it was inferred, he had thrown in a large quantity, in order to promote a scarcity—though it was substantially proved on his trial, that at the preceding harvest the grain of an adjoining field had been got in during a high wind, and that in all probability some scattered ears which reached the water had produced what was deemed sufficient



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testimony to convict him.— Another underwent the same punishment for pursuing his usual course of tillage, and sowing part of his ground with lucerne, instead of employing the whole for wheat; and every where these people became the objects of persecution, both in their persons and property.

“Almost all our considerable farmers have been thrown into prison; the consequence is, that their capital is eat up, their stock gone to ruin, and our lands have lost the almost incalculable effect of their industry. In La Vendee six million acres of land lie uncultivated, and five hundred thousand oxen have been turned astray, without shelter and without an owner.”

Speech of Dubois Crance, Sept. 22, 1794.

—Amazed to find themselves the objects of a tyranny they had hitherto contributed to support, and sharing the misfortune of their Lords and Clergy, these ignorant and mistaken people wander up and down with a vacant sort of ruefulness, which seems to bespeak that they are far from comprehending or being satisfied with this new specimen of republicanism.—It has been a fatality attending the French through the whole revolution, that the different classes have too readily facilitated the sacrifice of each other; and the Nobility, the Clergy, the Merchant, and the Farmer, have the mortification of experiencing, that their selfish and illiberal policy has answered no purpose but to involve all in one common ruin.

Angelique has contrived to-day to negotiate the sale of some bracelets, which a lady, with whom I was acquainted previous to our detention, has very obligingly given almost half their value for, though not without many injunctions to secrecy, and as many implied panegyrics on her benevolence, in risking the odium of affording assistance to a foreigner. We are, I assure you, under the necessity of being oeconomists, where the most abundant wealth could not render us externally comfortable: and the little we procure, by a clandestine disposal of my unnecessary trinkets, is considerably diminished,* by arbitrary impositions of the guard and the poor,** and a voluntary tax from the misery that surrounds us.

* I am aware of Mr. Burke's pleasantry on the expression of very little, being greatly diminished; but my exchequer at this time was as well calculated to prove the infinite divisibility of matter, as that of the Welch principality.** The guards of the republican Bastilles were paid by the prisoners they contained; and, in many places, the tax for this purpose was levied with indecent rigour. It might indeed be supposed, that people already in prison could have little to apprehend from an inability or unwillingness to submit to such an imposition; yet those who refused were menaced with a dungeon; and I was informed, from undoubted authority, of two instances of the sort among the English—the one



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a young woman, the other a person with a large family of children, who were on the point of suffering this treatment, but that the humanity of some of their companions interfered and paid the sum exacted of them. The tax for supporting the imprisoned poor was more willingly complied with, though not less iniquitous in its principle; numbers of inoffensive and industrious people were taken from their homes on account of their religion, or other frivolous pretexts, and not having the wherewithal to maintain themselves in confinement, instead of being kept by the republic, were supported by their fellow-prisoners, in consequence of a decree to that purpose. Families who inherited nothing from their noble ancestors but their names, were dragged from obscurity only to become objects of persecution; and one in particular, consisting of nine persons, who lived in extreme indigence, but were notwithstanding of the proscribed class; the sons were brought wounded from the army and lodged with the father, mother, and five younger children in a prison, where they had scarcely food to support, or clothing to cover them. I take this opportunity of doing justice to the Comte d'Artois, whose youthful errors did not extinguish his benevolence—the unfortunate people in question having enjoyed a pension from him until the revolution deprived them of it.

Our male companions are for the most part transferred to other prisons, and among the number are two young Englishmen, with whom I used sometimes to converse in French, without acknowledging our compatriotism. They have told me, that when the decree for arresting the English was received at Amiens, they happened to be on a visit, a few miles from the town; and having notice that a party of horse were on the road to take them, willing to gain time at least, they escaped by another route, and got home. The republican constables, for I can call the military employed in the interior by no better appellation, finding their prey had taken flight, adopted the impartial justice of the men of Charles Town,* and carried off the old couple (both above seventy) at whose house they had been.

* “But they maturely having weigh’d
“They had no more but him o’th’trade,
“Resolved to spare him, yet to do
“The Indian Houghan-Moghan too
“Impartial justice—in his stead did
“Hang an old weaver that was bed-rid.”

The good man, who was probably not versed in the etiquette of the revolution, conceived nothing of the matter, and when at the end of their journey they were deposited at the Bicetre, his head was so totally deranged, that he imagined himself still in his own house, and continued for some days addressing all the prisoners as though they were his guests—at one moment congratulating them on their arrival, the next apologizing for want of room and accommodation.—The evasion of the young men, as you will conclude, availed them nothing, except a delay of their captivity for a few hours.



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A report has circulated amongst us to-day, that all who are not detained on specific charges are soon to be liberated. This is eagerly believed by the new-comers, and those who are not the “pale converts of experience.” I am myself so far from crediting it, that I dread lest it should be the harbinger of some new evil, for I know not whether it be from the effect of chance, or a refinement in atrocity, but I have generally found every measure which tended to make our situation more miserable preceded by these flattering rumours.

You would smile to see with what anxious credulity intelligence of this sort is propagated: we stop each other on the stairs and listen while our palled dinner, just arrived from the *traiteur*, is cooling; and the bucket of the draw-well hangs suspended while a history is finished, of which the relator knows as little as the hearer, and which, after all, proves to have originated in some ambiguous phrase of our keeper, uttered in a good-humoured paroxysm while receiving a *douceur*.

We occasionally lose some of our associates, who, having obtained their discharge, *depart a la Francaise*, forget their suffering, and praise the clemency of Dumont, and the virtue of the Convention; while those who remain still unconverted amuse themselves in conjecturing the channel through which such favours were solicited, and alleging reasons why such preferences were partial and unjust.

Dumont visits us, as usual, receives an hundred or two of petitions, which he does not deign to read, and reserves his indulgence for those who have the means of assailing him through the smiles of a favourite mistress, or propitiating him by more substantial advantages.—Many of the emigrants' wives have procured their liberty by being divorced, and in this there is nothing blameable, for I imagine the greater number consider it only as a temporary expedient, indifferent in itself, and which they are justified in having recourse to for the protection of their persons and property. But these domestic alienations are not confined to those who once moved in the higher orders of society—the monthly registers announce almost as many divorces as marriages, and the facility of separation has rendered the one little more than a licentious compact, which the other is considered as a means of dissolving. The effect of the revolution has in this, as in many other cases, been to make the little emulate the vices of the great, and to introduce a more gross and destructive policy among the people at large, than existed in the narrow circle of courtiers, imitators of the Regent, or Louis the fifteenth. Immorality, now consecrated as a principle, is far more pernicious than when, though practised, it was condemned, and, though suffered, not sanctioned.



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You must forgive me if I ennuye you a little sententiously—I was more partial to the lower ranks of life in France, than to those who were deemed their superiors; and I cannot help beholding with indignant regret the last asylums of national morals thus invaded by the general corruption.—I believe no one will dispute that the revolution has rendered the people more vicious; and, without considering the matter either in a moral or religious point of view, it is impossible to assert that they are not less happy. How many times, when I was at liberty, have I heard the old wish for an accession of years, or envy those yet too young to be sensible of “the miseries of a revolution!”—Were the vanity of the self-sufficient philosopher susceptible of remorse, would he not, when he beholds this country, lament his presumption, in supposing he had a right to cancel the wisdom of past ages; or that the happiness of mankind might be promoted by the destruction of their morals, and the depravation of their social affections?—Yours, &c.

April 30, 1794.

For some years previous to the revolution, there were several points in which the French ascribed to themselves a superiority not very distant from perfection. Amongst these were philosophy, politeness, the refinements of society, and, above all, the art of living.—I have sometimes, as you know, been inclined to dispute these claims; yet, if it be true that in our sublunary career perfection is not stationary, and that, having reached the apex of the pyramid on one side, we must necessarily descend on the other, I might, on this ground, allow such pretensions to be more reasonable than I then thought them. Whatever progress might have been attained in these respects, or however near our neighbours might have approached to one extreme, it is but too certain they are now rapidly declining to the other. This boasted philosophy is become a horrid compound of all that is offensive to Heaven, and disgraceful to man—this politeness, a ferocious incivility—and this social elegance and exclusive science in the enjoyment of life, are now reduced to suspicious intercourse, and the want of common necessaries.

If the national vanity only were wounded, perhaps I might smile, though I hope I should not triumph; but when I see so much misery accompany so profound a degradation, my heart does not accord with my language, if I seem to do either one or the other.

I should ineffectually attempt to describe the circumstances and situation which have given rise to these reflections. Imagine to yourself whatever tyranny can inflict, or human nature submit to—whatever can be the result of unrestrained wickedness and unresisting despair—all that can scourge or disgrace a people—and you may form some idea of the actual state of this country: but do not search your books for comparisons, or expect to find in the proscriptions and extravagancies of former periods any examples by which to judge the present.—Tiberius and Nero are on the road to oblivion, and the subjects of the Lama may boast comparative pretensions to rank as a free and enlightened nation.



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The frantic ebullitions of the revolutionary government are now as it were subsided, and instead of appearing the temporary resources of “despotism in distress,” [Burke.] have assumed the form of a permanent and regular system. The agitation occasioned by so many unexampled scenes is succeeded by an habitual terror, and this depressing sentiment has so pervaded all ranks, that it would be difficult to find an individual, however obscure or inoffensive, who deems his property, or even his existence, secure only for a moment. The sound of a bell or a knocker at the close of the evening is the signal of dismay. The inhabitants of the house regard each other with looks of fearful interrogation—all the precautions hitherto taken appear insufficient— every one recollects something yet to be secreted—a prayer-book, an unburied silver spoon, or a few assignats “a face royale,” are hastily scrambled together, and if the visit prove nothing more than an amicable domiciliary one, in search of arms and corn, it forms matter of congratulation for a week after. Yet such is the submission of the people to a government they abhor, that it is scarcely thought requisite now to arrest any person formally: those whom it is intended to secure often receive nothing more than a written mandate* to betake themselves to a certain prison, and such unpleasant rendezvous are attended with more punctuality than the most ceremonious visit, or the most gallant assignation.

* These rescripts were usually couched in the following terms:—
“Citizen, you are desired to betake yourself immediately to -----,
(naming the prison,) under pain of being conveyed there by an armed force in case of delay.”

—A few necessaries are hastily packed together, the adieus are made, and, after a walk to their prison, they lay their beds down in the corner allotted, just as if it were a thing of course.

It was a general observation with travellers, that the roads in France were solitary, and had rather the deserted appearance of the route of a caravan, than of the communications between different parts of a rich and populous kingdom. This, however, is no longer true, and, as far as I can learn, they are now sufficiently crowded—not, indeed, by curious itinerants, parties of pleasure, or commercial industry, but by Deputies of the Convention,* agents of subsistence,** committee men, Jacobin missionaries,*** troops posting from places where insurrection is just quelled to where it has just begun, besides the great and never-failing source of activity, that of conveying suspected people from their homes to prison, and from one prison to another.—



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* Every department was infested by one, two, or more of these strolling Deputies; and, it must be confessed, the constant tendency of the people to revolt in many places afforded them sufficient employment. Sometimes they acted as legislators, making laws on the spot—sometimes, both as judges and constables—or, if occasion required, they amused themselves in assisting the executioner.—The migrations of obscure men, armed with unlimited powers, and whose persons were unknown, was a strong temptation to imposture, and in several places adventurers were detected assuming the character of Deputies, for various purposes of fraud and depredation.—The following instance may appear ludicrous, but I shall be excused mentioning it, as it is a fact on record, and conveys an idea of what the people supposed a Deputy might do, consistent with the “dignity” of his executive functions. An itinerant of this sort, whose object seems to have been no more than to procure a daily maintenance, arriving hungry in a village, entered the first farm-house that presented itself, and immediately put a pig in requisition, ordered it to be killed, and some sausages to be made, with all speed. In the meanwhile our mock-legislator, who seems to have acted his part perfectly well, talked of liberty, l’amour de la Patrie, of Pitt and the coalesced tyrants, of arresting suspicious people and rewarding patriots; so that the whole village thought themselves highly fortunate in the presence of a Deputy who did no worse than harangue and put their pork in requisition.—Unfortunately, however, before the repast of sausages could be prepared, a hue and cry reached the place, that this gracious Representant was an impostor! He was bereft of his dignities, conveyed to prison, and afterwards tried by the Tribunal Revolutionnaire at Paris; but his Counsel, by insisting on the mildness with which he had “borne his faculties,” contrived to get his punishment mitigated to a short imprisonment.—Another suffered death on a somewhat similar account; or, as the sentence expressed it, for degrading the character of a National Representative.—Just Heaven! for degrading the character of a National Representative!!! —and this too after the return of Carrier from Nantes, and the publication of Collot d’Herbois’ massacres at Lyons!**The agents employed by government in the purchase of subsistence amounted, by official confession, to ten thousand. In all parts they were to be seen, rivalling each other, and creating scarcity and famine, by requisitions and exactions, which they did not convert to the profit of the republic, but to their own.—These privileged locusts, besides what they seized upon, occasioned a total stagnation of commerce, by laying embargoes on what they did not want; so that it frequently occurred that an unfortunate tradesman might have half the articles in his shop under requisition for a month together, and sometimes under different



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requisitions from deputies, commissaries of war, and agents of subsistence, all at once; nor could any thing be disposed of till such claims were satisfied or relinquished.*** Jacobin missionaries were sent from Paris, and other great towns, to keep up the spirits of the people, to explain the benefits of the revolution, (which, indeed, were not very apparent,) and to maintain the connection between the provincial and metropolitan societies.—I remember the Deputies on mission at Perpignan writing to the Club at Paris for a reinforcement of civic apostles, "*pour evangeliser les habitans et les mettre dans la voie de salut*"—"to convert the inhabitants, and put them in the road to salvation").

—These movements are almost entirely confined to the official travellers of the republic; for, besides the scarcity of horses, the increase of expence, and the diminution of means, few people are willing to incur the suspicion or hazard* attendant on quitting their homes, and every possible obstacle is thrown in the way of a too general intercourse between the inhabitants of large towns.

* There were moments when an application for a passport was certain of being followed by a mandat d'arret—a writ of arrest). The applicant was examined minutely as to the business he was going upon, the persons he was to transact it with, and whether the journey was to be performed on horseback or in a carriage, and any signs of impatience or distaste at those democratic ceremonies were sufficient to constitute "*un homme suspect*"—"a suspicious person"), or at least one "*soupconne d'etre suspect*," that is, a man suspected of being suspicious. In either case it was usually deemed expedient to prevent the dissemination of his supposed principles, by laying an embargo on his person.—I knew a man under persecution six months together, for having gone from one department to another to see his family.

The committee of Public Welfare is making rapid advances to an absolute concentration of the supreme power, and the convention, while they are the instruments of oppressing the whole country, are themselves become insignificant, and, perhaps, less secure than those over whom they tyrannize. They cease to debate, or even to speak; but if a member of the Committee ascends the tribune, they overwhelm him with applauses before they know what he has to say, and then pass all the decrees presented to them more implicitly than the most obsequious Parliament ever enregistered an arrete of the Court; happy if, by way of compensation, they attract a smile from Barrere, or escape the ominous glances of Robespierre.*



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* When a member of the committee looked inauspiciously at a subordinate accomplice, the latter scarce ventured to approach his home for some time.—Legendre, who has since boasted so continually about his courage, is said to have kept his bed, and Bourdon de l'Oise, to have lost his senses for a considerable time, from frights, the consequence of such menaces.

Having so far described the situation of public affairs, I proceed as usual, and for which I have the example of Pope, who never quits a subject without introducing himself, to some notice of my own. It is not only bad in itself, but worse in perspective than ever: yet I learn not to murmur, and derive patience from the certainty, that almost every part of France is more oppressed and wretched than we are.—Yours, *etc.*

June 3, 1794.

The individual sufferings of the French may perhaps yet admit of increase; but their humiliation as a people can go no farther; and if it were not certain that the acts of the government are congenial to its principles, one might suppose this tyranny rather a moral experiment on the extent of human endurance, than a political system.

Either the vanity or cowardice of Robespierre is continually suggesting to him plots for his assassination; and on pretexts, at once absurd and atrocious, a whole family, with near seventy other innocent people as accomplices, have been sentenced to death by a formal decree of the convention.

One might be inclined to pity a people obliged to suppress their indignation on such an event, but the mind revolts when addresses are presented from all quarters to congratulate this monster's pretended escape, and to solicit a farther sacrifice of victims to his revenge.— The assassins of Henry the Fourth had all the benefit of the laws, and suffered only after a legal condemnation; yet the unfortunate Cecilia Renaud, though evidently in a state of mental derangement, was hurried to the scaffold without a hearing, for the vague utterance of a truth, to which every heart in France, not lost to humanity, must assent. Brooding over the miseries of her country, till her imagination became heated and disordered, this young woman seems to have conceived some hopeless plan of redress from expostulation with Robespierre, whom she regarded as a principal in all the evils she deplored. The difficulty of obtaining an audience of him irritated her to make some comparison between an hereditary sovereign and a republican despot; and she avowed, that, in desiring to see Robespierre, she was actuated only by a curiosity to “contemplate the features of a tyrant.”—On being examined by the Committee, she still persisted that her design was “seulement pour voir comment etoit fait un tyran;” and no instrument nor possible means of destruction was found upon her to justify a charge of any thing more than the wild and enthusiastic attachment to royalism, which she did not attempt to disguise. The influence of a feminine propensity, which often survives even the wreck of reason and beauty, had induced her to dress with peculiar neatness, when she went in search of Robespierre;



and, from the complexion of the times, supposing it very probable a visit of this nature might end in imprisonment and death, she had also provided herself with a change of clothes to wear in her last moments.



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Such an attention in a beautiful girl of eighteen was not very unnatural; yet the mean and cruel wretches who were her judges, had the littleness to endeavour at mortifying, by divesting her of her ornaments, and covering her with the most loathsome rags. But a mind tortured to madness by the sufferings of her country, was not likely to be shaken by such puerile malice; and, when interrogated under this disguise, she still preserved the same firmness, mingled with contempt, which she had displayed when first apprehended. No accusation, nor even implication, of any person could be drawn from her, and her only confession was that of a passionate loyalty: yet an universal conspiracy was nevertheless decreed by the Convention to exist, and Miss Renaud, with sixty-nine others,* were sentenced to the guillotine, without farther trial than merely calling over their names.

* It is worthy of remark, that the sixty-nine people executed as accomplices of Miss Renaud, except her father, mother, and aunt, were totally unconnected with her, or with each other, and had been collected from different prisons, between which no communication could have subsisted.

—They were conducted to the scaffold in a sort of red frocks, intended, as was alleged, to mark them as assassins—but, in reality, to prevent the crowd from distinguishing or receiving any impression from the number of young and interesting females who were comprised in this dreadful slaughter.—They met death with a courage which seemed almost to disappoint the malice of their tyrants, who, in an original excess of barbarity, are said to have lamented that their power of inflicting could not reach those mental faculties which enabled their victims to suffer with fortitude.*

* Fouquier Tinville, public accuser of the Revolutionary Tribunal, enraged at the courage with which his victims submitted to their fate, had formed the design of having them bled previous to their execution; hoping by this means to weaken their spirits, and that they might, by a pusillanimous behaviour in their last moments, appear less interesting to the people.

Such are the horrors now common to almost every part of France: the prisons are daily thinned by the ravages of the executioner, and again re-peopled by inhabitants destined to the fate of their predecessors. A gloomy reserve, and a sort of uncertain foreboding, have taken possession of every body—no one ventures to communicate his thoughts, even to his nearest friend—relations avoid each other—and the whole social system seems on the point of being dissolved. Those who have yet preserved their freedom take the longest circuit, rather than pass a republican Bastille; or, if obliged by necessity to approach one, it is with downcast or averted looks, which bespeak their dread of incurring the suspicion of humanity.



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I say little of my own feelings; they are not of a nature to be relieved by pathetic expressions: "I am e'en sick at heart." For some time I have struggled both against my own evils, and the share I take in the general calamity, but my mortal part gives way, and I can no longer resist the despondency which at times depresses me, and which indeed, more than the danger attending it, has occasioned my abandoning my pen for the last month.—Several circumstances have occurred within these few days, to add to the uneasiness of our situation, and my own apprehensions. Le Bon,* whose cruelties at Arras seem to have endeared him to his colleagues in the Convention, has had his powers extended to this department, and Andre Dumont is recalled; so that we are hourly menaced with the presence of a monster, compared to whom our own representative is amiable.—

* I have already noticed the cruel and ferocious temper of Le Bon, and the massacres of his tribunals are already well known. I will only add some circumstances which not only may be considered as characteristic of this tyrant, but of the times—and I fear I may add of the people, who suffered and even applauded them. They are selected from many others not susceptible of being described in language fit for an English reader. As he was one day enjoying his customary amusement of superintending an execution, where several had already suffered, one of the victims having, from a very natural emotion, averted his eyes while he placed his body in the posture required, the executioner perceived it, and going to the sack which contained the heads of those just sacrificed, took one out, and with the most horrible imprecations obliged the unhappy wretch to kiss it: yet Le Bon not only permitted, but sanctioned this, by dining daily with the hangman. He was afterwards reproached with this familiarity in the Convention, but defended himself by saying, "A similar act of Lequinio's was inserted by your orders in the bulletin with 'honourable mention;' and your decrees have invariably consecrated the principles on which I acted." They all felt for a moment the dominion of conscience, and were silent.—On another occasion he suspended an execution, while the savages he kept in pay threw dirt on the prisoners, and even got on the scaffold and insulted them previous to their suffering. When any of his colleagues passed through Arras, he always proposed their joining with him in a "*partie de Guillotine*," and the executions were perpetrated on a small square at Arras, rather than the great one, that he, his wife, and relations might more commodiously enjoy the spectacle from the balcony of the theatre, where they took their coffee, attended by a band of music, which played while this human butchery lasted. The following circumstance, though something less horrid, yet sufficiently so to excite the indignation of feeling people, happened

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to some friends of my own.—They had been brought with many others from a distant town in open carts to Arras, and, worn out with fatigue, were going to be deposited in the prison to which they were destined. At the moment of their arrival several persons were on the point of being executed. Le Bon, presiding as usual at the spectacle, observed the cavalcade passing, and ordered it to stop, that the prisoners might likewise be witnesses. He was, of course, obeyed; and my terrified friends and their companions were obliged not only to appear attentive to the scene before them, but to join in the cry of "*Vive la Republique!*" at the severing of each head.— One of them, a young lady, did not recover the shock she received for months. The Convention, the Committees, all France, were well acquainted with the conduct of Le Bon. He himself began to fear he might have exceeded the limits of his commission; and, upon communicating some scruples of this kind to his employers, received the following letters, which, though they do not exculpate him, certainly render the Committee of Public Welfare more criminal than himself.

"Citizen,

"The Committee of Public Welfare approve the measures you have adopted, at the same time that they judge the warrant you solicit unnecessary—such measures being not only allowable, but enjoined by the very nature of your mission. No consideration ought to stand in the way of your revolutionary progress—give free scope therefore to your energy; the powers you are invested with are unlimited, and whatever you may deem conducive to the public good, you are free, you are even called upon by duty, to carry into execution without delay.—We here transmit you an order of the Committee, by which your powers are extended to the neighbouring departments. Armed with such means, and with your energy, you will go on to confound the enemies of the republic, with the very schemes they have projected for its destruction.

"Carnot.

"Barrere.

"R. Lindet."

Extract from another letter, signed Billaud Varenne, Carnot, Barrere.

"There is no commutation for offences against a republic. Death alone can expiate them!—Pursue the traitors with fire and sword, and continue to march with courage in the revolutionary track you have described."

—Merciful Heaven! are there yet positive distinctions betwixt bad and worse that we thus regret a Dumont, and deem ourselves fortunate in being at the mercy of a tyrant who is only brutal and profligate? But so it is; and Dumont himself, fearful that he has not exercised his mission with sufficient severity, has ordered every kind of indulgence

to cease, the prisons to be more strictly guarded, and, if possible, more crowded; and he is now gone to Paris, trembling lest he should be accused of justice or moderation!



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The pretended plots for assassinating Robespierre are, as usual, attributed to Mr. Pitt; and a decree has just passed, that no quarter shall be given to English prisoners. I know not what such inhuman politics tend to, but my contempt, and the conscious pride of national superiority; certain, that when Providence sees fit to vindicate itself, by bestowing victory on our countrymen, the most welcome

“Laurels that adorn their brows
“Will be from living, not dead boughs.”

The recollection of England, and its generous inhabitants, has animated me with pleasure; yet I must for the present quit this agreeable contemplation, to take precautions which remind me that I am separated from both, and in a land of despotism and misery!

—Yours affectionately.

June 11, 1794.

The immorality of Hebert, and the base compliances of the Convention, for some months turned the churches into “temples of reason.”—The ambition, perhaps the vanity, of Robespierre, has now permitted them to be dedicated to the “Supreme Being,” and the people, under such auspices, are to be conducted from atheism to deism. Desirous of distinguishing his presidency, and of exhibiting himself in a conspicuous and interesting light, Robespierre, on the last decade, appeared as the hero of a ceremony which we are told is to restore morals, destroy all the mischiefs introduced by the abolition of religion, and finally to defeat the machinations of Mr. Pitt. A gay and splendid festival has been exhibited at Paris, and imitated in the provinces: flags of the republican colours, branches of trees, and wreaths of flowers, were ordered to be suspended from the houses—every countenance was to wear the prescribed smile, and the whole country, forgetting the pressure of sorrow and famine, was to rejoice. A sort of monster was prepared, which, by some unaccountable ingenuity, at once represented Atheism and the English, Cobourg and the Austrians—in short, all the enemies of the Convention.—This external phantom, being burned with proper form, discovered a statue, which was understood to be that of Liberty, and the inauguration of this divinity, with placing the busts of Chalier* and Marat in the temple of the Supreme Being, by way of attendant saints, concluded the ceremony.—

* Chalier had been sent from the municipality of Paris after the dethronement of the King, to revolutionize the people of Lyons, and to excite a massacre. In consequence, the first days of September presented the same scenes at Lyons as were presented in the capital. For near a year he continued to scourge this unfortunate city, by urging the lower classes of people to murder and pillage; till, at the insurrection which took place in the spring of 1793, he was arrested by the insurgents, tried, and sentenced to the



guillotine. —The Convention, however, whose calendar of saints is as extraordinary as their criminal



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code, chose to beatify Chaliier, while they executed Malesherbes; and, accordingly, decreed him a lodging in the Pantheon, pensioning his mistress, and set up his bust in their own Hall as an associate for Brutus, whom, by the way, one should not have expected to find in such company.

The good citizens of the republic, not to be behind hand with their representatives, placed Chaliier in the cathedrals, in their public-houses, on fans and snuff-boxes—in short, wherever they thought his appearance would proclaim their patriotism.—I can only exclaim as Poultier, a deputy, did, on a similar occasion—“Francais, Francais, serez vous toujours Francais?”—(Frenchmen, Frenchmen, will you never cease to be Frenchmen?)

—But the mandates for such celebrations reach not the heart: flowers were gathered, and flags planted, with the scrupulous exactitude of fear;* yet all was cold and heavy, and a discerning government must have read in this anxious and literal obedience the indication of terror and hatred.

* I have more than once had occasion to remark the singularity of popular festivities solemnized on the part of the people with no other intention but that of exact obedience to the edicts of government. This is so generally understood, that Richard, a deputy on mission at Lyons, writes to the Convention, as a circumstance extraordinary, and worthy of remark, that, at the repeal of a decree which was to have razed their city to the ground, a rejoicing took place, “*dirigee et executee par le peuple, les autorites constituees n’ayant fait en quelque sorte qu’y assister,*” — (directed and executed by the people, the constituted authorities having merely assisted at the ceremony).

—Even the prisons were insultingly decorated with the mockery of colours, which, we are told, are the emblems of freedom; and those whose relations have expired on the scaffold, or who are pining in dungeons for having heard a mass, were obliged to listen with apparent admiration to a discourse on the charms of religious liberty.—The people, who, for the most part, took little interest in the rest of this pantomime, and insensible of the national disgrace it implied, beheld with stupid satisfaction* the inscription on the temple of reason replaced by a legend, signifying that, in this age of science and information, the French find it necessary to declare their acknowledgment of a God, and their belief in the immortality of the soul.

* Much has been said of the partial ignorance of the unfortunate inhabitants of La Vendee, and divers republican scribblers attribute their attachment to religion and monarchy to that cause: yet at Havre, a sea-port, where, from commercial communication, I should suppose the people as informed and civilized as in any other part of France, the ears of piety and decency were assailed, during the celebration above-mentioned, by the acclamations of, “*Vive le Pere Eternel!*”—“*Vive*



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l'etre Supreme!"—(I entreat that I may not be suspected of levity when I translate this; in English it would be "God Almighty for ever! The Supreme Being for ever!")

—At Avignon the public understanding seems to have been equally enlightened, if we may judge from the report of a Paris missionary, who writes in these terms:—"The celebration in honour of the Supreme Being was performed here yesterday with all possible pomp: all our country-folks were present, and unspeakably content that there was still a God—What a fine decree (cried they all) is this!"

My last letter was a record of the most odious barbarities—to-day I am describing a festival. At one period I have to remark the destruction of the saints—at another the adoration of Marat. One half of the newspaper is filled with a list of names of the guillotined, and the other with that of places of amusement; and every thing now more than ever marks that detestable association of cruelty and levity, of impiety and absurdity, which has uniformly characterized the French revolution. It is become a crime to feel, and a mode to affect a brutality incapable of feeling—the persecution of Christianity has made atheism a boast, and the danger of respecting traditional virtues has hurried the weak and timid into the apotheosis of the most abominable vices. Conscious that they are no longer animated by enthusiasm,* the Parisians hope to imitate it by savage fury or ferocious mirth—their patriotism is signalized only by their zeal to destroy, and their attachment to their government only by applauding its cruelties.—If Robespierre, St. Just, Collot d'Herbois, and the Convention as their instruments, desolate and massacre half France, we may lament, but we can scarcely wonder at it. How should a set of base and needy adventurers refrain from an abuse of power more unlimited than that of the most despotic monarch; or how distinguish the general abhorrence, amid addresses of adulation, which Louis the Fourteenth would have blushed to appropriate?*

* Louis the Fourteenth, aguerrri (stealed) as he was by sixty years of adulation and prosperity, had yet modesty sufficient to reject a "dose of incense which he thought too strong." (See D'Alembert's Apology for Clermont Tonnerre.) Republicanism, it should seem, has not diminished the national complaisance for men in power, though it has lessened the modesty of those who exercise it.—If Louis the Fourteenth repressed the zeal of the academicians, the Convention publish, without scruple, addresses more hyperbolical than the praises that monarch refused.—Letters are addressed to Robespierre under the appellation of the Messiah, sent by the almighty for the reform of all things! He is the apostle of one, and the tutelar deity of another. He is by turns the representative of the virtues individually, and a compendium of them altogether: and this monster, whose features are the counterpart of



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his soul, find republican parasites who congratulate themselves on resembling him.

The bulletins of the Convention announce, that the whole republic is in a sort of revolutionary transport at the escape of Robespierre and his colleague, Collot d'Herbois, from assassination; and that we may not suppose the legislators at large deficient in sensibility, we learn also that they not only shed their grateful tears on this affecting occasion, but have settled a pension on the man who was instrumental in rescuing the benign Collot.

The members of the Committee are not, however, the exclusive objects of public adoration—the whole Convention are at times incensed in a style truly oriental; and if this be sometimes done with more zeal than judgment, it does not appear to be less acceptable on that account. A petition from an incarcerated poet assimilates the mountain of the Jacobins to that of Parnassus—a state-creditor importunes for a small payment from the Gods of Olympus—and congratulations on the abolition of Christianity are offered to the legislators of Mount Sinai! Every instance of baseness calls forth an eulogium on their magnanimity. A score of orators harangue them daily on their courage, while they are over-awed by despots as mean as themselves and whom they continue to reinstal at the stated period with clamorous approbation. They proscribe, devastate, burn, and massacre—and permit themselves to be addressed by the title of “Fathers of their Country!”

All this would be inexplicable, if we did not contemplate in the French a nation where every faculty is absorbed by a terror which involves a thousand contradictions. The rich now seek protection by becoming members of clubs,* and are happy if, after various mortifications, they are finally admitted by the mob who compose them; while families, that heretofore piqued themselves on a voluminous and illustrious genealogy,** eagerly endeavour to prove they have no claim to either.

* *Le diplôme de Jacobin était une espèce d'amulette, dont les initiés étaient jaloux, et qui frappait de prestiges ceux qui ne l'étaient pas*—“The Jacobin diploma was a kind of amulet, which the initiated were jealous of preserving, and which struck as it were with witchcraft, those who were not of the number.”

Rapport de Courtois sur les Papiers de Robespierre.

** Besides those who, being really noble, were anxious to procure certificates of sans-cullotism, many who had assumed such honours without pretensions now relinquished them, except indeed some few, whose vanity even surmounted their fears. But an express law included all these seceders in the general proscription; alledging, with a candour not usual, that those who assumed rank were, in fact, more criminal than such as were guilty of being born to it.—Places and employments, which are in most countries the objects of intrigue

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and ambition, are here refused or relinquished with such perfect sincerity, that a decree became requisite to oblige every one, under pain of durance, to preserve the station to which his ill stars, mistaken politics, or affectation of patriotism, had called him. Were it not for this law, such is the dreadful responsibility and danger attending offices under the government, that even low and ignorant people, who have got possession of them merely for support, would prefer their original poverty to emoluments which are perpetually liable to the commutation of the guillotine.—Some members of a neighbouring district told me to-day, when I asked them if they came to release any of our fellow-prisoners, that so far from it, they had not only brought more, but were not certain twelve hours together of not being brought themselves.

The visionary equality of metaphysical impostors is become a substantial one—not constituted by abundance and freedom, but by want and oppression. The disparities of nature are not repaired, but its whole surface is levelled by a storm. The rich are become poor, but the poor still remain so; and both are conducted indiscriminately to the scaffold. The prisons of the former government were “petty to the ends” of this. Convents, colleges, palaces, and every building which could any how be adapted to such a purpose, have been filled with people deemed suspicious;* and a plan of destruction seems resolved on, more certain and more execrable than even the general massacre of September 1792.

* Now multiplied to more than four hundred thousand!—The prisons of Paris and the environs were supposed to contain twenty-seven thousand. The public papers stated but about seven thousand, because they included the official returns of Paris only.

—Agents of the police are, under some pretended accusation, sent to the different prisons; and, from lists previously furnished them, make daily information of plots and conspiracies, which they alledge to be carrying on by the persons confined. This charge and this evidence suffice: the prisoners are sent to the tribunal, their names read over, and they are conveyed by cart’s-full to the republican butchery. Many whom I have known, and been in habits of intimacy with, have perished in this manner; and the expectation of Le Bon,* with our numbers which make us of too much consequence to be forgotten, all contribute to depress and alarm me.

* Le Bon had at this period sent for lists of the prisoners in the department of the Somme—which lists are said to have been since found, and many of the names in them marked for destruction.

—Even the levity of the French character yields to this terrible despotism, and nothing is observed but weariness, silence, and sorrow:— “*O triste loisir, poids affreux du tems.*” [St. Lambert.] The season returns with the year, but not to us—the sun shines, but to add to our miseries that of insupportable heat—and the vicissitudes of nature only awaken our regret that we cannot enjoy them—



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“Now gentle gales o’er all the vallies play,
“Breathe on each flow’r, and bear their sweets away.”

[Collins.]

Yet what are fresh air and green fields to us, who are immured amidst a thousand ill scents, and have no prospect but filth and stone walls? It is difficult to describe how much the mind is depressed by this state of passive suffering. In common evils, the necessity of action half relieves them, as a vessel may reach her port by the agitation of a storm; but this stagnant listless existence is terrible.

Those most to be envied here are the victims of their religious opinions. The nuns, who are more distressed than any of us,* employ themselves patiently, and seem to look beyond this world; whilst the once gay deist wanders about with a volume of philosophy in his hand, unable to endure the present, and dreading still more the future.

* These poor women, deprived of the little which the rapacity of the Convention had left them, by its subordinate agents, were in want of every thing; and though in most prisons they were employed for the republican armies, they could scarcely procure more than bread and water. Yet this was not all: they were objects of the meanest and most cruel persecution.—I knew one who was put in a dungeon, up to her waist in putrid water, for twelve hours altogether, without losing her resolution or serenity.

I have already written you a long letter, and bid you adieu with the reluctance which precedes an uncertain separation. Uneasiness, ill health, and confinement, besides the danger I am exposed to, render my life at present more precarious than “the ordinary of nature’s tenures.” --God knows when I may address you again!--My friend Mad. de _____ is returned from the hospital, and I yield to her fears by ceasing to write, though I am nevertheless determined not to part with what I have hitherto preserved; being convinced, that if evil be intended us, it will be as soon without a pretext as with one.—Adieu.

Providence, Aug. 11, 1794.

I have for some days contemplated the fall of Robespierre and his adherents, only as one of those dispensations of Providence, which were gradually to pursue all who had engaged in the French revolution. The late change of parties has, however, taken a turn I did not expect; and, contrary to what has hitherto occurred, there is a manifest disposition in the people to avail themselves of the weakness which is necessarily occasioned by the contentions of their governors.

When the news of this extraordinary event first became public, it was ever where received with great gravity—I might say, coldness.—Not a comment was uttered, nor a glance of approbation seen. Things might be yet in equilibrium, and popular commotions are always uncertain. Prudence was, therefore, deemed, indispensable;

and, until the contest was finally decided, no one ventured to give an opinion; and many, to be certain of guarding against verbal indiscretion, abstained from all intercourse whatever.

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By degrees, the execution of Robespierre and above an hundred of his partizans, convinced even the most timid; the murmurs of suppressed discontent began to be heard; and all thought they might now with safety relieve their fears and their sufferings, by execrating the memory of the departed tyrants. The prisons, which had hitherto been avoided as endangering all who approached them, were soon visited with less apprehension; and friendship or affection, no longer exanimate by terror, solicited, though still with trepidation, the release of those for whom they were interested. Some of our associates have already left us in consequence of such intercessions, and we all hope that the tide of opinion, now avowedly inimical to the detestable system to which we are victims, will enforce a general liberation.—We are guarded but slightly; and I think I perceive in the behaviour of the Jacobin Commissaries something of civility and respect not usual.

Thus an event, which I beheld merely as the justice which one set of banditti were made the instruments of exercising upon another, may finally tend to introduce a more humane system of government; or, at least, suspend proscription and massacre, and give this harassed country a little repose.

I am in arrears with my epistolary chronicle, and the hope of so desirable a change will now give me courage to resume it from the conclusion of my last. To-morrow shall be dedicated to this purpose.— Yours.

August 12.

My letters, previous to the time when I judged it necessary to desist from writing, will have given you some faint sketch of the situation of the country, and the sufferings of its inhabitants—I say a faint sketch, because a thousand horrors and iniquities, which are now daily disclosing, were then confined to the scenes where they were perpetrated; and we knew little more of them than what we collected from the reports of the Convention, where they excited a laugh as pleasantries, or applause as acts of patriotism.

France had become one vast prison, executions were daily multiplied, and a minute and comprehensive oppression seemed to have placed the lives, liberty, and fortune of all within the grasp of the single Committee. Despair itself was subdued, and the people were gradually sinking into a gloomy and stupid obedience.

* The words despotism and tyranny are sufficiently expressive of the nature of the government to which they are applied; yet still they are words rendered familiar to us only by history, and convey no precise idea, except that of a bad political system. The condition of the French at this time, besides its wretchedness, had something so strange, so original in it, that even those who beheld it with attention must be content to wonder, without pretending to offer any description as adequate.

—The following extract from a speech of Bailleul, a member of the Convention, exhibits a picture nearer the original than I have yet seen—



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"La terreur dominait tous les esprits, comprimait tous les couers— elle etait la force du gouvernement, et ce gouvernement etait tel, que les nombreux habitans d'un vaste territoire semblaient avoir perdu les qualites qui distinguent l'homme de l'animal domestique: ils semblaient meme n'avoir de vie que ce que le gouvernement voulait bien leur en accorder.—Le moi humain n'existoit plus; chaque individu n'etait qu'une machine, allant, venant, pensant ou ne pensant pas, felon que la tyrannie le pressait ou l'animait."

Discours de Bailleul, 19 March 1795.

"The minds of all were subdued by terror, and every heart was compressed beneath its influence.—In this consisted the strength of the government; and that government was such, that the immense population of a vast territory, seemed to have lost all the qualities which distinguish man from the animals attached to him.—They appeared to exhibit no signs of life but such as their rulers condescended to permit—the very sense of existence seemed doubtful or extinct, and each individual was reduced to a mere machine, going or coming, thinking or not thinking, according as the impulse of tyranny gave him force or animation."

Speech of Bailleul, 19 March 1795.

On the twenty-second of Prairial, (June 10,) a law, consisting of a variety of articles for the regulation of the Revolutionary Tribunal, was introduced to the convention by Couthon, a member of the government; and, as usual adopted with very little previous discussion.—Though there was no clause of this act but ought to have given the alarm to humanity, "knocked at the heart, and bid it not be quiet;" yet the whole appeared perfectly unexceptionable to the Assembly in general: till, on farther examination, they found it contained an implied repeal of the law hitherto observed, according to which, no representative could be arrested without a preliminary decree for that purpose.—This discovery awakened their suspicions, and the next day Bourdon de l'Oise, a man of unsteady principles, (even as a revolutionist,) was spirited up to demand an explicit renunciation of any power in the Committee to attack the legislative inviolability except in the accustomed forms.—The clauses which elected a jury of murderers, that bereft all but guilt of hope, and offered no prospect to innocence but death, were passed with no other comment than the usual one of applause.*—

* The baseness, cruelty, and cowardice of the Convention are neither to be denied, nor palliated. For several months they not only passed decrees of proscription and murder which might reach every individual in France except themselves, but they even sacrificed numbers of their own body; and if, instead of proposing an article affecting the whole Convention, the Committee had demanded the heads of as many Deputies as

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they had occasion for by name, I am persuaded they would have met no resistance.— This single example of opposition only renders the convention still more an object of abhorrence, because it marks that they could subdue their pusillanimity when their own safety was menaced, and that their previous acquiescence was voluntary.

—This, and this only, by involving their personal safety, excited their courage through their fears.—Merlin de Douay, originally a worthless character, and become yet more so by way of obviating the imputation of bribery from the court, seconded Bourdon's motion, and the obnoxious article was repealed instantaneously.

This first and only instance of opposition was highly displeasing to the Committee, and, on the twenty-fourth, Robespierre, Barrere, Couthon, and Billaud, animadverted with such severity on the promoters of it, that the terrified Bourdon* declared, the repeal he had solicited was unnecessary, and that he believed the Committee were destined to be the saviours of the country; while Merlin de Douay disclaimed all share in the business — and, in fine, it was determined, that the law of the twenty-second of Prairial should remain as first presented to the Convention, and that the qualification of the succeeding day was void.

* It was on this occasion that the "intrepid" Bourdon kept his bed a whole month with fear.

So dangerous an infringement on the privileges of the representative body, dwelt on minds insensible to every other consideration; the principal members caballed secretly on the perils by which they were surrounded; and the sullen concord which now marked their deliberations, was beheld by the Committee rather as the prelude to revolt, than the indication of continued obedience. In the mean while it was openly proposed to concentrate still more the functions of government. The circulation of newspapers was insinuated to be useless; and Robespierre gave some hints of suppressing all but one, which should be under particular and official controul.*

* This intended restriction was unnecessary; for the newspapers were all, not indeed paid by government, but so much subject to the censure of the guillotine, that they had become, under an "unlimited freedom of the press," more cautious and insipid than the gazettes of the proscribed court. Poor Duplain, editor of the "Petit Courier," and subsequently of the "Echo," whom I remember one of the first partizans of the revolution, narrowly escaped the massacre of August 1792, and was afterwards guillotined for publishing the surrender of Landrecy three days before it was announced officially.

A rumour prevailed, that the refractory members who had excited the late rebellion were to be sacrificed, a general purification of the Assembly to take place, and that the committee and a few select adherents were to be invested with the whole national



authority. Lists of proscription were said to be made; and one of them was secretly communicated as having been found among the papers of a jurymen of the Revolutionary Tribunal lately arrested.—These apprehensions left the members implicated no alternative but to anticipate hostilities, or fall a sacrifice; for they knew the instant of attack would be that of destruction, and that the people were too indifferent to take any part in the contest.



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Things were in this state, when two circumstances of a very different nature assisted in promoting the final explosion, which so much astonished, not only the rest of Europe, but France itself.

It is rare that a number of men, however well meaning, perfectly agree in the exercise of power; and the combinations of the selfish and wicked must be peculiarly subject to discord and dissolution. The Committee of Public Welfare, while it enslaved the convention and the people, was torn by feuds, and undermined by the jealousies of its members. Robespierre, Couthon, and St. Just, were opposed by Collot and Billaud Varennes; while Barrere endeavoured to deceive both parties; and Carnot, Lindet, the two Prieurs, and St. Andre, laboured in the cause of the common tyranny, in the hope of still dividing it with the conquerors.

For some months this enmity was restrained, by the necessity of preserving appearances, and conciliated, by a general agreement in the principles of administration, till Robespierre, relying on his superior popularity, began to take an ascendant, which alarmed such of his colleagues as were not his partisans, both for their power and their safety. Animosities daily increased, and their debates at length became so violent and noisy, that it was found necessary to remove the business of the Committee to an upper room, lest people passing under the windows should overhear these scandalous scenes. Every means were taken to keep these disputes a profound secret—the revilings which accompanied their private conferences were turned into smooth panegyrics of each other when they ascended the tribune, and their unanimity was a favourite theme in all their reports to the Convention.*

* So late as on the seventh of Thermidor, (25th July,) Barrere made a pompous eulogium on the virtues of Robespierre; and, in a long account of the state of the country, he acknowledges “some little clouds hang over the political horizon, but they will soon be dispersed, by the union which subsists in the Committees;—above all, by a more speedy trial and execution of revolutionary criminals.” It is difficult to imagine what new means of dispatch this airy barbarian had contrived, for in the six weeks preceding this harangue, twelve hundred and fifty had been guillotined in Paris only.

The impatience of Robespierre to be released from associates whose views too much resembled his own to leave him an undivided authority, at length overcame his prudence; and, after absenting himself for six weeks from the Committee, on the 8th of Thermidor, (26th July,) he threw off the mask, and in a speech full of mystery and implications, but containing no direct charges, proclaimed the divisions which existed in the government.—On the same evening he repeated this harangue at the Jacobins, while St. Just, by his orders, menaced the obnoxious part of the Committee with a formal denunciation to the Convention.—From this moment Billaud Varennes and Collot d’Herbois concluded their destruction to be certain. In vain they soothed, expostulated with, and endeavoured to mollify St. Just, so as to avert an open rupture. The latter,

who probably knew it was not Robespierre's intention to accede to any arrangement, left them to make his report.



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On the morning of the ninth the Convention met, and with internal dread and affected composure proceeded to their ordinary business.—St. Just then ascended the tribune, and the curiosity or indecision of the greater number permitted him to expatiate at large on the intrigues and guilt of every kind which he imputed to a “part” of the Committee. —At the conclusion of this speech, Tallien, one of the devoted members, and Billaud Varennes, the leader of the rival party, opened the trenches, by some severe remarks on the oration of St. Just, and the conduct of those with whom he was leagued. This attack encouraged others: the whole Convention joined in accusing Robespierre of tyranny; and Barrere, who perceived the business now deciding, ranged himself on the side of the strongest, though the remaining members of the Committee still appeared to preserve their neutrality. Robespierre was, for the first time, refused a hearing, yet, the influence he so lately possessed still seemed to protect him. The Assembly launched decrees against various of his subordinate agents, without daring to proceed against himself; and had not the indignant fury with which he was seized, at the desertion of those by whom he had been most flattered, urged him to call for arrest and death, it is probable the whole would have ended in the punishment of his enemies, and a greater accession of power to himself.

But at this crisis all Robespierre’s circumspection abandoned him. Having provoked the decree for arresting his person, instead of submitting to it until his party should be able to rally, he resisted; and by so doing gave the Convention a pretext for putting him out of the law; or, in other words, to destroy him, without the delay or hazard of a previous trial.

Having been rescued from the Gens d’Armes, and taken in triumph to the municipality, the news spread, the Jacobins assembled, and Henriot, the commander of the National Guard, (who had likewise been arrested, and again set at liberty by force,) all prepared to act in his defence. But while they should have secured the Convention, they employed themselves at the Hotel de Ville in passing frivolous resolutions; and Henriot, with all the cannoneers decidedly in his favour, exhibited an useless defiance, by stalking before the windows of the Committee of General Safety, when he should have been engaged in arresting its members.

All these imprudences gave the Convention time to proclaim that Robespierre, the municipality, and their adherents, were decreed out of the protection of the laws, and in circumstances of this nature such a step has usually been decisive—for however odious a government, if it does but seem to act on a presumption of its own strength, it has always an advantage over its enemies; and the timid, the doubtful, or indifferent, for the most part, determine in favour of whatever wears the appearance of established authority. The people, indeed, remained perfectly neuter; but



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the Jacobins, the Committees of the Sections, and their dependents, might have composed a force more than sufficient to oppose the few guards which surrounded the National Palace, had not the publication of this summary outlawry at once paralyzed all their hopes and efforts.—They had seen multitudes hurried to the Guillotine, because they were “hors de la loi;” and this impression now operated so forcibly, that the cannoneers, the national guard, and those who before were most devoted to the cause, laid down their arms, and precipitately abandoned their chiefs to the fate which awaited them. Robespierre was taken at the Hotel de Ville, after being severely wounded in the face; his brother broke his thigh, in attempting to escape from a window; Henriot was dragged from concealment, deprived of an eye; and Couthon, whom nature had before rendered a cripple, now exhibited a most hideous spectacle, from an ineffectual effort to shoot himself.—Their wounds were dressed to prolong their suffering, and their sentence being contained in the decree that outlawed them, their persons were identified by the same tribunal which had been the instrument of their crimes. —On the night of the tenth they were conveyed to the scaffold, amidst the insults and execrations of a mob, which a few hours before beheld them with trembling and adoration.—Lebas, also a member of the convention, and a principal agent of Robespierre, fell by his own hand; and Couthon, St. Just, and seventeen others, suffered with the two Robespierres.—The municipality of Paris, &c. to the number of seventy-two, were guillotined the succeeding day, and about twelve more the day after.

The fate of these men may be ranked as one of the most dreadful of those examples which history vainly transmits to discourage the pursuits of ambition. The tyrant who perishes amidst the imposing fallaciousness of military glory, mingles admiration with abhorrence, and rescues his memory from contempt, if not from hatred. Even he who expiates his crimes on the scaffold, if he die with fortitude, becomes the object of involuntary compassion, and the award of justice is not often rendered more terrible by popular outrage. But the fall of Robespierre and his accomplices was accompanied by every circumstance that could add poignancy to suffering, or dread to death. The ambitious spirit which had impelled them to tyrannize over a submissive and defenceless people, abandoned them in their last moments. Depressed by anguish, exhausted by fatigue, and without courage, religion, or virtue, to support them, they were dragged through the savage multitude, wounded and helpless, to receive that stroke, from which even the pious and the brave sometimes shrink with dismay.

Robespierre possessed neither the talents nor merits of Nicolas Riezi; but they are both conspicuous instances of the mutability of popular support, and there is a striking similitude in the last events of their history. They both degraded their ambition by cowardice—they were both deserted by the populace, whom they began by flattering, and ended by oppressing; and the death of both was painful and ignominious—borne without dignity, and embittered by reproach and insult.*



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* Robespierre lay for some hours in one of the committee-rooms, writhing with the pain of his wound, and abandoned to despair; while many of his colleagues, perhaps those who had been the particular agents and applauders of his crimes, passed and repassed him, glorying and jesting at his sufferings. The reader may compare the death of Robespierre with that of Rienzi; but if the people of Rome revenged the tyranny of the Tribune, they were neither so mean nor so ferocious as the Parisians.

You will perceive by this summary that the overthrow of Robespierre was chiefly occasioned by the rivalry of his colleagues in the Committee, assisted by the fears of the Convention at large for themselves.—Another circumstance, at which I have already hinted, as having some share in this event, shall be the subject of my next letter.

Providence, Aug. 13, 1794.

Amour, tu perdis Troye [Love! thou occasionedst the destruction of Troy.]:—yet, among the various mischiefs ascribed to the influence of this capricious Sovereign, amidst the wrecks of sieges, and the slaughter of battles, perhaps we may not unjustly record in his praise, that he was instrumental to the solace of humanity, by contributing to the overthrow of Robespierre. It is at least pleasing to turn from the general horrors of the revolution, and suppose, for a moment, that the social affections were not yet entirely banished, and that gallantry still retained some empire, when every other vestige of civilization was almost annihilated.

After such an exordium, I feel a little ashamed of my hero, and could wish, for the credit of my tale, it were not more necessary to invoke the historic muse of Fielding, than that of Homer or Tasso; but imperious Truth obliges me to confess, that Tallien, who is to be the subject of this letter, was first introduced to celebrity by circumstances not favourable for the comment of my poetical text.

At the beginning of the revolution he was known only as an eminent orator en plain vent; that is, as a preacher of sedition to the mob, whom he used to harangue with great applause at the Palais Royal. Having no profession or means of subsistence, he, as Dr. Johnson observes of one of our poets, necessarily became an author. He was, however, no farther entitled to this appellation, than as a periodical scribbler in the cause of insurrection; but in this he was so successful, that it recommended him to the care of Petion and the municipality, to whom his talents and principles were so acceptable, that they made him Secretary to the Committee.

On the second and third of September 1792, he superintended the massacre of the prisons, and is alledged to have paid the assassins according to the number of victims they dispatched with great regularity; and he himself seems to have little to say in his defence, except that he acted officially. Yet even the imputation of such a claim could not be overlooked by the citizens of Paris; and at the election of the Convention he was distinguished by being chosen one of their representatives.



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It is needless to describe his political career in the Assembly otherwise than by adding, that when the revolutionary furor was at its acme, he was deemed by the Committee of Public Welfare worthy of an important mission in the South. The people of Bourdeaux were, accordingly, for some time harassed by the usual effects of these visitations—imprisonments and the Guillotine; and Tallien, though eclipsed by Maignet and Carrier, was by no means deficient in the patriotic energies of the day.

I think I must before have mentioned to you a Madame de Fontenay, the wife of an emigrant, whom I occasionally saw at Mad. de C____'s. I then remarked her for the uncommon attraction of her features, and the elegance of her person; but was so much disgusted at a tendency to republicanism I observed in her, and which, in a young woman, I thought unbecoming, that I did not promote the acquaintance, and our different pursuits soon separated us entirely. Since this period I have learned, that her conduct became exceedingly imprudent, or at least suspicious, and that at the general persecution, finding her republicanism would not protect her, she fled to Bourdeaux, with the hope of being able to proceed to Spain. Here, however, being a Spaniard by birth, and the wife of an emigrant, she was arrested and thrown into prison, where she remained till the arrival of Tallien on his mission.

The miscellaneous occupations of a deputy-errant, naturally include an introduction to the female prisoners; and Tallien's presence afforded Mad. de Fontenay an occasion of pleading her cause with all the success which such a pleader might, in other times, be supposed to obtain from a judge of Tallien's age. The effect of the scenes Tallien had been an actor in, was counteracted by youth, and his heart was not yet indifferent to the charms of beauty—Mad. de Fontenay was released by the captivity of her liberator, and a reciprocal attachment ensued.

We must not, however, conclude, all this merely a business of romance. Mad. de Fontenay was rich, and had connexions in Spain, which might hereafter procure an asylum, when a regicide may with difficulty find one: and on the part of the lady, though Tallien's person is agreeable, a desire of protecting herself and her fortune might be allowed to have some influence.

From this time the revolutionist is said to have given way: Bourdeaux became the Capua of Tallien; and its inhabitants were, perhaps, indebted for a more moderate exercise of his power, to the smiles of Mad. de Fontenay.—From hanging loose on society, he had now the prospect of marrying a wife with a large fortune; and Tallien very wisely considered, that having something at stake, a sort of comparative reputation among the higher class of people at Bourdeaux, might be of more importance to him in future, than all the applause the Convention could bestow on a liberal use of the

Guillotine.—The relaxed system which was the consequence of such policy, soon reached the Committee of Public Welfare, to whom it was highly displeasing, and Tallien was recalled.



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A youth of the name of Julien, particularly in the confidence of Robespierre, was then sent to Bourdeaux, not officially as his successor, but as a spy, to collect information concerning him, as well as to watch the operations of other missionaries, and prevent their imitating Tallien's schemes of personal advantage, at the expence of scandalizing the republic by an appearance of lenity.—The disastrous state of Lyons, the persecutions of Carrier, the conflagrations of Maignet, and the crimes of various other Deputies, had obliterated the minor revolutionisms of Tallien:* The citizens of Bourdeaux spoke of him without horror, which in these times was equal to eulogium; and Julien transmitted such accounts of his conduct to Robespierre,** as were equally alarming to the jealousy of his spirit, and repugnant to the cruelty of his principles.

* It was Tallien's boast to have guillotined only aristocrats, and of this part of his merit I am willing to leave him in possession. At Toulon he was charged with the punishment of those who had given up the town to the English; but finding, as he alledged, nearly all the inhabitants involved, he selected about two hundred of the richest, and that the horrid business might wear an appearance of regularity, the patriots, that is, the most notorious Jacobins, were ordered to give their opinion on the guilt of these victims, who were brought out into an open field for that purpose. With such judges the sentence was soon passed, and a fusillade took place on the spot.—It was on this occasion that Tallien made particular boast of his humanity; and in the same publication where he relates the circumstance, he exposes the "atrocious conduct" of the English at the surrender of Toulon. The cruelty of these barbarians not being sufficiently gratified by dispatching the patriots the shortest way, they hung up many of them by their chins on hooks at the shambles, and left them to die at their leisure.—See "Mitrailades, Fusillades," a recriminating pamphlet, addressed by Tallien to Collot d'Herbois.—The title alludes to Collot's exploits at Lyons.** It is not out of the usual course of things that Tallien's moderation at Bourdeaux might have been profitable; and the wife or mistress of a Deputy was, on such occasions, a useful medium, through which the grateful offerings of a rich and favoured aristocrat might be conveyed, without committing the legislative reputation.—The following passage from Julien's correspondence with Robespierre seems to allude to some little arrangements of this nature: "I think it my duty to transmit you an extract from a letter of Tallien's, [Which had been intercepted.] to the National Club.—It coincides with the departure of La Fontenay, whom the Committee of General Safety have doubtless had arrested. I find some very curious political details regarding her; and Bourdeaux seems to have been, until this moment, a labyrinth



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of intrigue and speculation.”

It appears from Robespierre’s papers, that not only Tallien, but Legendre, Bourdon de l’Oise, Thuriot, and others, were incessantly watched by the spies of the Committee. The profession must have improved wonderfully under the auspices of the republic, for I doubt if *Mons. le Noir’s Mouchards* [The spies of the old police, so called in derision.—Brissot, in this act of accusation, is described as having been an agent of the Police under the monarchy.—I cannot decide on the certainty of this, or whether his occupation was immediately that of a spy, but I have respectable authority for saying, that antecedent to the revolution, his character was very slightly estimated, and himself considered as “hanging loose on society.”] were as able as Robespierre’s.—The reader may judge from the following specimens:

“The 6th instant, the deputy Thuriot, on quitting the Convention, went to No. 35, Rue Jaques, section of the Pantheon, to the house of a pocket-book maker, where he staid talking with a female about ten minutes. He then went to No. 1220, Rue Fosse St. Bernard, section of the Sans-Culottes, and dined there at a quarter past two. At a quarter past seven he left the last place, and meeting a citizen on the Quay de l’Ecole, section of the Museum, near le Cafe Manoury, they went in there together, and drank a bottle of beer. From thence he proceeded to la Maison Memblee de la Providence, No. 16, Rue d’Orleans Honore, section de la Halle au Bled, whence, after staying about five-and-twenty minutes, he came out with a citoyenne, who had on a puce Levite, a great bordered shawl of Japan cotton, and on her head a white handkerchief, made to look like a cap. They went together to No. 163, Place Egalite, where after stopping an instant, they took a turn in the galleries, and then returned to sup.—They went in at half past nine, and were still there at eleven o’clock, when we came away, not being certain if they would come out again.

“Bourdon de l’Oise, on entering the Assembly, shook hands with four or five Deputies. He was observed to gape while good news was announcing.”

Tallien was already popular among the Jacobins of Paris; and his connexion with a beautiful woman, who might enable him to keep a domestic establishment, and to display any wealth he had acquired, without endangering his reputation, was a circumstance not to be overlooked; for Robespierre well knew the efficacy of female intrigue, and dinners,* in gaining partizans among the subordinate members of the Convention.



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* Whoever reads attentively, and in detail, the debates of the Convention, will observe the influence and envy created by a superior style of living in any particular member. His dress, his lodging, or dinners, are a perpetual subject of malignant reproach. —This is not to be wondered at, when we consider the description of men the Convention is composed of;—men who, never having been accustomed to the elegancies of life, behold with a grudging eye the gay apparel or luxurious table of a colleague, who arrived at Paris with no other treasure but his patriotism, and has no ostensible means beyond his eighteen livres a day, now increased to thirty-six.

Mad. de Fontenay, was, therefore, on her arrival at Paris, whither she had followed Tallien, (probably in order to procure a divorce and marry him,) arrested, and conveyed to prison.

An injury of this kind was not to be forgiven; and Robespierre seems to have acted on the presumption that it could not. He beset Tallien with spies, menaced him in the Convention, and made Mad. de Fontenay an offer of liberty, if she would produce a substantial charge against him, which he imagined her knowledge of his conduct at Bourdeaux might furnish her grounds for doing. A refusal must doubtless have irritated the tyrant; and Tallien had every reason to fear she would soon be included in one of the lists of victims who were daily sacrificed as conspirators in the prisons. He was himself in continual expectation of being arrested; and it was generally believed Robespierre would soon openly accuse him.—Thus situated, he eagerly embraced the opportunity which the schism in the Committee presented of attacking his adversary, and we certainly must allow him the merit of being the first who dared to move for the arrest of Robespierre.—I need not add, that *la belle* was one of the first whose prison doors were opened; and I understand that, being divorced from *Mons. de Fontenay*, she is either married, or on the point of being so, to Tallien.

This conclusion spoils my story as a moral one; and had I been the disposer of events, the Septembriser, the regicide, and the cold assassin of the Toulonais, should have found other rewards than affluence, and a wife who might represent one of Mahomet's Houris. Yet, surely, "the time will come, though it come ne'er so slowly," when Heaven shall separate guilt from prosperity, and when Tallien and his accomplices shall be remembered only as monuments of eternal justice. For the lady, her faults are amply punished in the disgrace of such an alliance—

"A cut-purse of the empire and the rule;
"____ a King of shreds and patches."

Providence, Aug. 14, 1794.



The thirty members whom Robespierre intended to sacrifice, might perhaps have formed some design of resisting, but it appears evident that the Convention in general acted without plan, union, or confidence.*—



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* The base and selfish timidity of the Convention is strongly evinced by their suffering fifty innocent people to be guillotined on the very ninth of Thermidor, for a pretended conspiracy in the prison of St. Lazare.—A single word from any member might at this crisis have suspended the execution of the sentence, but that word no one had the courage or the humanity to utter.

—Tallien and Billaud were rendered desperate by their situation, and it is likely that, when they ventured to attack Robespierre, they did not themselves expect to be successful—it was the consternation of the latter which encouraged them to persist, and the Assembly to support them:

“There is a tide in the affairs of men,
“Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.”

And to have been lucky enough to seize on this crisis, is, doubtless, the whole merit of the convention. There has, it is true, been many allusions to the dagger of Brutus, and several Deputies are said to have conceived very heroic projects for the destruction of the tyrant; but as he was dead before these projects were brought to light, we cannot justly ascribe any effect to them.

The remains of the Brissotin faction, still at liberty, from whom some exertions might have been expected, were cautiously inactive; and those who had been most in the habit of appreciating themselves for their valour, were now conspicuous only for that discretion which Falstaff calls the better part of it.—Dubois Crance, who had been at the expence of buying a Spanish poniard at St. Malo, for the purpose of assassinating Robespierre, seems to have been calmed by the journey, and to have finally recovered his temper, before he reached the Convention.—Merlin de Thionville, Merlin de Douay, and others of equal note, were among the “passive valiant;” and Bourdon de l’Oise had already experienced such disastrous effects from inconsiderate exhibitions of courage, that he now restrained his ardour till the victory should be determined. Even Legendre, who is occasionally the Brutus, the Curtius, and all the patriots whose names he has been able to learn, confined his prowess to an assault on the club-room of the Jacobins, when it was empty, and carrying off the key, which no one disputed with him, so that he can at most claim an ovation. It is, in short, remarkable, that all the members who at present affect to be most vehement against Robespierre’s principles, [And where was the all-politic Sieyes?—At home, writing his own eulogium.] were the least active in attacking his person; and it is indisputable, that to Tallien, Billaud, Louchet, Elie Lacoste, Collot d’Herbois, and a few of the more violent Jacobins, were due those first efforts which determined his fall.—Had Robespierre, instead of a querulous harangue, addressed the convention in his usual tone of authority, and ended by moving for a decree against a few only of those obnoxious to him, the rest might have been glad to compound for their own safety, by abandoning a cause no longer personal: but his impolicy, not his wickedness, hastened his fate; and it is so far fortunate for France, that it has at least suspended the system of government which is ascribed to him.



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The first days of victory were passed in receiving congratulations, and taking precautions; and though men do not often adapt their claims to their merits, yet the members of the Convention seemed in general to be conscious that none amongst them had very decided pretensions to the spoils of the vanquished.—Of twelve, which originally composed the Committee of Public Welfare, seven only remained; yet no one ventured to suggest a completion of the number, till Barrere, after previously insinuating how adequate he and his colleagues were to the task of “saving the country,” proposed, in his flippant way, and merely as a matter of form, that certain persons whom he recommended, should fill up the vacancies in the government.

This modest Carmagnole* was received with great coolness; the late implicit acquiescence was changed to demur, and an adjournment unanimously called for.

* A ludicrous appellation, which Barrere used to give to his reports in the presence of those who were in the secret of his Charlatanry. The air of “La Carmagnole” was originally composed when the town of that name was taken by Prince Eugene, and was adapted to the indecent words now sung by the French after the 10th of August 1792.

—Such unusual temerity surprisid and alarmed the remains of the Committee, and Billaud Varennes sternly reminded the Convention of the abject state they were so lately released from. This produced retort and replication, and the partners of Robespierre’s enormities, who had hoped to be the tranquil inheritors of his power, found, that in destroying a rival, they had raised themselves masters.

The Assembly persisted in not adopting the members offered to be imposed upon them; but, as it was easier to reject than to choose, the Committee were ordered to present a new plan for this part of the executive branch, and the election of those to be entrusted with it was postponed for farther consideration.

Having now felt their strength, they next proceeded to renew a part of the committee of General Safety, several of its members being inculpated as partizans of Robespierre, and though this Committee had become entirely subordinate to that of Public Welfare, yet its functions were too important for it to be neglected, more especially as they comprised a very favourite branch of the republican government, that of issuing writs of arrest at pleasure.—The law of the twenty-second of Prairial is also repealed, but the Revolutionary Tribunal is preserved, and the necessity of suspending the old jury, as being the creatures of Robespierre, has not prevented the tender solicitude of the Convention for a renovated activity in the establishment itself.

This assumption of power has become every day more confirmed, and the addresses which are received by the Assembly, though yet in a strain of gross adulation,* express such an abhorrence of the late system, as must suffice to convince them the people are not disposed to see such a system continued.



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* A collection of addresses, presented to the Convention at various periods, might form a curious history of the progress of despotism. These effusions of zeal were not, however, all in the "sublime" style: the legislative dignity sometimes condescended to unbend itself, and listen to metrical compositions, enlivened by the accompaniment of fiddles; but the manly and ferocious Danton, to whom such sprightly interruptions were not congenial, proposed a decree, that the citizens should, in future, express their adorations in plain prose, and without any musical accessories.

Billaud Varennes, Collot, and other members of the old Committee, view these innovations with sullen acquiescence; but Barrere, whose frivolous and facile spirit is incapable of consistency, even in wickedness, perseveres and flourishes at the tribune as gaily as ever.—Unabashed by detection, insensible to contempt, he details his epigrams and antitheses against Catilines and Cromwells with as much self-sufficiency as when, in the same tinsel eloquence, he promulgated the murderous edicts of Robespierre.

Many of the prisoners at Paris continue daily to obtain their release, and, by the exertions of his personal enemies, particularly of our quondam sovereign, Andre Dumont, (now a member of the Committee of General Safety,) an examination into the atrocities committed by Le Bon is decreed.—But, amidst these appearances of justice, a versatility of principle, or rather an evident tendency to the decried system, is perceptible. Upon the slightest allusion to the revolutionary government, the whole Convention rise in a mass to vociferate their adherence to it:* the tribunal, which was its offspring and support, is anxiously reinstalled; and the low insolence with which Barrere announces their victories in the Netherlands, is, as usual, loudly applauded.

* The most moderate, as well as the most violent, were always united on the subject of this irrational tyranny.—"*Toujours en menageant, comme la prunelle de ses yeux, le gouvernement revolutionnaire.*"—"Careful always of the revolutionary government, as of the apple of their eye." *Fragment pour servir a l'Hist. de la Convention, par J. J. Dussault.*

The brothers of Cecile Renaud, who were sent for by Robespierre from the army to Paris, in order to follow her to the scaffold, did not arrive until their persecutor was no more, and a change of government was avowed. They have presented themselves at the bar of the Convention, to entreat a revisal of their father's sentence, and some compensation for his property, so unjustly confiscated.—You will, perhaps, imagine, that, at the name of these unfortunate young men, every heart anticipated a consent to their claims, even before the mind could examine the justice of them, and that one of those bursts of sensibility for which this legislature is so remarkable instantaneously accorded the petition. Alas! this was not an



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occasion to excite the enthusiasm of the Convention: Coupilleau de Fontenay, one of the “mild and moderate party”, repulsed the petitioners with harshness, and their claim was silenced by a call for the order of the day. The poor Renauds were afterwards coldly referred to the Committee of Relief, for a pittance, by way of charity, instead of the property they have a right to, and which they have been deprived of, by the base compliance of the Convention with the caprice of a monster.

Such relapses and aberrations are not consolatory, but the times and circumstances seem to oppose them—the whole fabric of despotism is shaken, and we have reason to hope the efforts of tyranny will be counteracted by its weakness.

We do not yet derive any advantage from the early maturity of the harvest, and it is still with difficulty we obtain a limited portion of bad bread. Severe decrees are enacted to defeat the avarice of the farmers, and prevent monopolies of the new corn; but these people are invulnerable: they have already been at issue with the system of terror—and it was found necessary, even before the death of Robespierre, to release them from prison, or risk the destruction of the harvest for want of hands to get it in. It is now discovered, that natural causes, and the selfishness of individuals, are adequate to the creation of a temporary scarcity; yet when this happened under the King, it was always ascribed to the machinations of government.—How have the people been deceived, irritated, and driven to rebellion, by a degree of want, less, much less, insupportable than that they are obliged to suffer at present, without daring even to complain!

I have now been in confinement almost twelve months, and my health is considerably impaired. The weather is oppressively warm, and we have no shade in the garden but under a mulberry-tree, which is so surrounded by filth, that it is not approachable. I am, however, told, that in a few days, on account of my indisposition, I shall be permitted to go home, though with a proviso of being guarded at my own expence.—My friends are still at Arras; and if this indulgence be extended to Mad. de la F____, she will accompany me. Personal accommodation, and an opportunity of restoring my health, render this desirable; but I associate no idea of freedom with my residence in this country. The boundary may be extended, but it is still a prison.—Yours.

Providence, Aug. 15, 1794.

To-morrow I expect to quit this place, and have been wandering over it for the last time. You will imagine I can have no attachment to it: yet a retrospect of my sensations when I first arrived, of all I have experienced, and still more of what I have apprehended since that period, makes me look forward to my departure with a satisfaction that I might almost call melancholy. This cell, where I have shivered through the winter—the long passages, which I have so often traversed in bitter rumination—the



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garden, where I have painfully breathed a purer air, at the risk of sinking beneath the fervid rays of an unmitigated sun, are not scenes to excite regret; but when I think that I am still subject to the tyranny which has so long condemned me to them, this reflection, with a sentiment perhaps of national pride, which is wounded by accepting as a favour what I have been unjustly deprived of, renders me composed, if not indifferent, at the prospect of my release.

This dreary epoch of my life has not been without its alleviations. I have found a chearful companion in Mad. de M____, who, at sixty, was brought here, because she happened to be the daughter of Count L____, who has been dead these thirty years!—The graces and silver accents of Madame de B____, might have assisted in beguiling severer captivity; and the Countess de C____, and her charming daughters (the eldest of whom is not to be described in the common place of panegyric), who, though they have borne their own afflictions with dignity, have been sensible to the misfortunes of others, and whom I must, in justice, except from all the imputations of meanness or levity, which I have sometimes had occasion to notice in those who, like themselves, were objects of republican persecution, have essentially contributed to diminish the horrors of confinement.—I reckon it likewise among my satisfactions, that, with the exception of the Marechalle de Biron,* and General O’Moran, none of our fellow-prisoners have suffered on the scaffold.—

* The Marechalle de Biron, a very old and infirm woman, was taken from hence to the Luxembourg at Paris, where her daughter-in-law, the Duchess, was also confined. A cart arriving at that prison to convey a number of victims to the tribunal, the list, in the coarse dialect of republicanism, contained the name of la femme Biron. “But there are two of them,” said the keeper. “Then bring them both.”— The aged Marechalle, who was at supper, finished her meal while the rest were preparing, then took up her book of devotion, and departed chearfully.—The next day both mother and daughter were guillotined.

—Dumont has, indeed, virtually occasioned the death of several; in particular the Duc du Chatelet, the Comte de Bethune, *Mons. de Mancheville*, &c.—and it is no merit in him that Mr. Luttrell, with a poor nun of the name of Pitt,* whom he took from hence to Paris, as a capture which might give him importance, were not massacred either by the mob or the tribunal.

* This poor woman, whose intellects, as I am informed, appeared in a state of derangement, was taken from a convent at Abbeville, and brought to the Providence, as a relation of Mr. Pitt, though I believe she has no pretensions to that honour. But the name of Pitt gave her importance; she was sent to Paris under a military escort, and

Dumont announced the arrival of this miserable victim with all the airs of a conqueror. I have



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been since told, she was lodged at St. Pelagie, where she suffered innumerable hardships, and did not recover her liberty for many months after the fall of Robespierre.

—If the persecution of this department has not been sanguinary,* it should be remembered, that it has been covered with prisons; and that the extreme submission of its inhabitants would scarcely have furnished the most merciless tyrant with a pretext for a severer regimen.—

* There were some priests guillotined at Amiens, but the circumstance was concealed from me for some months after it happened.

—Dumont, I know, expects to establish a reputation by not having guillotined as an amusement, and hopes that he may here find a retreat when his revolutionary labours shall be finished.

The Convention have not yet chosen the members who are to form the new Committee. They were yesterday solemnly employed in receiving the American Ambassador; likewise a brass medal of the tyrant Louis the Fourteenth, and some marvellous information about the unfortunate Princess' having dressed herself in mourning at the death of Robespierre. These legislators remind me of one of Swift's female attendants, who, in spite of the literary taste he endeavoured to inspire her with, never could be divested of her original housewifely propensities, but would quit the most curious anecdote, as he expresses it, "to go seek an old rag in a closet." Their projects for the revival of their navy seldom go farther than a transposal in the stripes of the flag, and their vengeance against regal anthropophagi, and proud islanders, is infallibly diverted by a denunciation of an aristocratic quartrain, or some new mode, whose general adoption renders it suspected as the badge of a party.—If, according to Cardinal de Retz' opinion, elaborate attention to trifles denote a little mind, these are true Lilliputian sages.—Yours, &c.

August, 1794.

I did not leave the Providence until some days after the date of my last: there were so many precautions to be taken, and so many formalities to be observed—such references from the municipality to the district, and from the district to the Revolutionary Committee, that it is evident Robespierre's death has not banished the usual apprehension of danger from the minds of those who became responsible for acts of justice or humanity. At length, after procuring a house-keeper to answer with his life and property for our re-appearance, and for our attempting nothing against the "unity and indivisibility" of the republic, we bade (I hope) a long adieu to our prison.



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Madame de ____ is to remain with me till her house can be repaired; for it has been in requisition so often, that there is now, we are told, scarcely a bed left, or a room habitable. We have an old man placed with us by way of a guard, but he is civil, and is not intended to be a restraint upon us. In fact, he has a son, a member of the Jacobin club, and this opportunity is taken to compliment him, by taxing us with the maintenance of his father. It does not prevent us from seeing our acquaintance, and we might, I suppose, go out, though we have not yet ventured.

The politics of the Convention are fluctuating and versatile, as will ever be the case where men are impelled by necessity to act in opposition to their principles. In their eagerness to attribute all the past excesses to Robespierre, they have, unawares, involved themselves in the obligation of not continuing the same system. They doubtless expected, by the fall of the tyrant, to become his successors; but the people, weary of being dupes, and of hearing that tyrants were fallen, without feeling any diminution of tyranny, have every where manifested a temper, which the Convention, in the present relaxed state of its power, is fearful of making experiments upon. Hence, great numbers of prisoners are liberated, those that remain are treated more indulgently, and the fury of revolutionary despotism is in general abated.

The Deputies who most readily assent to these changes have assumed the appellation of Moderates; (Heaven knows how much they are indebted to comparison;) and the popularity they have acquired has both offended and alarmed the more inflexible Jacobins. A motion has just been made by one Louchet, that a list of all persons lately enlarged should be printed, with the names of those Deputies who solicited in their favour, annexed; and that such aristocrats as were thus discovered to have regained their liberty, should be re-imprisoned.—The decree passed, but was so ill received by the people, that it was judged prudent to repeal it the next day.

This circumstance seems to be the signal of dissention between the Assembly and the Club: the former, apprehensive of revolting the public opinion on the one hand, and desirous of conciliating the Jacobins on the other, waver between indulgence and severity; but it is easy to discover, that their variance with the Jacobins is more a matter of expediency than principle, and that, were it not for other considerations, they would not suffer the imprisonment of a few thousand harmless people to interrupt the amity which has so long subsisted between themselves and their ancient allies.—It is written, “from their works you shall know them;” and reasoning from this tenet, which is our best authority, (for who can boast a science in the human heart?) I am justified in my opinion, and I know it to be that of many persons more competent to decide than myself. If I could have had doubts on the subject, the occurrences of the last few days would have amply satisfied them.



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However rejoiced the nation at large might be at the overthrow of Robespierre, no one was deceived as to the motives which actuated his colleagues in the Committee. Every day produced new indications not only of their general concurrence in the enormities of the government, but of their own personal guilt. The Convention, though it could not be insensible of this, was willing, with a complaisant prudence, to avoid the scandal of a public discussion, which must irritate the Jacobins, and expose its own weakness by a retrospect of the crimes it had applauded and supported. Laurent Lecointre,* alone, and apparently unconnected with party, has had the courage to exhibit an accusation against Billaud, Collot, Barrere, and those of Robespierre's accomplices who were members of the Committee of General Safety. He gave notice of his design on the eleventh of Fructidor (28th of August).

* Lecointre is a linen-draper at Versailles, an original revolutionist, and I believe of more decent character than most included in that description. If we could be persuaded that there were any real fanatics in the Convention, I should give Lecointre the credit of being among the number. He seems, at least, to have some material circumstances in his favour—such as possessing the means of living; of not having, in appearance, enriched himself by the revolution; and, of being the only member who, after a score of decrees to that purpose, has ventured to produce an account of his fortune to the public.

—It was received everywhere but in the Convention with applause; and the public was flattered with the hope that justice would attain another faction of its oppressors. On the succeeding day, Lecointre appeared at the tribune to read his charges. They conveyed, even to the most prejudiced mind, an entire conviction, that the members he accused were sole authors of a part, and accomplices in all the crimes which had desolated their country. Each charge was supported by material proof, which he deposited for the information of his colleagues. But this was unnecessary—his colleagues had no desire to be convinced; and, after overpowering him with ridicule and insult, they declared, without entering into any discussion, that they rejected the charges with indignation, and that the members implicated had uniformly acted according to their [own] wishes, and those of the nation.

As soon as this result was known in Paris, the people became enraged and disgusted, the public walks resounded with murmurs, the fermentation grew general, and some menaces were uttered of forcing the Convention to give Lecointre a more respectful hearing.—Intimidated by such unequivocal proofs of disapprobation, when the Assembly met on the thirteenth, it was decreed, after much opposition from Tallien, that Lecointre should be allowed to reproduce his charges, and that they should be solemnly examined.

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After all this, Lecointre, whose figure is almost ludicrous, and who is no orator, was to repeat a voluminous denunciation, amidst the clamour, abuse, chicane, and derision of the whole Convention. But there are occasions when the keenest ridicule is pointless; when the mind, armed by truth and elevated by humanity, rejects its insidious efforts—and, absorbed by more laudable feelings, despises even the smile of contempt. The justice of Lecointre's cause supplied his want of external advantages: and his arguments were so clear and so unanswerable, that the plain diction in which they were conveyed was more impressive than the most finished eloquence; and neither the malice nor sarcasms of his enemies had any effect but on those who were interested in silencing or confounding him. Yet, in proportion as the force of Lecointre's denunciation became evident, the Assembly appeared anxious to suppress it; and, after some hours' scandalous debate, during which it was frequently asserted that these charges could not be encouraged without criminating the entire legislative body, they decreed the whole to be false and defamatory.

The accused members defended themselves with the assurance of delinquents tried by their avowed accomplices, and who are previously certain of favour and acquittal; while Lecointre's conduct in the business seems to have been that of a man determined to persevere in an act of duty, which he has little reason to hope will be successful.*

* It is said, that, at the conclusion of this disgraceful business, the members of the convention crowded about the delinquents with their habitual servility, and appeared gratified that their services on the occasion had given them a claim to notice and familiarity.

Though the galleries of the Convention were more than usually furnished on the day with applauders, yet this decision has been universally ill received. The time is passed when the voice of reason could be silenced by decrees. The stupendous tyranny of the government, though not meliorated in principle, is relaxed in practice; and this vote, far from operating in favour of the culprits, has only served to excite the public indignation, and to render them more odious. Those who cannot judge of the logical precision of Lecointre's arguments, or the justness of his inferences, can feel that his charges are merited. Every heart, every tongue, acknowledges the guilt of those he has attacked. They are certain France has been the prey of numberless atrocities—they are certain, that these were perpetrated by order of the committee; that eleven members composed it; and that Robespierre and his associates being but three, did not constitute a majority.



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These facts are now commented on with as much freedom as can be expected among a people whose imaginations are yet haunted by revolutionary tribunals and Bastilles, and the conclusions are not favourable to the Convention. The national discontent is, however, suspended by the hostilities between the legislature and the Jacobin club: the latter still persists in demanding the revolutionary system in its primitive severity, while the former are restrained from compliance, not only by the odium it must draw on them, but from a certainty that it cannot be supported but through the agency of the popular societies, who would thus again become their dictators. I believe it is not unlikely that the people and the Convention are both endeavouring to make instruments of each other to destroy the common enemy; for the little popularity the Convention enjoy is doubtless owing to a superior hatred of the Jacobins: and the moderation which the former affect towards the people, is equally influenced by a view of forming a powerful balance against these obnoxious societies.—While a sort of necessity for this temporizing continues, we shall go on very tranquilly, and it is become a mode to say the Convention is “adorable.”

Tallien, who has been wrestling with his ill fame for a transient popularity, has thought it advisable to revive the public attention by the farce of Pisistratus—at least, an attempt to assassinate him, in which there seems to have been more eclat than danger, has given rise to such an opinion. Bulletins of his health are delivered every day in form to the Convention, and some of the provincial clubs have sent congratulations on his escape. But the sneers of the incredulous, and perhaps an internal admonition of the ridicule and disgrace attendant on the worship of an idol whose reputation is so unpropitious, have much repressed the customary ardour, and will, I think, prevent these “hair-breadth ’scapes” from continuing fashionable.—Yours, &c.

[No Date Given]

When I describe the French as a people bending meekly beneath the most absurd and cruel oppression, transmitted from one set of tyrants to another, without personal security, without commerce—menaced by famine, and desolated by a government whose ordinary resources are pillage and murder; you may perhaps read with some surprize the progress and successes of their armies. But, divest yourself of the notions you may have imbibed from interested misrepresentations—forget the revolutionary common-place of “enthusiams”, “soldiers of freedom,” and “defenders of their country”—examine the French armies as acting under the motives which usually influence such bodies, and I am inclined to believe you will see nothing very wonderful or supernatural in their victories.

The greater part of the French troops are now composed of young men taken indiscriminately from all classes, and forced into the service by the first requisition. They arrive at the army ill-disposed, or at best indifferent, for it must not be forgotten, that all who could be prevailed on to go voluntarily had departed before recourse was had to the measure of a general levy. They are then distributed into different corps, so

that no local connections remain: the natives of the North are mingled with those of the South, and all provincial combinations are interdicted.



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It is well known that the military branch of espionage is as extended as the civil, and the certainty of this destroys confidence, and leaves even the unwilling soldier no resource but to go through his professional duty with as much zeal as though it were his choice. On the one hand, the discipline is severe—on the other, licentiousness is permitted beyond all example; and, half-terrified, half-seduced, principles the most inimical, and morals the least corrupt, become habituated to fear nothing but the government, and to relish a life of military indulgence.—The armies were some time since ill clothed, and often ill fed; but the requisitions, which are the scourge of the country, supply them, for the moment, with profusion: the manufacturers, the shops, and the private individual, are robbed to keep them in good humour—the best wines, the best clothes, the prime of every thing, is destined to their use; and men, who before laboured hard to procure a scanty subsistence, now revel in luxury and comparative idleness.

The rapid promotion acquired in the French army is likewise another cause of its adherence to the government. Every one is eager to be advanced; for, by means of requisitions, pillage and perquisites, the most trifling command is very lucrative.—Vast sums of money are expended in supplying the camps with newspapers written nearly for that purpose, and no others are permitted to be publicly circulated.—When troops are quartered in a town, instead of that cold reception which it is usual to accord such inmates, the system of terror acts as an excellent Marechal de Logis, and procures them, if not a cordial, at least a substantial one; and it is indubitable, that they are no where so well entertained as at the houses of professed aristocrats. The officers and men live in a familiarity highly gratifying to the latter; and, indeed, neither are distinguishable by their language, manners, or appearance. There is, properly speaking, no subordination except in the field, and a soldier has only to avoid politics, and cry “Vive la Convention!” to secure plenary indulgence on all other occasions.—Many who entered the army with regret, continue there willingly for the sake of a maintenance; besides that a decree exists, which subjects the parents of those who return, to heavy punishments. In a word, whatever can operate on the fears, or interests, or passions, is employed to preserve the allegiance of the armies to the government, and attach them to their profession.

I am far from intending to detract from the national bravery—the annals of the French Monarchy abound with the most splendid instances of it—I only wish you to understand, what I am fully convinced of myself, that liberty and republicanism have no share in the present successes. The battle of Gemappe was gained when the Brissotin faction had enthroned itself on the ruins of a constitution, which the armies were said to adore with enthusiasm: by what sudden

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inspiration were their affections transferred to another form of government? or will any one pretend that they really understood the democratic Machiavelism which they were to propagate in Brabant? At the battle of Maubeuge, France was in the first paroxysm of revolutionary terror—at that of Fleurus, she had become a scene of carnage and proscription, at once the most wretched and the most detestable of nations, the sport and the prey of despots so contemptible, that neither the excess of their crimes, nor the sufferings they inflicted, could efface the ridicule which was incurred by a submission to them. Were the French then fighting for liberty, or did they only move on professionally, with the enemy in front, the Guillotine in the rear, and the intermediate space filled up with the licentiousness of a camp?—If the name alone of liberty suffices to animate the French troops to conquest, and they could imagine it was enjoyed under Brissot or Robespierre, this is at least a proof that they are rather amateurs than connoisseurs; and I see no reason why the same impulse might not be given to an army of Janizaries, or the the legions of Tippoo Saib.

After all, it may be permitted to doubt, whether the sort of enthusiasm so liberally ascribed to the French, would really contribute more to their successes, than the thoughtless courage I am willing to allow them.—It is, I believe, the opinion of military men, that the best soldiers are those who are most disposed to act mechanically; and we are certain that the most brilliant victories have been obtained where this ardour, said to be produced by the new doctrines, could have had no influence.—The heroes of Pavia, of Narva, or those who administered to the vain-glory of Louis the Fourteenth, by ravaging the Palatinate, we may suppose little acquainted with it. The fate of battles frequently depends on causes which the General, the Statesman, or the Philosopher, are equally unable to decide upon; and the laurel, “meed of mighty conquerors,” seems oftener to fall at the caprice of the wind, than to be gathered. It is sometimes the lot of the ablest tactician, at others of the most voluminous muster-roll; but, I believe, there are few examples where these political elevations have had an effect, when unaccompanied by advantages of situation, superior skill, or superior numbers.—“*La plupart des gens de guerre (says Fontenelle) sont leur metier avec beaucoup de courage. Il en est peu qui y pensent; leurs bras agissent aussi vigoureusement que l'on veut, leurs tetes se reposent, et ne prennent presque part a rien*”*

* “Military men in general do their duty with much courage, but few make it a subject of reflection. With all the bodily activity that can be expected of them, their minds remain at rest, and partake but little of the business they are engaged in.”

—If this can be applied with truth to any armies, it must be to those of France. We have seen them successively and implicitly adopting all the new constitutions and strange gods which faction and extravagance could devise—we have seen them alternately the dupes and slaves of all parties: at one period abandoning their King and their religion: at another adulating Robespierre, and deifying Marat.—These, I confess are

dispositions to make good soldiers, but convey to me no idea of enthusiasts or republicans.



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The bulletin of the Convention is periodically furnished with splendid feats of heroism performed by individuals of their armies, and I have no doubt but some of them are true. There are, however, many which have been very peaceably culled from old memoirs, and that so unskillfully, that the hero of the present year loses a leg or an arm in the same exploit, and uttering the self-same sentences, as one who lived two centuries ago. There is likewise a sort of jobbing in the edifying scenes which occasionally occur in the Convention—if a soldier happen to be wounded who has relationship, acquaintance, or connexion, with a Deputy, a tale of extraordinary valour and extraordinary devotion to the cause is invented or adopted; the invalid is presented in form at the bar of the Assembly, receives the fraternal embrace and the promise of a pension, and the feats of the hero, along with the munificence of the Convention, are ordered to circulate in the next bulletin. Yet many of the deeds recorded very deservedly in these annals of glory, have been performed by men who abhor republican principles, and lament the disasters their partizans have occasioned. I have known even notorious aristocrats introduced to the Convention as martyrs to liberty, and who have, in fact, behaved as gallantly as though they had been so.—These are paradoxes which a military man may easily reconcile.

Independently of the various secondary causes that contribute to the success of the French armies, there is one which those persons who wish to exalt every thing they denominate republican seem to exclude—I mean, the immense advantage they possess in point of numbers. There has scarcely been an engagement of importance, in which the French have not profited by this in a very extraordinary degree.*

* This has been confessed to me by many republicans themselves; and a disproportion of two or three to one must add considerably to republican enthusiasm.

—Whenever a point is to be gained, the sacrifice of men is not a matter of hesitation. One body is dispatched after another; and fresh troops thus succeeding to oppose those of the enemy already harassed, we must not wonder that the event has so often proved favourable to them.

A republican, who passes for highly informed, once defended this mode of warfare by observing, that in the course of several campaigns more troops perished by sickness than the sword. If then an object could be attained by such means, so much time was saved, and the loss eventually the same: but the Generals of other countries dare not risk such philosophical calculations, and would be accountable to the laws of humanity for their destructive conquests.

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When you estimate the numbers that compose the French armies, you are not to consider them as an undisciplined multitude, whose sole force is in their numbers. From the beginning of the revolution, many of them have been exercised in the National Guard; and though they might not make a figure on the parade at Potsdam, their inferiority is not so great as to render the German exactitude a counterbalance for the substantial inequality of numbers. Yet, powerfully as these considerations favour the military triumphs of France, there is a period when we may expect both cause and effect will terminate. That period may still be far removed, but whenever the assignats* become totally discredited, and it shall be found requisite to economize in the war department, adieu la gloire, a bas les armes, and perhaps bon soir la republique; for I do not reckon it possible, that armies so constituted can ever be persuaded to subject themselves to the restraints and privations which must be indispensable, as soon as the government ceases to have the disposal of an unlimited fund.

* The mandats were, in fact, but a continuation of the assignats, under another name. The last decree for the emission of assignats, limited the quantity circulated to forty milliards, which taken at par, is only about sixteen hundred millions of pounds sterling!

What I have hitherto written you will understand as applicable only to the troops employed on the frontiers. There are some of another description, more cherished and not less serviceable, who act as a sort of police militant and errant, and defend the republic against her internal enemies—the republicans. Almost every town of importance is occasionally infested by these servile instruments of despotism, who are maintained in insolent profusion, to overawe those whom misery and famine might tempt to revolt. When a government, after imprisoning some hundred thousands of the most distinguished in every class of life, and disarming all the rest, is yet obliged to employ such a force for its protection, we may justifiably conclude, it does not presume on the attachment of the people. It is not impossible that the agents of different descriptions, destined to the service of conciliating the interior to republicanism, might alone form an army equal to that of the Allies; but this is a task, where the numbers employed only serve to render it more difficult. They, however, procure submission, if they do not create affection; and the Convention is not delicate.

Amiens, Sept. 30, 1794.

The domestic politics of France are replete with novelties: the Convention is at war with the Jacobins—and the people, even to the most decided aristocrats, have become partizans of the Convention.—My last letters have explained the origin of these phaenomena, and I will now add a few words on their progress.



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You have seen that, at the fall of Robespierre, the revolutionary government had reached the very summit of despotism, and that the Convention found themselves under the necessity of appearing to be directed by a new impulse, or of acknowledging their participation in the crimes they affected to deplore.—In consequence, almost without the direct repeal of any law, (except some which affected their own security,) a more moderate system has been gradually adopted, or, to speak more correctly, the revolutionary one is suffered to relax. The Jacobins behold these popular measures with extreme jealousy, as a means which may in time render the legislature independent of them; and it is certainly not the least of their discontents, that, after all their labours in the common cause, they find themselves excluded both from power and emoluments. Accustomed to carry every thing by violence, and more ferocious than politic, they have, by insisting on the reincarceration of suspected people, attached a numerous party to the Convention, which is thus warned that its own safety depends on repressing the influence of clubs, which not only loudly demand that the prisons may be again filled, but frequently debate on the project of transporting all the “enemies of the republic” together.

The liberty of the press, also, is a theme of discord not less important than the emancipation of aristocrats. The Jacobins are decidedly adverse to it; and it is a sort of revolutionary solecism, that those who boast of having been the original destroyers of despotism, are now the advocates of arbitrary imprisonment, and restraints on the freedom of the press. The Convention itself is divided on the latter subject; and, after a revolution of five years, founded on the doctrine of the rights of man, it has become matter of dispute—whether so principal an article of them ought really to exist or not. They seem, indeed, willing to allow it, provided restrictions can be devised which may prevent calumny from reaching their own persons; but as that cannot easily be achieved, they not only contend against the liberty of the press in practice, but have hitherto refused to sanction it by decree, even as a principle.

It is perhaps reluctantly that the Convention opposes these powerful and extended combinations which have so long been its support, and it may dread the consequences of being left without the means of overawing or influencing the people; but the example of the Brissotins, who, by attempting to profit by the services of the Jacobins, without submitting to their domination, fell a sacrifice, has warned their survivors of the danger of employing such instruments. It is evident that the clubs will not act subordinately, and that they must either be subdued to insignificance, or regain their authority entirely; and as neither the people nor Convention are disposed to acquiesce in the latter, they are politicly joining their efforts to accelerate the former.



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Yet, notwithstanding these reciprocal cajoleries, the return of justice is slow and mutable; an instinctive or habitual preference of evil appears at times to direct the Convention, even in opposition to their own interests. They have as yet done little towards repairing the calamities of which they are the authors; and we welcome the little they have done, not for its intrinsic value, but as we do the first spring flowers—which, though of no great sweetness or beauty, we consider as pledges that the storms of winter are over, and that a milder season is approaching.—It is true, the revolutionary Committees are diminished in number, the prisons are disencumbered, and a man is not liable to be arrested because a Jacobin suspects his features: yet there is a wide difference between such toleration and freedom and security; and it is a circumstance not favourable to those who look beyond the moment, that the tyrannical laws which authorized all the late enormities are still unrepealed. The Revolutionary Tribunal continues to sentence people to death, on pretexts as frivolous as those which were employed in the time of Robespierre; they have only the advantage of being tried more formally, and of forfeiting their lives upon proof, instead of without it, for actions that a strictly administered justice would not punish by a month's imprisonment.*

* For instance, a young monk, for writing fanatic letters, and signing resolutions in favour of foederalism—a hosier, for facilitating the return of an emigrant—a man of ninety, for speaking against the revolution, and discrediting the assignats—a contractor, for embezzling forage—people of various descriptions, for obstructing the recruitment, or insulting the tree of liberty. These, and many similar condemnations, will be found in the proceedings of the Revolutionary Tribunal, long after the death of Robespierre, and when justice and humanity were said to be restored.

A ceremony has lately taken place, the object of which was to deposit the ashes of Marat in the Pantheon, and to dislodge the bust of Mirabeau—who, notwithstanding two years notice to quit this mansion of immortality, still remained there. The ashes of Marat being escorted to the Convention by a detachment of Jacobins, and the President having properly descanted on the virtues which once animated the said ashes, they were conveyed to the place destined for their reception; and the excommunicated Mirabeau being delivered over to the secular arm of a beadle, these remains of the divine Marat were placed among the rest of the republican deities. To have obliged the Convention in a body to attend and consecrate the crimes of this monster, though it could not degrade them, was a momentary triumph for the Jacobins, nor could the royalists behold without satisfaction the same men deploring the death of Marat, who, a month before, had celebrated the fall of Louis the Sixteenth! To have been so deplored, and so celebrated, are, methinks, the very extremes of infamy and glory.



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I must explain to you, that the Jacobins have lately been composed of two parties—the avowed adherents of Collot, Billaud, &c. and the concealed remains of those attached to Robespierre; but party has now given way to principle, a circumstance not usual; and the whole club of Paris, with several of the affiliated ones, join in censuring the innovating tendencies of the Convention.—It is curious to read the debates of the parent society, which pass in afflicting details of the persecutions experienced by the patriots on the parts of the moderates and aristocrats, who, they assert, are become so daring as even to call in question the purity of the immortal Marat. You will suppose, of course, that this cruel persecution is nothing more than an interdiction to persecute others; and their notions of patriotism and moderation may be conceived by their having just expelled Tallien and Freron as moderates.*

* Freron endeavoured, on this occasion, to disculpate himself from the charge of “moderantisme,” by alledging he had opposed Lecointre’s denunciation of Barrere, &c. —and certainly one who piques himself on being the pupil of the divine Marat, was worthy of remaining in the fraternity from which he was now expelled.—Feron is a veteran journalist of the revolution, of better talents, though not of better fame, than the generality of his contemporaries: or, rather, his early efforts in exciting the people to rebellion entitle him to a preeminence of infamy.

Amiens, October 4, 1794.

We have had our guard withdrawn for some days; and I am just now returned from Peronne, where we had been in order to see the seals taken off the papers, &c. which I left there last year. I am much struck with the alteration observable in people’s countenances. Every person I meet seems to have contracted a sort of revolutionary aspect: many walk with their heads down, and with half-shut eyes measure the whole length of a street, as though they were still intent on avoiding greetings from the suspicious; some look grave and sorrow-worn; some apprehensive, as if in hourly expectation of a *mandat d’arret*; and others absolutely ferocious, from a habit of affecting the barbarity of the times.

Their language is nearly as much changed as their appearance—the revolutionary jargon is universal, and the most distinguished aristocrats converse in the style of Barrere’s reports. The common people are not less proficient in this fashionable dialect, than their superiors; and, as far as I can judge, are become so from similar motives. While I was waiting this morning at a shop-door, I listened to a beggar who was cheapening a slice of pumpkin, and on some disagreement about the price, the beggar told the old *revendeuse* [Market-woman.] that she was “*gangrenee d’aristocratie*.” [“Eat up with aristocracy.”] “*Je vous en defie*,” [“I defy you.”] retorted the pumpkin-merchant; but turning pale as she spoke, “*Mon civisme est*



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a toute epreuve, mais prenez donc ta citrouille, ["My civism is unquestionable; but here take your pumpkin."] take it then." "*Ah, te voila bonne republicaine,* ["Ah! Now I see you are a good republican."] says the beggar, carrying off her bargain; while the old woman muttered, "*Oui, oui, l'on a beau etre republicaine tandis qu'on n'a pas de pain a manger.*" ["Yes, in troth, it's a fine thing to be a republican, and have no bread to eat."]

I hear little of the positive merits of the convention, but the hope is general that they will soon suppress the Jacobin clubs; yet their attacks continue so cold and cautious, that their intentions are at least doubtful: they know the voice of the nation at large would be in favour of such a measure, and they might, if sincere, act more decisively, without risk to themselves.—The truth is, they would willingly proscribe the persons of the Jacobins, while they cling to their principles, and still hesitate whether they shall confide in a people whose resentment they have so much deserved, and have so much reason to dread. Conscious guilt appears to shackle all their proceedings, and though the punishment of some subordinate agents cannot, in the present state of things, be dispensed with, yet the Assembly unveil the register of their crimes very reluctantly, as if each member expected to see his own name inscribed on it. Thus, even delinquents, who would otherwise be sacrificed voluntarily to public justice, are in a manner protected by delays and chicane, because an investigation might implicate the Convention as the example and authoriser of their enormities.—Fouquier Tinville devoted a thousand innocent people to death in less time than it has already taken to bring him to a trial, where he will benefit by all those judicial forms which he has so often refused to others. This man, who is much the subject of conversation at present, was Public Accuser to the Revolutionary Tribunal—an office which, at best, in this instance, only served to give an air of regularity to assassination: but, by a sort of genius in turpitude, he contrived to render it odious beyond its original perversion, in giving to the most elaborate and revolting cruelties a turn of spontaneous pleasantry, or legal procedure.—The prisoners were insulted with sarcasms, intimidated by threats, and still oftener silenced by arbitrary declarations, that they were not entitled to speak; and those who were taken to the scaffold, after no other ceremony than calling over their names, had less reason to complain, than if they had previously been exposed to the barbarities of such trials.—Yet this wretch might, for a time at least, have escaped punishment, had he not, in defending himself, criminated the remains of the Committee, whom it was intended to screen. When he appeared at the bar of the Convention, every word he uttered seemed to fill its members with alarm, and he was ordered away before he could finish his declaration. It must be acknowledged, that, however he may be condemned by justice and humanity, nothing could legally attach to him: he was only the agent of the Convention, and the utmost horrors of the Tribunal were not merely sanctioned, but enjoined by specific decrees.



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I have been told by a gentleman who was at school with Fouquier, and has had frequent occasions of observing him at different periods since, that he always appeared to him to be a man of mild manners, and by no means likely to become the instrument of these atrocities; but a strong addiction to gaming having involved him in embarrassments, he was induced to accept the office of Public Accuser to the Tribunal, and was progressively led on from administering to the iniquity of his employers, to find a gratification in it himself.

I have often thought, that the habit of watching with selfish avidity for those turns of fortune which enrich one individual by the misery of another, must imperceptibly tend to harden the heart. How can the gamester, accustomed both to suffer and inflict ruin with indifference, preserve that benevolent frame of mind, which, in the ordinary and less censurable pursuits of common life, is but too prone to become impaired, and to leave humanity more a duty than a feeling?

The conduct of Fouquier Tinville has led me to some reflections on a subject which I know the French consider as matter of triumph, and as a peculiar advantage which their national character enjoys over the English—I mean that smoothness of manner and guardedness of expression which they call “aimable,” and which they have the faculty of attaining and preserving distinctly from a correspondent temper of the mind. It accompanies them through the most irritating vicissitudes, and enables them to deceive, even without deceit: for though this suavity is habitual, of course frequently undesigning, the stranger is nevertheless thrown off his guard by it, and tempted to place confidence, or expect services, which a less conciliating deportment would not have been suggested. A Frenchman may be an unkind husband, a severe parent, or an arrogant master, yet never contract his features, or asperate his voice, and for this reason is, in the national sense, “un homme bien doux.” His heart may become corrupt, his principles immoral, and his disposition ferocious—yet he shall still retain his equability of tone and complacent phraseology, and be “un homme bien aimable.”

The revolution has tended much to developpe this peculiarity of the French character, and has, by various examples in public life, confirmed the opinions I had formed from previous observation. Fouquier Tinville, as I have already noticed, was a man of gentle exterior.—Couthon, the execrable associate of Robespierre, was mildness itself—Robespierre’s harangues are in a style of distinguished sensibility—and even Carrier, the destroyer of thirty thousand Nantais, is attested by his fellow-students to have been of an amiable disposition. I know a man of most insinuating address, who has been the means of conducting his own brother to the Guillotine; and another nearly as prepossessing, who, without losing his courteous demeanor, was, during the late revolutionary excesses, the intimate of an executioner.



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It would be too voluminous to enumerate all the contrasts of manners and character exhibited during the French revolution—The philosophic Condorcet, pursuing with malignancy his patron, the Duc de la Rochefoucault, and hesitating with atrocious mildness on the sentence of the King—The massacres of the prisons connived at by the gentle Petion—Collot d'Herbois dispatching, by one discharge of cannon, three hundred people together, "to spare his sensibility" the talk of executions in detail—And St. Just, the deviser of a thousand enormities, when he left the Committee, after his last interview, with the project of sending them all to the Guillotine, telling them, in a tone of tender reproach, like a lover of romance, "Vous avez fletri mon coeur, je vais l'ouvrir a la Convention."— Madame Roland, in spite of the tenderness of her sex, could coldly reason on the expediency of a civil war, which she acknowledged might become necessary to establish the republic. Let those who disapprove this censure of a female, whom it is a sort of mode to lament, recollect that Madame Roland was the victim of a celebrity she had acquired in assisting the efforts of faction to dethrone the King—that her literary bureau was dedicated to the purpose of exasperating the people against him—and that she was considerably instrumental to the events which occasioned his death. If her talents and accomplishments make her an object of regret, it was to the unnatural misapplication of those talents and accomplishments in the service of party, that she owed her fate. Her own opinion was, that thousands might justifiably be devoted to the establishment of a favourite system; or, to speak truly, to the aggrandisement of those who were its partizans. The same selfish principle actuated an opposite faction, and she became the sacrifice.—"Oh even-handed justice!"

I do not pretend to decide whether the English are virtually more gentle in their nature than the French; but I am persuaded this douceur, on which the latter pride themselves, affords no proof of the contrary. An Englishman is seldom out of humour, without proclaiming it to all the world; and the most forcible motives of interest, or expediency, cannot always prevail on him to assume a more engaging external than that which delineates his feelings.

If he has a matter to refuse, he usually begins by fortifying himself with a little ruggedness of manner, by way of prefacing a denial he might otherwise not have resolution to persevere in. "The hows and whens of life" corrugate his features, and disharmonize his periods; contradiction sours, and passion ruffles him—and, in short, an Englishman displeased, from whatever cause, is neither "un homme bien doux," nor "un homme bien aimable;" but such as nature has made him, subject to infirmities and sorrows, and unable to disguise the one, or appear indifferent to the other. Our country, like every other, has doubtless produced too many examples of human depravity; but I scarcely recollect any, where a ferocious disposition was not accompanied by corresponding manners—or where men, who would plunder or massacre, affected to retain at the same time habits of softness, and a conciliating physiognomy.



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We are, I think, on the whole, authorized to conclude, that, in determining the claims to national superiority, the boasted and unvarying controul which the French exercise over their features and accents, is not a merit; nor those indications of what passes within, to which the English are subject, an imperfection. If the French sometimes supply their want of kindness, or render disappointment less acute at the moment, by a sterile complacency, the English harshness is often only the alloy to an efficient benevolence, and a sympathizing mind. In France they have no humourists who seem impelled by their nature to do good, in spite of their temperament—nor have we in England many people who are cold and unfeeling, yet systematically aimable: but I must still persist in not thinking it a defect that we are too impetuous, or perhaps too ingenuous, to unite contradictions.

There is a cause, that doubtless has its effects in representing the English disadvantageously, and which I have never heard properly allowed for. The liberty of the press, and the great interest taken by all ranks of people in public affairs, have occasioned a more numerous circulation of periodical prints of every kind in England, than in any other country in Europe. Now, as it is impossible to fill them constantly with politics, and as the taste of different readers must be consulted, every barbarous adventure, suicide, murder, robbery, domestic fracas, assaults, and batteries of the lower orders, with the duels and divorces of the higher, are all chronicled in various publications, disseminated over Europe, and convey an idea that we are a very miserable, ferocious, and dissolute nation. The foreign gazettes being chiefly appropriated to public affairs, seldom record either the vices, the crimes, or misfortunes of individuals; so that they are thereby at least prevented from fixing an unfavourable judgement on the national character.

Mercier observes, that the number of suicides committed in Paris was supposed to exceed greatly that of similar disasters in London; and that murders in France were always accompanied by circumstances of peculiar horror, though policy and custom had rendered the publication of such events less general than with us.—Our divorces, at which the Gallic purity of manners used to be so much scandalized, are, no doubt, to be regretted; but that such separations were not then allowed, or desired in France, may perhaps be attributed, at least as justly, to the complaisance of husbands, as to the discretion of wives, or the national morality.*

* At present, in the monthly statement, the number of divorces in France, is often nearly equal to that of the marriages.

I should reproach myself if I could feel impartial when I contemplate the English character; yet I certainly endeavour to write as though I were so. If I have erred, it has been rather in allowing too much to received opinions on the subject of this country, than in suffering my affections to make me unjust; for though I am far from affecting the fashion of the day, which censures all prejudices as illiberal, except those in disfavour of

our own country, yet I am warranted, I hope, in saying, that however partial I may appear to England, I have not been so at the expence of truth.—Yours, &c.



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October 6, 1794.

The sufferings of individuals have often been the means of destroying or reforming the most powerful tyrannies; reason has been convinced by argument, and passion appealed to by declamation in vain—when some unvarnished tale, or simple exposure of facts, has at once roused the feelings, and conquered the supineness of an oppressed people.

The revolutionary government, in spite of the clamorous and weekly swearings of the Convention to perpetuate it, has received a check from an event of this nature, which I trust it will never recover.—By an order of the Revolutionary Committee of Nantes, in November 1793, all prisoners accused of political crimes were to be transferred to Paris, where the tribunal being more immediately under the direction of government, there would be no chance of their acquittal. In consequence of this order, an hundred and thirty-two inhabitants of Nantes, arrested on the usual pretexts of foederalism, or as suspected, or being Muscadins, were, some months after, conducted to Paris. Forty of the number died through the hardships and ill treatment they encountered on the way, the rest remained in prison until after the death of Robespierre.

The evidence produced on their trial, which lately took place, has revealed but too circumstantially all the horrors of the revolutionary system. Destruction in every form, most shocking to morals or humanity, has depopulated the countries of the Loire; and republican Pizarro's and Almagro's seem to have rivalled each other in the invention and perpetration of crimes.

When the prisons of Nantes overflowed, many hundreds of their miserable inhabitants had been conducted by night, and chained together, to the river side; where, being first stripped of their clothes, they were crowded into vessels with false bottoms, constructed for the purpose, and sunk.*—

* Though the horror excited by such atrocious details must be serviceable to humanity, I am constrained by decency to spare the reader a part of them. Let the imagination, however repugnant, pause for a moment over these scenes—Five, eight hundred people of different sexes, ages, and conditions, are taken from their prisons, in the dreary months of December and January, and conducted, during the silence of the night, to the banks of the Loire. The agents of the Republic there despoil them of their clothes, and force them, shivering and defenceless, to enter the machines prepared for their destruction—they are chained down, to prevent their escape by swimming, and then the bottom is detached for the upper part, and sunk.—On some occasions the miserable victims contrived to loose themselves, and clinging to the boards near them, shrieked in the agonies of despair and death, “O save us! it is not even now too late: in mercy save us!” But they appealed to wretches to whom mercy was a stranger; and, being cut away from their hold by strokes of the sabre, perished with their companions.



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That nothing might be wanting to these outrages against nature, they were escribed as jests, and called “Noyades, water parties,” and “civic baptisms”! Carrier, a Deputy of the Convention, used to dine and make parties of pleasure, accompanied by music and every species of gross luxury, on board the barges appropriated to these execrable purposes.

—At one time, six hundred children appear to have been destroyed in this manner;—young people of different sexes were tied in pairs and thrown into the river;—thousands were shot in the high roads and in the fields; and vast numbers were guillotined, without a trial!*

* Six young women, (the *Mesdemoiselles la Meterie*,) in particular, sisters, and all under four-and-twenty, were ordered to the Guillotine together: the youngest died instantly of fear, the rest were executed successively.—A child eleven years old, who had previously told the executioner, with affecting simplicity, that he hoped he would not hurt him much, received three strokes of the Guillotine before his head was severed from his body.

—Two thousand died, in less than two months, of a pestilence, occasioned by this carnage: the air became infected, and the waters of the Loire empoisoned, by dead bodies; and those whom tyranny yet spared, perished by the elements which nature intended for their support.*

* Vast sums were exacted from the Nantais for purifying the air, and taking precautions against epidemical disorders.

But I will not dwell on horrors, which, if not already known to all Europe, I should be unequal to describe: suffice it to say, that whatever could disgrace or afflict mankind, whatever could add disgust to detestation, and render cruelty, if possible, less odious than the circumstances by which it was accompanied, has been exhibited in this unfortunate city.—Both the accused and their witnesses were at first timid through apprehension, but by degrees the monstrous mysteries of the government were laid open, and it appeared, beyond denial or palliation, that these enormities were either devised, assisted, or connived at, by Deputies of the Convention, celebrated for their ardent republicanism and revolutionary zeal.—The danger of confiding unlimited power to such men as composed the majority of the Assembly, was now displayed in a manner that penetrated the dullest imagination, and the coldest heart; and it was found, that, armed with decrees, aided by revolutionary committees, revolutionary troops, and revolutionary vehicles of destruction,* missionaries selected by choice from the whole representation, had, in the city of Nantes alone, and under the mask of enthusiastic patriotism, sacrificed thirty thousand people!



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* A company was formed of all the ruffians that could be collected together. They were styled the Company of Marat, and were specially empowered to arrest whomsoever they chose, and to enter houses by night or day—in fine, to proscribe and pillage at their pleasure.

Facts like these require no comment. The nation may be intimidated, and habits of obedience, or despair of redress, prolong its submission; but it can no longer be deceived: and patriotism, revolutionary liberty, and philosophy, are for ever associated with the drowning machines of Carrier, and the precepts and calculations of a Herauld de Sechelles,* or a Lequinio.**—

* Herauld de Sechelles was distinguished by birth, talents, and fortune, above most of his colleagues in the Convention; yet we find him in correspondence with Carrier, applauding his enormities, and advising him how to continue them with effect.—Herauld was of a noble family, and had been a president in the Parliament of Paris. He was one of Robespierre's Committee of Public Welfare, and being in some way implicated in a charge of treachery brought against Simon, another Deputy, was guillotined at the same time with Danton.** Lequinio is a philosopher by profession, who has endeavoured to enlighten his countrymen by a publication entitled "*Les Prejuges Detruits*," and since by proving it advantageous to make no prisoners of war.

—The ninety Nantais, against whom there existed no serious charge, and who had already suffered more than death, were acquitted. Yet, though the people were gratified by this verdict, and the general indignation appeased by an immediate arrest of those who had been most notoriously active in these dreadful operations, a deep and salutary impression remains, and we may hope it will be found impracticable either to renew the same scenes, or for the Convention to shelter (as they seemed disposed to do) the principal criminals, who are members of their own body. Yet, how are these delinquents to be brought to condemnation? They all acted under competent authority, and their dispatches to the Convention, which sufficiently indicated their proceedings, were always sanctioned by circulation, and applauded, according to the excess of their flagitiousness.

It is worthy of remark, that Nantes, the principal theatre of these persecutions and murders, had been early distinguished by the attachment of its inhabitants to the revolution; insomuch, that, at the memorable epoch when the short-sighted policy of the Court excluded the Constituent Assembly from their Hall at Versailles, and they took refuge in the Jeu de Paume, with a resolution fatal to their country, never to separate until they had obtained their purposes, an express was sent to Nantes, as the place they should make choice of, if any violence obliged them to quit the neighbourhood of Paris.

But it was not only by its principles that Nantes had signalized itself; at every period of the war, it had contributed largely both in men and money, and its riches and commerce



still rendered it one of the most important towns of the republic.—What has been its reward?—Barbarous envoys from the Convention, sent expressly to level the aristocracy of wealth, to crush its mercantile spirit, and decimate its inhabitants.*—



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* When Nantes was reduced almost to a state of famine by the destruction of commerce, and the supplies drawn for the maintenance of the armies, Commissioners were sent to Paris, to solicit a supply of provisions. They applied to Carrier, as being best acquainted with their distress, and were answered in this language:—"*Demandez, pour Nantes! je solliciterai qu'on porte le fer et la flamme dans cette abominable ville. Vous etes tous des coquins, des contre- revolutionnaires, des brigands, des scelerats, je ferai nommer une commission par la Convention Nationale.—J'irai moi meme a la tete de cette commission.—Scelerats, je serai rouler les tetes dans Nantes—je regenererai Nantes.*"—"Is it for Nantes that you petition? I'll exert my influence to have fire and sword carried into that abominable city. You are all scoundrels, counter-revolutionists, thieves, miscreants.—I'll have a commission appointed by the Convention, and go myself at the head of it.— Villains, I'll set your heads a rolling about Nantes—I'll regenerate Nantes." Report of the Commission of Twenty-one, on the conduct of Carrier.

—Terrible lesson for those discontented and mistaken people, who, enriched by commerce, are not content with freedom and independence, but seek for visionary benefits, by becoming the partizans of innovation, or the tools of faction!*

* The disasters of Nantes ought not to be lost to the republicans of Birmingham, Manchester, and other great commercial towns, where "men fall out they know not why;" and where their increasing wealth and prosperity are the best eulogiums on the constitution they attempt to undermine.

I have hitherto said little of La Vendee; but the fate of Nantes is so nearly connected with it, that I shall make it the subject of my next letter.

[No Date or Place Given.]

It appears, that the greater part of the inhabitants of Poitou, Anjou, and the Southern divisions of Brittany, now distinguished by the general appellation of the people of La Vendee, (though they include those of several other departments,) never either comprehended or adopted the principles of the French revolution. Many different causes contributed to increase their original aversion from the new system, and to give their resistance that consistency, which has since become so formidable. A partiality for their ancient customs, an attachment to their Noblesse, and a deference for their Priests, are said to characterize the brave and simple natives of La Vendee. Hence republican writers, with self-complacent decision, always treat this war as the effect of ignorance, slavery, and superstition.



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The modern reformist, who calls the labourer from the plough, and the artizan from the loom, to make them statesmen or philosophers, and who has invaded the abodes of contented industry with the rights of man, that our fields may be cultivated, and our garments wove, by metaphysicians, will readily assent to this opinion.—Yet a more enlightened and liberal philosophy may be tempted to examine how far the Vendean have really merited the contempt and persecution of which they have been the objects. By the confession of the republicans themselves, they are religious, hospitable, and frugal, humane and merciful towards their enemies, and easily persuaded to whatever is just and reasonable.

I do not pretend to combat the narrow prejudices of those who suppose the worth or happiness of mankind compatible but with one set of opinions; and who, confounding the adventitious with the essential, appreciate only book learning: but surely, qualities which imply a knowledge of what is due both to God and man, and information sufficient to yield to what is right or rational, are not descriptive of barbarians; or at least, we may say with Phyrhus, “there is nothing barbarous in their discipline.”*

“The husbandmen of this country are in general men of simple manners, naturally well inclined, or at least not addicted to serious vices.” Lequinio, Guerre de La Vendee.

Dubois de Crance, speaking of the inhabitants of La Vendee, says, “They are the most hospitable people I ever saw, and always disposed to listen to what is just and reasonable, if proffered with mildness and humanity.”

“This unpolished people, whom, however, it is much less difficult to persuade than to fight.” Lequinio, G. de La V.

“They affected towards our prisoners a deceitful humanity, neglecting no means to draw them over to their own party, and often sending them back to us with only a simple prohibition to bear arms against the King or religion.” Report of Richard and Choudieu.

The ignorant Vendeans then could give lessons of policy and humanity, which the “enlightened” republicans were not capable of profiting by.

—Their adherence to their ancient institutions, and attachment to their Gentry and Clergy, when the former were abolished and the latter proscribed, might warrant a presumption that they were happy under the one, and kindly treated by the other: for though individuals may sometimes persevere in affections or habits from which they derive neither felicity nor advantage, whole bodies of men can scarcely be supposed eager to risk their lives in defence of privileges that have oppressed them, or of a religion from which they draw no consolation.

But whatever the cause, the new doctrines, both civil and religious, were received in La Vendee with a disgust, which was not only expressed by murmurs, but occasionally by little revolts, by disobedience to the constitutional authorities, and a rejection of the constitutional clergy.



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Some time previous to the deposition of the King, Commissioners were sent to suppress these disorders; and though I doubt not but all possible means were taken to conciliate, I can easily believe, that neither the King nor his Ministers might be desirous of subduing by force a people who erred only from piety or loyalty. What effect this system of indulgence might have produced cannot now be decided; because the subsequent overthrow of the monarchy, and the massacre or banishment of the priests, must have totally alienated their minds, and precluded all hope of reconciliation.—Disaffection, therefore, continued to increase, and the Brissotines are suspected of having rather fostered than repressed these intestine commotions,* for the same purpose which induced them to provoke the war with England, and to extend that of the Continent.

* Le Brun, one of the Brissotin Ministers, concealed the progress of this war for six months before he thought fit to report it to the Convention.

—It is impossible to assign a good motive to any act of this literary intriguer.

—Perhaps, while they determined to establish their faction by “braving all Europe,” they might think it equally politic to perplex and overawe Paris by a near and dangerous enemy, which would render their continuance in power necessary, or whom they might join, if expelled from it.*

* This last reason might afterwards have given way to their apprehensions, and the Brissotins have preferred the creation of new civil wars, to a confidence in the royalists. These men, who condemned the King for a supposed intention of defending an authority transmitted to him through whole ages, and recently sanctioned by the voice of the people, did not scruple to excite a civil war in defence of their six months’ sovereignty over a republic, proclaimed by a ferocious comedian, and certainly without the assent of the nation. Had the ill-fated Monarch dared thus to trifle with the lives of his subjects, he might have saved France and himself from ruin.

When men gratify their ambition by means so sanguinary and atrocious as those resorted to by the Brissotines, we are authorized in concluding they will not be more scrupulous in the use or preservation of power, than they were in attaining it; and we can have no doubt but that the fomenting or suppressing the progress of civil discord, was, with them, a mere question of expediency.

The decree which took place in March, 1793, for raising three hundred thousand men in the departments, changed the partial insurrections of La Vendee to an open and connected rebellion; and every where the young people refused going, and joined in preference the standard of revolt. In the beginning of the summer, the brigands* (as they were called) grew so numerous, that the government, now in the hands of Robespierre and his party, began to take serious measures to combat them.



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* Robbers—*banditti*—The name was first given, probably, to the insurgents of La Vendee, in order to insinuate a belief that the disorders were but of a slight and predatory nature.

—One body of troops were dispatched after another, who were all successively defeated, and every where fled before the royalists.

It is not unusual in political concerns to attribute to deep-laid plans and abstruse combinations, effects which are the natural result of private passions and isolated interests. Robespierre is said to have promoted both the destruction of the republican armies and those of La Vendee, in order to reduce the national population. That he was capable of imagining such a project is probable—yet we need not, in tracing the conduct of the war, look farther than to the character of the agents who were, almost necessarily, employed in it. Nearly every officer qualified for the command of an army, had either emigrated, or was on service at the frontiers; and the task of reducing by violence a people who resisted only because they deemed themselves injured, and who, even in the estimation of the republicans, could only be mistaken, was naturally avoided by all men who were not mere adventurers. It might likewise be the policy of the government to prefer the services of those, who, having neither reputation nor property, would be more dependent, and whom, whether they became dangerous by their successes or defeats, it would be easy to sacrifice.

Either, then, from necessity or choice, the republican armies in La Vendee were conducted by dissolute and rapacious wretches, at all times more eager to pillage than fight, and who were engaged in securing their plunder, when they should have been in pursuit of the enemy. On every occasion they seemed to retreat, that their ill success might afford them a pretext for declaring that the next town or village was confederated with the insurgents, and for delivering it up, in consequence, to murder and rapine. Such of the soldiers as could fill their pocket-books with assignats, left their less successful companions, and retired as invalids to the hospitals: the battalions of Paris (and particularly “the conquerors of the Bastille”) had such ardour for pillage, that every person possessed of property was, in their sense, an aristocrat, whom it was lawful to despoil.*

* *“Le pillage a ete porte a son comble—les militaires au lieu de songer a ce qu’ils avoient a faire, n’ont pense qu’a remplir leurs sacs, et a voir se perpetuer une guerre aussi avantageuse a leur interet—beaucoup de simples soldats ont acquis cinquante mille francs et plus; on en a vu couverts de bijoux, et faisant dans tous les genres des depenses d’une produgaloite, monstreuse.”* Lequinio, *Guerre de la Vendee*. “The most unbridled pillage prevailed—officers, instead of attending to their duty, thought only of filling their portmanteaus, and of the means

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to perpetuate a war they found so profitable.—Many private soldiers made fifty thousand livres, and they have been seen loaded with trinkets, and exercising the most abominable prodigalities of every kind.” Lequinio, War of La Vendee. “The conquerors of the Bastille had unluckily a most unbridled ardour for pillage—one would have supposed they had come for the express purpose of plunder, rather than fighting. The stage coaches for Paris were entirely loaded with their booty.” Report of Benaben, Commissioner of the Department of Maine and Loire.

—The carriages of the army were entirely appropriated to the conveyance of their booty; till, at last, the administrators of some departments were under the necessity of forbidding such incumbrances: but the officers, with whom restrictions of this sort were unavailing, put all the horses and waggons of the country in requisition for similar purposes, while they relaxed themselves from the serious business of the war, (which indeed was nearly confined to burning, plundering, and massacring the defenceless inhabitants,) by a numerous retinue of mistresses and musicians.

It is not surprizing that generals and troops of this description were constantly defeated; and their reiterated disasters might probably have first suggested the idea of totally exterminating a people it was found so difficult to subdue, and so impracticable to conciliate.—On the first of October 1793, Barrere, after inveighing against the excessive population of La Vendee, which he termed “frightful,” proposed to the Convention to proclaim by a decree, that the war of La Vendee “should be terminated” by the twentieth of the same month. The Convention, with barbarous folly, obeyed; and the enlightened Parisians, accustomed to think with contempt on the ignorance of the Vendean, believed that a war, which had baffled the efforts of government for so many months, was to end on a precise day—which Barrere had fixed with as much assurance as though he had only been ordering a fete.

But the Convention and the government understood this decree in a very different sense from the good people of Paris. The war was, indeed, to be ended; not by the usual mode of combating armies, but by a total extinction of all the inhabitants of the country, both innocent and guilty—and Merlin de Thionville, with other members, so perfectly comprehended this detestable project, that they already began to devise schemes for repeopleing La Vendee, when its miserable natives should be destroyed.*

* It is for the credit of humanity to believe, that the decree was not understood according to its real intention; but the nation has to choose between the imputation of cruelty, stupidity, or slavery— for they either approved the sense of the decree, believed what was not possible, or were obliged to put on an appearance of both, in spite of their senses and their feelings.



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A proclamation, in consequence, to the army, is more explicit—"All the brigands of La Vendee must be exterminated before the end of October."

From this time, the representatives on mission, commissaries of war, officers, soldiers, and agents of every kind, vied with each other in the most abominable outrages. Carrier superintended the fusillades and noyades at Nantes, while Lequinio dispatched with his own hands a part of the prisoners taken at La Fontenay, and projected the destruction of the rest.—After the evacuation of Mans by the insurgents, women were brought by twenties and thirties, and shot before the house where the deputies Tureau and Bourbotte had taken up their residence; and it appears to have been considered as a compliment to these republican Molochs, to surround their habitation with mountains of the dead. A compliment of the like nature was paid to the representative Prieur de la Marne,* by a volunteer, who having learned that his own brother was taken amongst the enemy, requested, by way of recommending himself to notice, a formal permission to be his executioner.—The Roman stoicism of Prieur accepted the implied homage, and granted the request!!

* This representative, who was also a member of the Committee of Public Welfare, was not only the Brutus, but the Antony of La Vendee; for we learn from the report of Benaben, that his stern virtues were accompanied, through the whole of his mission in this afflicted country, by a cortege of thirty strolling fiddlers!

Fourteen hundred prisoners, who had surrendered at Savenay, among whom were many women and children, were shot, by order of the deputy Francastel, who, together with Hentz, Richard, Choudieu, Carpentier, and others of their colleagues, set an example of rapine and cruelty, but too zealously imitated by their subordinate agents. In some places, the inhabitants, without distinction of age or sex, were put indiscriminately to the sword; in others, they were forced to carry the pillage collected from their own dwellings, which, after being thus stripped, were consigned to the flames.*

* "This conflagration accomplished, they had no sooner arrived in the midst of our army, than the volunteers, in imitation of their commanders, seized what little they had preserved, and massacred them.—But this is not all: a whole municipality, in their scarfs of office, were sacrificed; and at a little village, inhabited by about fifty good patriots, who had been uniform in their resistance of the insurgents, news is brought that their brother soldiers are coming to assist them, and to revenge the wrongs they have suffered. A friendly repast is provided, the military arrive, embrace their ill-fated hosts, and devour what they have provided; which is no sooner done, than they drive all these poor people into the churchyard, and stab them one after another." Report of Faure, Vice-President of a Military Commission at Fontenay.



—The heads of the prisoners served occasionally as marks for the officers to shoot at for trifling wagers, and the soldiers, who imitated these heinous examples, used to conduct whole hundreds to the place of execution, singing "*allons enfans de la patrie.*"*



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* Woe to those who were unable to walk, for, under pretext that carriages could not be found to convey them, they were shot without hesitation!—Benaben.

The insurgents had lost Cholet, Chatillon, Mortagne, &c. Yet, far from being vanquished by the day appointed, they had crossed the Loire in great force, and, having traversed Brittany, were preparing to make an attack on Granville. But this did not prevent Barrere from announcing to the convention, that La Vendee was no more, and the galleries echoed with applause, when they were told that the highways were impassable, from the numbers of the dead, and that a considerable part of France was one vast cemetery. This intelligence also tranquillized the paternal solicitude of the legislature, and, for many months, while the system of depopulation was pursued with the most barbarous fury, it was not permissible even to suspect that the war was yet unextinguished.

It is only since the trial of the Nantais, that the state of La Vendee has again become a subject of discussion: truth has now forced its way, and we learn, that, whatever may be the strength of these unhappy people, their minds, embittered by suffering, and animated by revenge, are still less than ever disposed to submit to the republican government. The design of total extirpation, once so much insisted on, is at present said to be relinquished, and a plan of instruction and conversion is to be substituted for bayonets and conflagrations. The revolted countries are to be enlightened by the doctrines of liberty, fanaticism is to be exposed, and a love of the republic to succeed the prejudices in favour of Kings and Nobles.—To promote these objects, is, undoubtedly, the real interest of the Convention; but a moralist, who observes through another medium, may compare with regret and indignation the instructors with the people they are to illumine, and the advantages of philosophy over ignorance.

Lequinio, one of the most determined reformers of the barbarism of La Vendee, proposes two methods: the first is, a general massacre of all the natives—and the only objection it seems susceptible of in his opinion is, their numbers; but as he thinks on this account it may be attended with difficulty, he is for establishing a sort of perpetual mission of Representatives, who, by the influence of good living and a company of fiddlers and singers, are to restore the whole country to peace.*—

"The only difficulty that presents itself is, to determine whether recourse shall be had to the alternative of indulgence, or if it will not be more advantageous to persist in the plan of total destruction." If the people that still remain were not more than thirty or forty thousand, the shortest way would doubtless be, to cut all their throats (egorger), agreeably to my first opinion; but the population is immense, amounting still to four hundred thousand souls.—If there



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were no hope of succeeding by any other methods, certainly it were better to kill all (egorger), even were there five hundred thousand. "But what are we to understand by measures of rigour? Is there no distinction to be made between rigorous and barbarous measures? The utmost severity is justified on the plea of the general good, but nothing can justify barbarity. If the welfare of France necessitated the sacrifice of the four hundred thousand inhabitants of La Vendee, and the countries in rebellion adjoining, they ought to be sacrificed: but, even in this case, there would be no excuse for those atrocities which revolt nature, which are an outrage to social order, and repugnant equally to feeling (sentiment) and reason; and in cutting off so many entire generations for the good of the country, we ought not to suffer the use of barbarous means in a single instance.

"Now the most effectual way to arrive at this end (converting the people), would be by joyous and fraternal missions, frank and familiar harangues, civic repasts, and, above all, dancing.

"I could wish, too, that during their circuits in these countries, the Representatives were always attended by musicians. The expence would be trifling, compared with the good effect; if, as I am strongly persuaded, we could thus succeed in giving a turn to the public mind, and close the bleeding arteries of these fertile and unhappy provinces." Lequinio, *Guerre de La Vendee*. And this people, who were either to have their throats cut, or be republicanized by means of singing, dancing, and revolutionary Pans and Silenus's, already beheld their property devastated by pillage or conflagration, and were in danger of a pestilence from the unburied bodies of their families.—Let the reader, who has seen Lequinio's pamphlet, compare his account of the sufferings of the Vendean, and his project for conciliating them. They convey a strong idea of the levity of the national character; but, in this instance, I must suppose, that nature would be superior to local influence; and I doubt if Lequinio's jocund philosophy will ever succeed in attaching the Vendean to the republic.

—Camille Desmouins, a republican reformer, nearly as sanguinary, though not more liberal, thought the guillotine disgraced by such ignorant prey, and that it were better to hunt them down like wild beasts; or, if made prisoners, to exchange them against the cattle of their country!—The eminently informed Hercul de Sechelles was the patron and confidant of the exterminating reforms of Carrier; and Carnot, when the mode of reforming by noyades and fusillades was debated at the Committee, pleaded the cause of Carrier, whom he describes as a good, nay, an excellent patriot.—Merlin de Thionville, whose philosophy is of a more martial cast, was desirous that the natives of La Vendee should be completely annihilated, in



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order to furnish in their territory and habitations a recompence for the armies.—Almost every member of the Convention has individually avowed principles, or committed acts, from which common turpitude would recoil, and, as a legislative body, their whole code has been one unvarying subversion of morals and humanity. Such are the men who value themselves on possessing all the advantages the Vendean are pretended to be in want of.—We will now examine what disciples they have produced, and the benefits which have been derived from their instructions.

Every part of France remarkable for an early proselytism to the revolutionary doctrines has been the theatre of crimes unparalleled in the annals of human nature. Those who have most boasted their contempt for religious superstition have been degraded by an idolatry as gross as any ever practiced on the Nile; and the most enthusiastic republicans have, without daring to murmur, submitted for two years successively to a horde of cruel and immoral tyrants.—A pretended enfranchisement from political and ecclesiastical slavery has been the signal of the lowest debasement, and the most cruel profligacy: the very Catechumens of freedom and philosophy have, while yet in their first rudiments, distinguished themselves as proficient in the arts of oppression and servility, of intolerance and licentiousness.—Paris, the rendezvous of all the persecuted patriots and philosophers in Europe, the centre of the revolutionary system, whose inhabitants were illumined by the first rays of modern republicanism, and who claim a sort of property in the rights of man, as being the original inventors, may fairly be quoted as an example of the benefits that would accrue from a farther dissemination of the new tenets.

Without reverting to the events of August and September, 1792, presided by the founders of liberty, and executed by their too apt sectaries, it is notorious that the legions of Paris, sent to chastise the unenlightened Vendean, were the most cruel and rapacious banditti that ever were let loose to afflict the world. Yet, while they exercised this savage oppression in the countries near the Loire, their fellow-citizens on the banks of the Seine crouched at the frown of paltry tyrants, and were unresistingly dragged to dungeons, or butchered by hundreds on the scaffold.—At Marseilles, Lyons, Bourdeaux, Arras, wherever these baleful principles have made converts, they have made criminals and victims; and those who have been most eager in imbibing or propagating them have, by a natural and just retribution, been the first sacrificed. The new discoveries in politics have produced some in ethics not less novel, and until the adoption of revolutionary doctrines, the extent of human submission or human depravity was fortunately unknown.



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In this source of guilt and misery the people of La Vendee are now to be instructed—that people, who are acknowledged to be hospitable, humane, and laborious, and whose ideas of freedom may be better estimated by their resistance to a despotism which the rest of France has sunk under, than by the jargon of pretended reformers.—I could wish, that not only the peasants of La Vendee, but those of all other countries, might for ever remain strangers to such pernicious knowledge. It is sufficient for this useful class of men to be taught the simple precepts of religion and morality, and those who would teach them more, are not their benefactors. Our age is, indeed, a literary age, and such pursuits are both liberal and laudable in the rich and idle; but why should volumes of politics or philosophy be mutilated and frittered into pamphlets, to inspire a disgust for labour, and a taste for study or pleasure, in those to whom such disgusts or inclinations are fatal. The spirit of one author is extracted, and the beauties of another are selected, only to bewilder the understanding, and engross the time, of those who might be more profitably employed.

I know I may be censured as illiberal; but I have, during my abode in this country, sufficiently witnessed the disastrous effects of corrupting a people through their amusements or curiosity, and of making men neglect their useful callings to become patriots and philosophers.*—

This right of directing public affairs, and neglecting their own, we may suppose essential to republicans of the lower orders, since we find the following sentence of transportation in the registers of a popular commission: “Bergeron, a dealer in skins—suspected—having done nothing in favour of the revolution—extremely selfish (egoiste,) and blaming the Sans-Culottes for neglecting their callings, that they may attend only to public concerns.”—Signed by the members of the Commission and the two Committees.

—“Il est dangereux d'apprendre au peuple a raisonner: il ne faut pas l'eclairer trop, parce qu'il n'est pas possible de l'eclairer assez.”_ [“It is dangerous to teach the people to reason—they should not be too much enlightened, because it is not possible to enlighten them sufficiently.”]—When the enthusiasm of Rousseau's genius was thus usefully submitted to his good sense and knowledge of mankind, he little expected every hamlet in France would be inundated with scraps of the contrat social, and thousands of inoffensive peasants massacred for not understanding the Profession de Foi.

The arguments of mistaken philanthropists or designing politicians may divert the order of things, but they cannot change our nature—they may create an universal taste for literature, but they will never unite it with habits of industry; and until they prove how men are to live without labour, they have no right to banish the chearful vacuity which usually accompanies it, by substituting reflections to make it irksome, and propensities with which it is incompatible.



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The situation of France has amply demonstrated the folly of attempting to make a whole people reasoners and politicians—there seems to be no medium; and as it is impossible to make a nation of sages, you let loose a horde of savages: for the philosophy which teaches a contempt for accustomed restraints, is not difficult to propagate; but that superior kind, which enables men to supply them, by subduing the passions that render restraints necessary, is of slow progress, and never can be general.

I have made the war of La Vendee more a subject of reflection than narrative, and have purposely avoided military details, which would be not only uninteresting, but disgusting. You would learn no more from these desultory hostilities, than that the defeats of the republican armies were, if possible, more sanguinary than their victories; that the royalists, who began the war with humanity, were at length irritated to reprisals; and that more than two hundred thousand lives have already been sacrificed in the contest, yet undecided.

Amiens, Oct. 24, 1794.

Revolutions, like every thing else in France, are a mode, and the Convention already commemorate four since 1789: that of July 1789, which rendered the monarchical power nugatory; that of August the 10th, 1792, which subverted it; the expulsion of the Brissotins, in May 1793; and the death of Robespierre, in July 1794.

The people, accustomed, from their earliest knowledge, to respect the person and authority of the King, felt that the events of the two first epochs, which disgraced the one and annihilated the other, were violent and important revolutions; and, as language which expresses the public sentiment is readily adopted, it soon became usual to speak of these events as the revolutions of July and August.

The thirty-first of May has always been viewed in a very different light, for it was not easy to make the people at large comprehend how the succession of Robespierre and Danton to Brissot and Roland could be considered as a revolution, more especially as it appeared evident that the principles of one party actuated the government of the other. Every town had its many-headed monster to represent the defeat of the Foederalists, and its mountain to proclaim the triumph of their enemies the Mountaineers; but these political hieroglyphics were little understood, and the merits of the factions they alluded to little distinguished—so that the revolution of the thirty-first of May was rather a party aera, than a popular one.

The fall of Robespierre would have made as little impression as that of the Girondists, if some melioration of the revolutionary system had not succeeded it; and it is in fact only since the public voice, and the interest of the Convention, have occasioned a change approaching to reform, that the death of Robespierre is really considered as a benefit.



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But what was in itself no more than a warfare of factions, may now, if estimated by its consequences, be pronounced a revolution of infinite importance. The Jacobins, whom their declining power only rendered more insolent and daring, have at length obliged the Convention to take decided measures against them, and they are now subject to such regulations as must effectually diminish their influence, and, in the end, dissolve their whole combination. They can no longer correspond as societies, and the mischievous union which constituted their chief force, can scarcely be supported for any time under the present restrictions.*

* "All affiliations, aggregations, and foederations, as well as correspondences carried on collectively between societies, under whatever denomination they may exist, are henceforth prohibited, as being subversive of government, and contrary to the unity of the republic." "Those persons who sign as presidents or secretaries, petitions or addresses in a collective form, shall be arrested and confined as suspicious, &c. &c.—Whoever offends in any shape against the present law, will incur the same penalty." The whole of the decree is in the same spirit. The immediate and avowed pretext for this measure was, that the popular societies, who have of late only sent petitions disagreeable to the Convention, did not express the sense of the people. Yet the deposition of the King, and the establishment of the republic, had no other sanction than the adherence of these clubs, who are now allowed not to be the nation, and whose very existence as then constituted is declared to be subversive of government.

It is not improbable, that the Convention, by suffering the clubs still to exist, after reducing them to nullity, may hope to preserve the institution as a future resource against the people, while it represses their immediate efforts against itself. The Brissotins would have attempted a similar policy, but they had nothing to oppose to the Jacobins, except their personal influence. Brissot and Roland took part with the clubs, as they approved the massacres of August and September, just as far as it answered their purpose; and when they were abandoned by the one, and the other were found to incur an unprofitable odium, they acted the part which Tallien and Freron act now under the same circumstances, and would willingly have promoted the destruction of a power which had become inimical to them.*—

* Brissot and Roland were more pernicious as Jacobins than the most furious of their successors. If they did not in person excite the people to the commission of crimes, they corrupted them, and made them fit instruments for the crimes of others. Brissot might affect to condemn the massacres of September in the gross, but he is known to have enquired with eager impatience, and in a tone which implied he had reasons for expecting it,



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whether De Morande, an enemy he wished to be released from, was among the murdered.

—Their imitators, without possessing more honesty, either political or moral, are more fortunate; and not only Tallien and Freron, who since their expulsion from the Jacobins have become their most active enemies, are now in a manner popular, but even the whole Convention is much less detested than it was before.

It is the singular felicity of the Assembly to derive a sort of popularity from the very excesses it has occasioned or sanctioned, and which, it was natural to suppose, would have consigned it for ever to vengeance or obloquy; but the past sufferings of the people have taught them to be moderate in their expectations; and the name of their representation has been so connected with tyranny of every sort, that it appears an extraordinary forbearance when the usual operations of guillotines and mandates of arrest are suspended.

Thus, though the Convention have not in effect repaired a thousandth part of their own acts of injustice, or done any good except from necessity, they are overwhelmed with applauding addresses, and affectionate injunctions not to quit their post. What is still more wonderful, many of these are sincere; and Tallien, Freron, Legendre, &c. with all their revolutionary enormities on their heads, are now the heroes of the reviving aristocrats.

Situated as things are at present, there is much sound policy in flattering the Convention into a proper use of their power, rather than making a convulsive effort to deprive them of it. The Jacobins would doubtless avail themselves of such a movement; and this is so much apprehended, that it has given rise to a general though tacit agreement to foment the divisions between the Legislature and the Clubs, and to support the first, at least until it shall have destroyed the latter.

The late decrees, which obstruct the intercourse and affiliation of popular societies, may be regarded as an event not only beneficial to this country, but to the world in general; because it is confessed, that these combinations, by means of which the French monarchy was subverted, and the King brought to the scaffold, are only reconcilable with a barbarous and anarchical government.

The Convention are now much occupied on two affairs, which call forth all their “natural propensities,” and afford a farther confirmation of this fact—that their feelings and principles are always instinctively at war with justice, however they may find it expedient to affect a regard for it—*C'est la chatte metamorphosee en femme* [The cat turned into a woman.]—



*"En vain de son train ordinaire"
"On la veut desaccoutumer,
"Quelque chose qu'on puisse faire
"On ne fauroit la reformer."
La Fontaine.*



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The Deputies who were imprisoned as accomplices of the Girondists, and on other different pretexts, have petitioned either to be brought to trial or released; and the abominable conduct of Carrier at Nantes is so fully substantiated, that the whole country is impatient to have some steps taken towards bringing him to punishment: yet the Convention are averse from both these measures—they procrastinate and elude the demand of their seventy-two colleagues, who were arrested without a specific charge; while they almost protect Carrier, and declare, that in cases which tend to deprive a Representative of his liberty, it is better to reflect thirty times than once. This is curious doctrine with men who have sent so many people arbitrarily to the scaffold, and who now detain seventy-two Deputies in confinement, they know not why.

The ashes of Rousseau have recently been deposited with the same ceremonies, and in the same place, as those of Marat. We should feel for such a degradation of genius, had not the talents of Rousseau been frequently misapplied; and it is their misapplication which has levelled him to an association with Marat. Rousseau might be really a fanatic, and, though eccentric, honest; yet his power of adorning impracticable systems, it must be acknowledged, has been more mischievous to society than a thousand such gross impostors as Marat.

I have learned since my return from the Providence, the death of Madame Elizabeth. I was ill when it happened, and my friends took some pains to conceal an event which they knew would affect me. In tracing the motives of the government for this horrid action, it may perhaps be sufficiently accounted for in the known piety and virtues of this Princess; but reasons of another kind have been suggested to me, and which, in all likelihood, contributed to hasten it. She was the only person of the royal family of an age competent for political transactions who had not emigrated, and her character extorted respect even from her enemies. [The Prince of Conti was too insignificant to be an object of jealousy in this way.] She must therefore, of course, since the death of the Queen, have been an object of jealousy to all parties. Robespierre might fear that she would be led to consent to some arrangement with a rival faction for placing the King on the throne—the Convention were under similar apprehensions with regard to him; so that the fate of this illustrious sufferer was probably gratifying to every part of the republicans.

I find, on reading her trial, (if so it may be called,) a repetition of one of the principal charges against the Queen—that of trampling on the national colours at Versailles, during an entertainment given to some newly-arrived troops. Yet I have been assured by two gentlemen, perfectly informed on the subject, and who were totally unacquainted with each other, that this circumstance, which has been so usefully enlarged upon, is false,* and that the whole calumny originated in the jealousy of a part of the national guard who had not been invited.



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* This infamous calumny (originally fabricated by Lecointre the linen draper, then an officer of the National Guard, now a member of the council of 500) was amply confuted by M. Mounier, who was President of the States-General at the time, in a publication intitled "*Expose de ma Conduite*," which appeared soon after the event—in the autumn of 1789.—Editor.

But this, as well as the taking of the Bastille, and other revolutionary falsehoods, will, I trust, be elucidated. The people are now undeceived only by their calamities—the time may come, when it will be safe to produce their conviction by truth. Heroes of the fourteenth of July, and patriots of the tenth of August, how will ye shrink from it!—Yours, &c.

Amiens, Nov. 2, 1794.

Every post now brings me letters from England; but I perceive, by the suppressed congratulations of my friends, that, though they rejoice to find I am still alive, they are far from thinking me in a state of security. You, my dear Brother, must more particularly have lamented the tedious confinement I have endured, and the inconveniencies to which I have been subjected; I am, however, persuaded that you would not wish me to have been exempt from a persecution in which all the natives of England, who are not a disgrace to their country, as well as some that are so, have shared. Such an exemption would now be deemed a reproach; for, though it must be confessed that few of us have been voluntary sufferers, we still claim the honour of martyrdom, and are not very tolerant towards those who, exposed by their situation, may be supposed to have owed their protection to their principles.

There are, indeed, many known revolutionists and republicans, who, from party disputes, personal jealousies, or from being comprised in some general measure, have undergone a short imprisonment; and these men now wish to be confounded with their companions who are of a different description. But such persons are carefully distinguished;* and the aristocrats have, in their turn, a catalogue of suspicious people—that is, of people suspected of not having been suspicious.

* Mr. Thomas Paine, for instance, notwithstanding his sufferings, is still thought more worthy of a seat in the Convention or the Jacobins, than of an apartment in the Luxembourg.—Indeed I have generally remarked, that the French of all parties hold an English republican in peculiar abhorrence.

It is now the fashion to talk of a sojourn in a maison d'arret with triumph; and the more decent people, who from prudence or fear had been forced to seek refuge in the Jacobin clubs, are now solicitous to proclaim their real motives. The red cap no longer "rears its hideous front" by day, but is modestly converted into a night-cap; and the bearer of a *diplome de Jacobin*, instead of swinging along, to the annoyance of all the passengers he meets, paces soberly with a diminished height, and an air not unlike



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what in England we call sneaking. The bonnet rouge begins likewise to be effaced from flags at the doors; and, as though this emblem of liberty were a very bad neighbour to property, its relegation seems to encourage the re-appearance of silver forks and spoons, which are gradually drawn forth from their hiding-places, and resume their stations at table. The Jacobins represent themselves as being under the most cruel oppression, declare that the members of the Convention are aristocrats and royalists, and lament bitterly, that, instead of fish-women, or female patriots of republican external, the galleries are filled with auditors in flounces and anti-civic top-knots, femmes a fontanges.

These imputations and grievances of the Jacobins are not altogether without foundation. People in general are strongly impressed with an idea that the Assembly are veering towards royalism; and it is equally true, that the speeches of Tallien and Freron are occasionally heard and applauded by fair elegantes, who, two years ago, would have recoiled at the name of either. It is not that their former deeds are forgotten, but the French are grown wise by suffering; and it is politic, when bad men act well, whatever the motive, to give them credit for it, as nothing is so likely to make them persevere, as the hope that their reputation is yet retrievable. On this principle the aristocrats are the eulogists of Tallien, while the Jacobins remind him hourly of the massacres of the priests, and his official conduct as Secretary to the municipality of Paris.*

* Tallien was Secretary to the Commune of Paris in 1792, and on the thirty-first of August he appeared at the bar of the Legislative Assembly with an address, in which he told them "he had caused the refractory priests to be arrested and confined, and that in a few days the Land of Liberty should be freed of them."—The massacres of the prisons began two days after!

As soon as a Representative is convicted of harbouring an opinion unfavourable to pillage or murder, he is immediately declared an aristocrat; or, if the Convention happen for a moment to be influenced by reason or justice, the hopes and fears of both parties are awakened by suspicions that the members are converts to royalism.—For my own part, I believe they are and will be just what their personal security and personal interest may suggest, though it is but a sorry sort of panegyric on republican ethics to conclude, that every one who manifests the least symptom of probity or decency, must of course be a royalist or an aristocrat.



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Notwithstanding the harmony which appears to subsist between the Convention and the people, the former is much less popular in detail than in the gross. Almost every member who has been on mission, is accused of dilapidations and cruelties so heinous, that, if they had not been committed by Representans du Peuple, the criminal courts would find no difficulty in deciding upon them.—But as theft or murder does not deprive a member of his privileges, complaints of this nature are only cognizable by the Assembly, which, being yet in its first days of regeneration, is rather scrupulous of defending such amusements overtly. Alarmed, however, at the number, and averse from the precedent of these denunciations, it has now passed a variety of decrees, which are termed a guarantee of the national representation, and which in fact guarantee it so effectually, that a Deputy may do any thing in future with impunity, provided it does not affect his colleagues. There are now so many forms, reports, and examinations, that several months may be employed before the person of a delinquent, however notorious his guilt, can be secured. The existence of a fellow-creature should, doubtless, be attacked with caution; for, though he may have forfeited his claims on our esteem, and even our pity, religion has preserved him others, of which he should not be deprived.—But when we recollect that all these merciful ceremonies are in favour of a Carrier or a Le Bon, and that the King, Madame Elizabeth, and thousands of innocent people, were hurried to execution, without being allowed the consolations of piety or affection, which only a mockery of justice might have afforded them; when, even now, priests are guillotined for celebrating masses in private, and thoughtless people for speaking disrespectfully of the Convention—the heart is at variance with religion and principle, and we regret that mercy is to be the exclusive portion of those who were never accessible to its dictates.*

* The denunciation being first presented to the Assembly, they are to decide whether it shall be received. If they determine in the affirmative, it is sent to the three Committees of Legislation, Public Welfare, and General Safety, to report whether there may be room for farther examination. In that case, a commission of twenty-one members is appointed to receive the proofs of the accuser, and the defence of the accused. These Commissioners, after as long a delay as they may think fit to interpose, make known their opinion; and if it be against the accused, the Convention proceed to determine finally whether the matter shall be referred to the ordinary tribunal. All this time the culprit is at large, or, at worst, and merely for the form, carelessly guarded at his own dwelling.

I would not “pick bad from bad,” but it irks one’s spirit to see these miscreants making “assurance doubly sure,” and providing for their own safety with such solicitude, after sacrificing, without remorse, whatever was most interesting or respectable in the country.—Yours, &c.



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Basse-ville, Arras, Nov. 6, 1794.

Since my own liberation, I have been incessantly employed in endeavouring to procure the return of my friends to Amiens; who, though released from prison some time, could not obtain passports to quit Arras. After numerous difficulties and vexations, we have at length succeeded, and I am now here to accompany them home.

I found Mr. and Mrs. D___ much altered by the hardships they have undergone: Mrs. D___, in particular, has been confined some months in a noisome prison called the Providence, originally intended as a house of correction, and in which, though built to contain an hundred and fifty persons, were crowded near five hundred females, chiefly ladies of Arras and the environs.—The superintendance of this miserable place was entrusted to a couple of vulgar and vicious women, who, having distinguished themselves as patriots from the beginning of the revolution, were now rewarded by Le Bon with an office as profitable as it was congenial to their natures.

I know not whether it is to be imputed to the national character, or to that of the French republicans only, but the cruelties which have been committed are usually so mixed with licentiousness, as to preclude description. I have already noticed the conduct of Le Bon, and it must suffice to say, his agents were worthy of him, and that the female prisoners suffered every thing which brutality, rapaciousness, and indecency, could inflict. Mr. D___ was, in the mean time, transferred from prison to prison—the distress of separation was augmented by their mutual apprehensions and pecuniary embarrassments—and I much fear, the health and spirits of both are irretrievably injured.

I regret my impatience in coming here, rather than waiting the arrival of my friends at home; for the changes I observe, and the recollections they give birth to, oppress my heart, and render the place hateful to me.—All the families I knew are diminished by executions, and their property is confiscated—those whom I left in elegant hotels are now in obscure lodgings, subsisting upon the superfluities of better days—and the sorrows of the widows and orphans are increased by penury; while the Convention, which affects to condemn the crimes of Le Bon, is profiting by the spoils of his victims.

I am the more deeply impressed by these circumstances, because, when I was here in 1792, several who have thus fallen, though they had nothing to reproach themselves with, were yet so much intimidated as to propose emigrating; and I then was of opinion, that such a step would be impolitic and unnecessary. I hope and believe this opinion did not influence them, but I lament having given it, for the event has proved that a great part of the emigrants are justifiable. It always appeared to me so serious and great an



evil to abandon one's country, that when I have seen it done with indifference or levity, I may perhaps have sometimes



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transferred to the measure itself a sentiment of disapprobation, excited originally by the manner of its adoption. When I saw people expatiate with calmness, and heard them speak of it as a means of distinguishing themselves, I did not sufficiently allow for the tendency of the French to make the best of every thing, or the influence of vanity on men who allow it to make part of the national characteristic: and surely, if ever vanity were laudable, that of marking a detestation for revolutionary principles, and an attachment to loyalty and religion, may justly be considered so. Many whom I then accused of being too lightly affected by the prospect of exile, might be animated by the hope of personally contributing to the establishment of peace and order, and rescuing their country from the banditti who were oppressing it; and it is not surprising that such objects should dazzle the imagination and deceive the judgment in the choice of measures by which they were to be obtained.

The number of emigrants from fashion or caprice is probably not great; and whom shall we now dare to include under this description, when the humble artizan, the laborious peasant, and the village priest, have ensanguined the scaffold destined for the prince or the prelate?—But if the emigrants be justifiable, the refugees are yet more so.

By Emigrants, I mean all who, without being immediately in danger, left their country through apprehension of the future—from attachment to the persons of the Princes, or to join companions in the army whom they might deem it a disgrace to abandon.—Those whom I think may with truth be styled Refugees, are the Nobility and Priests who fled when the people, irritated by the literary terrorists of the day, the Brissots, Rolands, Camille Desmoulins, &c. were burning their chateaux and proscribing their persons, and in whom expatriation cannot properly be deemed the effect of choice. These, wherever they have sought an asylum, are entitled to our respect and sympathy.

Yet, I repeat, we are not authorized to discriminate. There is no reasoning coldly on the subject. The most cautious prudence, the most liberal sacrifices, and the meanest condescensions, have not insured the lives and fortunes of those who ventured to remain; and I know not that the absent require any other apology than the desolation of the country they have quitted. Had my friends who have been slaughtered by Le Bon's tribunal persisted in endeavouring to escape, they might have lived, and their families, though despoiled by the rapacity of the government, have been comparatively happy.*



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* The first horrors of the revolution are well known, and I have seen no accounts which exaggerate them. The niece of a lady of my acquaintance, a young woman only seventeen, escaped from her country-house (whilst already in flames) with her infant at her breast, and literally without clothes to cover her. In this state she wandered a whole night, and when she at length reached a place where she procured assistance, was so exhausted that her life was in danger.—Another lady, whom I knew, was wounded in the arm by some peasants assembled to force from her the writings of her husband's estates. Even after this they still remained in France, submitted with cheerfulness to all the demands of patriotic gifts, forced loans, requisitions and impositions of every kind; yet her husband was nevertheless guillotined, and the whole of their immense property confiscated.

Retrospections, like these, obliterate many of my former notions on the subject of the Emigrants; and if I yet condemn emigration, it is only as a general measure, impolitic, and inadequate to the purposes for which it was undertaken. But errors of judgment, in circumstances so unprecedented, cannot be censured consistently with candour, through we may venture to mark them as a discouragement to imitation; for if any nation should yet be menaced by the revolutionary scourge, let it beware of seeking external redress by a temporary abandonment of its interests to the madness of systemists, or the rapine of needy adventurers. We must, we ought to, lament the fate of the many gallant men who have fallen, and the calamities of those who survive; but what in them has been a mistaken policy, will become guilt in those who, on a similar occasion, shall not be warned by their example. I am concerned when I hear these unhappy fugitives are any where objects of suspicion or persecution, as it is not likely that those who really emigrated from principle can merit such treatment: and I doubt not, that most of the instances of treachery or misconduct ascribed to the Emigrants originated in republican emissaries, who have assumed that character for the double purpose of discrediting it, and of exercising their trade as spies.

The common people here, who were retained by Le Bon for several months to attend and applaud his executions, are still dissolute and ferocious, and openly regret the loss of their pay, and the disuse of the guillotine.

—I came to Arras in mourning, which I have worn since the receipt of your first letter, but was informed by the lady with whom my friends lodge, that I must not attempt to walk the streets in black, for that it was customary to insult those who did so, on a supposition that they were related to some persons who had been executed; I therefore borrowed a white undress, and stole out by night to visit my unfortunate acquaintance, as I found it was also dangerous to be seen entering houses known to contain the remains of those families which had been dismembered by Le Bon's cruelties.



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We return to Amiens to-morrow, though you must not imagine so formidable a person as myself is permitted to wander about the republic without due precaution; and I had much difficulty in being allowed to come, even attended by a guard, who has put me to a considerable expence; but the man is civil, and as he has business of his own to transact in the town, he is no embarrassment to me.

Amiens, Nov. 26, 1794.

The Constituent Assembly, the Legislative Assembly, and the National Convention, all seem to have acted from a persuasion, that their sole duty as revolutionists was comprised in the destruction of whatever existed under the monarchy. If an institution were discovered to have the slightest defect in principle, or to have degenerated a little in practice, their first step was to abolish it entirely, and leave the replacing it for the present to chance, and for the future to their successors. In return for the many new words which they have introduced into the French language, they have expunged that of reform; and the havock and devastation, which a Mahometan conqueror might have performed as successfully, are as yet the only effects of philosophy and republicanism.

This system of ignorance and violence seems to have persecuted with peculiar hostility all the ancient establishments for education; and the same plan of suppressing daily what they have neither leisure nor abilities to supply, which I remarked to you two years ago, has directed the Convention ever since. It is true, the interval has produced much dissertation, and engendered many projects; but those who were so unanimous in rejecting, were extremely discordant in adopting, and their own disputes and indecision might have convinced them of their presumption in condemning what they now found it so difficult to excel. Some decided in favour of public schools, after the example of Sparta—this was objected to by others, because, said they, if you have public schools you must have edifices, and governors, and professors, who will, to a certainty, be aristocrats, or become so; and, in short, this will only be a revival of the colleges of the old government—A third party proposed private seminaries, or that people might be at liberty to educate their children in the way they thought best; but this, it was declared, would have a still greater tendency to aristocracy; for the rich, being better able to pay than the poor, would engross all the learning to themselves. The Jacobins were of opinion, that there should be no schools, either public or private, but that the children should merely be taken to hear the debates of the Clubs, where they would acquire all the knowledge necessary for republicans; and a few spirits of a yet sublimer cast were adverse both to schools or clubs, and recommended, that the rising generation should “study the great book of Nature alone.” It is, however, at length concluded, that there shall be a certain number of public establishments, and that people shall even be allowed to have their children instructed at home, under the inspection of the constituted authorities, who are to prevent the instillation of aristocratic principles.*



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* We may judge of the competency of many of these people to be official censors of education by the following specimens from a report of Gregoire's. Since the rage for destruction has a little subsided, circular letters have been sent to the administrators of the departments, districts, &c. enquiring what antiquities, or other objects of curiosity, remain in their neighbourhood.—“From one, (says Gregoire,) we are informed, that they are possessed of nothing in this way except four vases, which, as they have been told, are of porphyry. From a second we learn, that, not having either forge or manufactory in the neighbourhood, no monument of the arts is to be found there: and a third announces, that the completion of its library cataloges has been retarded, because the person employed at them ne fait pas la diplomatique!”—(“does not understand the science of diplomacy.”)

The difficulty as to the mode in which children were to be taught being got over, another remained, not less liable to dispute—which was, the choice of what they were to learn. Almost every member had a favourite article—music, physic, prophylactics, geography, geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, natural history, and botany, were all pronounced to be requisites in an eleemosynary system of education, specified to be chiefly intended for the country people; but as this debate regarded only the primary schools for children in their earliest years, and as one man for a stipend of twelve hundred livres a year, was to do it all, a compromise became necessary, and it has been agreed for the present, that infants of six years shall be taught only reading, writing, gymnastics, geometry, geography, natural philosophy, and history of all free nations, and that of all the tyrants, the rights of man, and the patriotic songs. —Yet, after these years of consideration, and days of debate, the Assembly has done no more than a parish-clerk, or an old woman with a primer, and “a twig whilom of small regard to see,” would do better without its interference.

The students of a more advanced age are still to be disposed of, and the task of devising an institution will not be easy; because, perhaps a Collot d'Herbois or a Duhem is not satisfied with the system which perfected the genius of Montesquieu or Descartes. Change, not improvement, is the object—whatever bears a resemblance to the past must be proscribed; and while other people study to simplify modes of instruction, the French legislature is intent on rendering them as difficult and complex as possible; and at the moment they decree that the whole country shall become learned, they make it an unfathomable science to teach urchins of half a dozen years old their letters.

Foreigners, indeed, who judge only from the public prints, may suppose the French far advanced towards becoming the most erudite nation in Europe: unfortunately, all these schools, primary, and secondary, and central, and divergent, and normal,* exist as yet but in the repertoires of the Convention, and perhaps may not add “a local habitation” to their names, till the present race** shall be unfit to reap the benefit of them.



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* *Les Ecoles Normales* were schools where masters were to be instructed in the art of teaching. Certain deputies objected to them, as being of feudal institution, supposing that Normale had some reference to Normandy.** This was a mistake, for the French seem to have adopted the maxim, “that man is never too old to learn;” and, accordingly, at the opening of the Normal schools, the celebrated Bougainville, now eighty years of age, became a pupil. This Normal project was, however, soon relinquished—for by that fatality which has hitherto attended all the republican institutions, it was found to have become a mere nursery for aristocrats.

But this revolutionary barbarism, not content with stopping the progress of the rising generation, has ravaged without mercy the monuments of departed genius, and persecuted with senseless despotism those who were capable of replacing them. Pictures have been defaced, statues mutilated, and libraries burnt, because they reminded the people of their Kings or their religion; while artists, and men of science or literature, were wasting their valuable hours in prison, or expiring on the scaffold.—The moral and gentle Florian died of vexation. A life of abstraction and utility could not save the celebrated chymist, Lavoisier, from the Guillotine. La Harpe languished in confinement, probably, that he might not eclipse Chenier, who writes tragedies himself; and every author that refused to degrade his talents by the adulation of tyranny has been proscribed and persecuted. Palissot,* at sixty years old, was destined to expiate in a prison a satire upon Rousseau, written when he was only twenty, and escaped, not by the interposition of justice, but by the efficacy of a bon mot.

* Palissot was author of “The Philosophers,” a comedy, written thirty years ago, to ridicule Rousseau. He wrote to the municipality, acknowledged his own error, and the merits of Rousseau; yet, says he, if Rousseau were a god, you ought not to sacrifice human victims to him.—The expression, which in French is well tuned, pleased the municipality, and Palissot, I believe, was not afterwards molested.

—A similar fate would have been awarded Dorat, [Author of “*Les Malheurs de l’Inconstance*,” and other novels.] for styling himself Chevalier in the title-pages of his novels, had he not commuted his punishment for base eulogiums on the Convention, and with the same pen, which has been the delight of the French boudoir, celebrated Carrier’s murders on the Loire under the appellation of “baptêmes civiques.” Every province in France, we are informed by the eloquent pedantry of Gregoire, exhibits traces of these modern Huns, which, though now exclusively attributed to the agents of Robespierre and Mr. Pitt,* it is very certain were authorized by the decrees of the Convention, and executed under the sanction of Deputies on mission, or their subordinates.



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* *"Soyez sur que ces destructions se sont pour la plupart a l'instigation de nos ennemis —quel triomphe pour l'Anglais si il eul pu ecraser notre commerce par l'aneantissement des arts dont la culture enrichit le sien."*—"Rest assured that these demolitions were, for the most part, effected at the instigation of our enemies —what a triumph would it have been for the English, if they had succeeded in crushing our commerce by the annihilation of the arts, the culture of which enriched their own."

—If the principal monuments of art be yet preserved to gratify the national taste or vanity, it is owing to the courage and devotion of individuals, who obeyed with a protecting dilatoriness the destructive mandates of government.

At some places, orangeries were sold by the foot for fire-wood, because, as it was alledged, that republicans had more occasion for apples and potatoes than oranges.—At Mousseaux, the seals were put on the hot-houses, and all the plants nearly destroyed. Valuable remains of sculpture were condemned for a crest, a fleur de lys, or a coronet attached to them; and the deities of the Heathen mythology were made war upon by the ignorance of the republican executioners, who could not distinguish them from emblems of feodality.*

* At Anet, a bronze stag, placed as a fountain in a large piece of water, was on the point of being demolished, because stags are beasts of chase, and hunting is a feudal privilege, and stags of course emblems of feodality.—It was with some difficulty preserved by an amateur, who insisted, that stags of bronze were not included in the decree.—By a decree of the Convention, which I have formerly mentioned, all emblems of royalty or feodality were to be demolished by a particular day; and as the law made no distinction, it could not be expected that municipalities, &c. often ignorant or timid, should either venture or desire to spare what in the eyes of the connoisseur might be precious."At St. Dennis, (says the virtuoso Gregoire,) where the National Club justly struck at the tyrants even in their tombs, that of Turenne ought to have been spared; yet strokes of the sword are still visible on it."—He likewise complains, that at the Botanic Garden the bust of Linnaeus had been destroyed, on a presumption of its being that of Charles the Ninth; and if it had been that of Charles the Ninth, it is not easy to discern how the cause of liberty was served by its mutilation.—The artist or moralist contemplates with equal profit or curiosity the features of Pliny or Commodus; and History and Science will appreciate Linnaeus and Charles the Ninth, without regarding whether their resemblances occupy a palace, or are scattered in fragments by republican ignorance.—Long after the death of Robespierre, the people of Amiens humbly petitioned the Convention, that their cathedral, perhaps the most beautiful Gothic edifice in Europe,



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might be preserved; and to avoid giving offence by the mention of churches or cathedrals, they called it a Basilique.—But it is unnecessary to adduce any farther proof, that the spirit of what is now called Vandalism originated in the Convention. Every one in France must recollect, that, when dispatches from all corners announced these ravages, they were heard with as much applause, as though they had related so many victories gained over the enemy.

—Quantities of curious medals have been melted down for the trifling value of the metal; and at Abbeville, a silver St. George, of uncommon workmanship, and which Mr. Garrick is said to have desired to purchase at a very high price, was condemned to the crucible—

”——*Sur tant de tresors “Antiques monumens respectes jusqu’alors, “Par la destruction signalant leur puissance, “Las barbares etendirent leur stupide vengeance.” “La Religion,” Racine.*

Yet the people in office who operated these mischiefs were all appointed by the delegates of the Assembly; for the first towns of the republic were not trusted even with the choice of a constable. Instead, therefore, of feeling either surprise or regret at this devastation, we ought rather to rejoice that it has extended no farther; for such agents, armed with such decrees, might have reduced France to the primitive state of ancient Gaul. Several valuable paintings are said to have been conveyed to England, and it will be curious if the barbarism of France in the eighteenth century should restore to us what we, with a fanaticism and ignorance at least more prudent than theirs, sold them in the seventeenth. The zealots of the Barebones’ Parliament are, however, more respectable than the atheistical Vandals of the Convention; and, besides the benefit of our example, the interval of a century and an half, with the boast of a philosophy and a degree of illumination exceeding that of any other people, have rendered the errors of the French at once more unpardonable and more ridiculous; for, in assimilating their past presentations to their present conduct and situation, we do not always find it possible to regret without a mixture of contempt.

Amiens, Nov. 29, 1794.

The selfish policy of the Convention in affecting to respect and preserve the Jacobin societies, while it deprived them of all power, and help up the individuals who composed them to abhorrence, could neither satisfy nor deceive men versed in revolutionary expedients, and more accustomed to dictate laws than to submit to them.*

* The Jacobins were at this time headed by Billaud Varenne, Collot, Thuriot, &c.—veterans, who were not likely to be deceived by temporizing.



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Supported by all the force of government, and intrinsically formidable by their union, the Clubs had long existed in defiance of public reprobation, and for some time they had braved not only the people, but the government itself. The instant they were disabled from corresponding and communicating in that privileged sort of way which rendered them so conspicuous, they felt their weakness; and their desultory and unconnected efforts to regain their influence only served to complete its annihilation. While they pretended obedience to the regulations to which the Convention had subjected them, they intrigued to promote a revolt, and were strenuously exerting themselves to gain partizans among the idle and dissolute, who, having subsisted for months as members of revolutionary committees, and in other revolutionary offices, were naturally averse from a more moderate government. The numbers of these were far from inconsiderable: and, when it is recollected that this description of people only had been allowed to retain their arms, while all who had any thing to defend were deprived of them, we cannot wonder if the Jacobins entertained hopes of success.

The Convention, aware of these attempts, now employed against its ancient accomplices the same arts that had proved so fatal to all those whom it had considered as its enemies. A correspondence was “opportunely” intercepted between the Jacobins and the Emigrants in Switzerland, while emissaries insinuated themselves into the Clubs, for the purpose of exciting desperate motions; or, dispersed in public places, contrived, by assuming the Jacobin costume, to throw on the faction the odium of those seditious exclamations which they were employed to vociferate.

There is little doubt that the designs of the Jacobins were nearly such as have been imputed to them. They had, however, become more politic than to act thus openly, without being prepared to repel their enemies, or to support their friends; and there is every appearance that the Swiss plots, and the insurrections of the *Palais Egalite*, were the devices of the government, to give a pretext for shutting up the Club altogether, and to avert the real dangers with which it was menaced, by spreading an alarm of fictitious ones. A few idle people assembled (probably on purpose) about the *Palais Egalite*, and the place where the Jacobins held their meetings, and the exclamation of “Down with the Convention!” served as the signal for hostilities. The aristocrats joined the partizans of the Convention, the Jacobins were attacked in their hall, and an affray ensued, in which several persons on each side were wounded. Both parties accused each other of being the aggressor, and a report of the business was made to the Assembly; but the Assembly had already decided—and, on the ninth of November, while the Jacobins were endeavouring to raise the storm by a recapitulation of the rights of man, a decree was passed, prohibiting their debates, and ordering the national seal to be put on their doors and papers. The society were not in force to make resistance, and the decree was carried into execution as quietly as though it had been levelled against the hotel of some devoted aristocrat.



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When the news of this event reached the departments, it occasioned an universal rejoicing—not such a rejoicing as is ordered for the successes of the French arms, (which always seems to be a matter of great indifference,) but a chearfulness of heart and of countenance; and many persons whom I do not remember to have ever seen in the least degree moved by political events, appeared sincerely delighted at this—

“And those smile now, who never smil’d before,
“And those who always smil’d, now smile the more.”
Parnell’s Claudian.

The armies might proceed to Vienna, pillage the Escorial, or subjugate all Europe, and I am convinced no emotion of pleasure would be excited equal to that manifested at the downfall of the Jacobins of Paris.

Since this disgrace of the parent society, the Clubs in the departments have, for the most part, dissolved themselves, or dwindled into peaceable assemblies to hear the news read, and applaud the convention.—The few Jacobin emblems which were yet remaining have totally disappeared, and no vestige of Jacobinism is left, but the graves of its victims, and the desolation of the country.

The profligate, the turbulent, the idle, and needy, of various countries in Europe, have been tempted by the successes of the French Jacobins to endeavour to establish similar institutions; but the same successes have operated as a warning to people of a different description, and the fall of these societies has drawn two confessions from their original partizans, which ought never to be forgotten—namely, that they were formed for the purpose of subverting the monarchy, and that their existence is incompatible with regular government of any kind.—“While the monarchy still existed, (says the most philosophic Lequinio, with whose scheme of reforming La Vendee you are already acquainted,) it was politic and necessary to encourage popular societies, as the most efficacious means of operating its destruction; but now we have effected a revolution, and have only to consolidate it by mild and philosophic laws, these societies are dangerous, because they can produce only confusion and disorder.”—This is also the language of Brissot, who admires the Jacobins from their origin till the end of 1792, but after that period he admits they were only the instruments of faction, and destructive of all property and order.*

* The period of the Jacobin annals so much admired by Brissot, comprises the dethronement of the King, the massacres of the prisons, the banishment of the priests, &c. That which he reprobates begins precisely at the period when the Jacobins disputed the claims of himself and his party to the exclusive direction of the government.—See Brissot’s Address to his Constituents.

—We learn therefore, not from the abuses alone, but from the praises bestowed on the Jacobins, how much such combinations are to be dreaded. Their merit, it appears,

consisted in the subversion of the monarchical government, and their crime in ceasing to be useful as agents of tyranny, the moment they ceased to be principals.



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I am still sceptical as to the conversion of the Assembly, and little disposed to expect good from it; yet whatever it may attempt in future, or however its real principles may take an ascendant, this fortunate concurrence of personal interests, coalition of aristocrats and democrats, and political rivalry, have likewise secured France from a return of that excess of despotism which could have been exercised only by such means. It is true, the spirit of the nation is so much depressed, that an effort to revive these Clubs might meet no resistance; but the ridicule and opprobrium to which they have latterly been subject, and finally the manner of their being sacrificed by that very Convention, of which they were the sole creators and support, will, I think, cool the zeal, and diminish the numbers of their partizans too much for them ever again to become formidable.

The conduct of Carrier has been examined according to the new forms, and he is now on his trial—though not till the delays of the Convention had given rise to a general suspicion that they intended either to exonerate or afford him an opportunity of escaping; and the people were at last so highly exasperated, that six thousand troops were added to the military force of Paris, and an insurrection was seriously apprehended. This stimulated the diligence, or relaxed the indulgence, of the commission appointed to make the report on Carrier's conduct; and it being decided that there was room for accusation, the Assembly confirmed the decision, and he was ordered into custody, to be tried along with the Revolutionary Committee of Nantes which had been the instrument of his crimes.

It is a circumstance worth noting, that most of the Deputies who explained the motives on which they thought Carrier guilty, were silent on the subject of his drowning, shooting, and guillotining so many thousands of innocent people, and only declared him guilty, as having been wanting in respect towards Trehouard, one of his colleagues, and of injuring the republican cause by his atrocities.

The fate of this monster exhibits a practical exposition of the enormous absurdity of such a government. He is himself tried for the exercise of a power declared to be unbounded when entrusted to him. The men tried with him as his accomplices were obliged by the laws to obey him; and the acts of which they are all accused were known, applauded, and held out for imitation, by the Convention, who now declare those very acts to be criminal!—There is certainly no way of reconciling justice but by punishing both chiefs and subordinates, and the hour for this will yet come.—Adieu.

Amiens. [No date given.]

I do not yet venture to correspond with my Paris friends by the post, but whenever the opportunity of private conveyance occurs, I receive long and circumstantial letters, as well as packets, of all the publications most read, and the theatrical pieces most applauded. I have lately drudged through great numbers of these last, and bestowed

on them an attention they did not in themselves deserve, because I considered it as one means of judging both of the spirit of the government and the morals of the people.



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The dramas produced at the beginning of the revolution were in general calculated to corrupt the national taste and morals, and many of them were written with skill enough to answer the purpose for which they were intended; but those that have appeared during the last two years, are so stupid and so depraved, that the circumstance of their being tolerated even for a moment implies an extinction both of taste and of morals.*

* *"Dans l'espace d'un an ils ont failli détruire le produit de plusieurs siècles de civilisation."*—"In the space of a year they nearly destroyed the fruits of several ages of civilization."

The principal cause of this is the despotism of the government in making the stage a mere political engine, and suffering the performance of such pieces only as a man of honesty or genius would not submit to write.*

* The tragedy of Brutus was interdicted on account of these two lines:

*"Arreter un romain sur de simple soupçons,
"C'est agir en tyrans, nous qui les punissons."*

That of Mahomet for the following:

*"Exterminez, grands dieux, de la terre ou nous sommes
"Quiconque avec plaisir repand le sang des hommes."*

It is to be remarked, that the last lines are only a simple axiom of humanity, and could not have been considered as implying a censure on any government except that of the French republic.

—Hence a croud of scribblers, without shame or talents, have become the exclusive directors of public amusements, and, as far as the noise of a theatre constitutes success, are perhaps more successful than ever was Racine or Moliere. Immorality and dulness have an infallible resource against public disapprobation in the abuse of monarchy and religion, or a niche for Mr. Pitt; and an indignant or impatient audience, losing their other feelings in their fears, are glad to purchase the reputation of patriotism by applauding trash they find it difficult to endure. The theatres swarm with spies, and to censure a revolutionary piece, however detestable even as a composition, is dangerous, and few have courage to be the critics of an author who is patronized by the superintendants of the guillotine, or who may retaliate a comment on his poetry by the significant prose of a mandat d'arret.

Men of literature, therefore, have wisely preferred the conservation of their freedom to the vindication of their taste, and have deemed it better to applaud at the Theatre de la Republique, than lodge at St. Lazare or Duplessis.—Thus political slavery has assisted



moral depravation: the writer who is the advocate of despotism, may be dull and licentious by privilege, and is alone exempt from the laws of Parnassus and of decency. —One Sylvan Marechal, author of a work he calls philosophie, has written a sort of farce, which has been performed very generally,



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where all the Kings in Europe are brought together as so many monsters; and when the King of France is enquired after as not being among them, a Frenchman answers,—“Oh, he is not here—we have guillotined him—we have cut off his head according to law.”—In one piece, the hero is a felon escaped from the galleys, and is represented as a patriot of the most sublime principles; in another, he is the virtuous conductor of a gang of banditti; and the principal character in a third, is a ploughman turned deist and politician.

Yet, while these malevolent and mercenary scribblers are ransacking past ages for the crimes of Kings or the abuses of religion, and imputing to both many that never existed, they forget that neither their books nor their imagination are able to furnish scenes of guilt and misery equal to those which have been presented daily by republicans and philosophers. What horror can their mock-tragedies excite in those who have contemplated the Place de la Revolution? or who can smile at a farce in ridicule of monarchy, that beholds the Convention, and knows the characters of the men who compose it?—But in most of these wretched productions the absurdity is luckily not less conspicuous than the immoral intention: their Princes, their Priests, their Nobles, are all tyrannical, vicious, and miserable; yet the common people, living under these same vicious tyrants, are described as models of virtue, hospitality, and happiness. If, then, the auditors of such edifying dramas were in the habit of reasoning, they might very justly conclude, that the ignorance which republicanism is to banish is desirable, and that the diffusion of riches with which they have been flattered, will only increase their vices, and subtract from their felicity.

There are, however, some patriotic spirits, who, not insensible to this degeneracy of the French theatre, and lamenting the evil, have lately exercised much ingenuity in developing the cause. They have at length discovered, that all the republican tragedies, flat farces, and heavy comedies, are attributable to Mr. Pitt, who has thought proper to corrupt the authors, with a view to deprave the public taste. There is, certainly, no combating this charge; for as, according to the assertions of the Convention, Mr. Pitt has succeeded in bribing nearly every other description of men in the republic, we may suppose the consciences of such scribblers not less flexible. Mr. Pitt, indeed, stands accused, sometimes in conjunction with the Prince of Cobourg, and sometimes on his own account, of successively corrupting the officers of the fleet and army, all the bankers and all the farmers, the priests who say masses, and the people who attend them, the chiefs of the aristocrats, and the leaders of the Jacobins. The bakers who refuse to bake when they have no flour, and the populace who murmur when they have no bread, besides the merchants and shopkeepers who prefer coin to assignats, are notoriously pensioned by him: and even a part of the Representatives, and all the frail beauties, are said to be enlisted in his service.—These multifarious charges will be found on the journals of the Assembly, and we must of course infer, that Mr. Pitt is the ablest statesman, or the French the most corrupt nation, existing.



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But it is not only Barrere and his colleagues who suppose the whole country bribeable—the notion is common to the French in general; and vanity adding to the omnipotence of gold, whenever they speak of a battle lost, or a town taken, they conclude it impossible to have occurred but through the venal treachery of their officers.—The English, I have observed, always judge differently, and would not think the national honour sustained by a supposition that their commanders were vulnerable only in the hand. If a general or an admiral happen to be unfortunate, it would be with the utmost reluctance that we should think of attributing his mischance to a cause so degrading; yet whoever has been used to French society will acknowledge, that the first suggestion on such events is "*nos officiers ont ete gagnes*," [Our officers were bought.] or "*sans la trahison ce ne seroit pas arrive*." [This could not have happened without treachery.]—Pope's hyperbole of

"Just half the land would buy, and half be sold,"

is more than applicable here; for if we may credit the French themselves, the buyers are by no means so well proportioned to the sellers.

As I have no new political intelligence to comment upon, I shall finish my letter with a domestic adventure of the morning.—Our house was yesterday assigned as the quarters of some officers, who, with part of a regiment, were passing this way to join the Northern army. As they spent the evening out, we saw nothing of them, but finding one was a Colonel, and the other a Captain, though we knew what republican colonels and captains might be, we thought it civil, or rather necessary, to send them an invitation to breakfast. We therefore ordered some milk coffee early, (for Frenchmen seldom take tea,) and were all assembled before the usual time to receive our military guests. As they did not, however, appear, we were ringing to enquire for them, when Mr. D_____ entered from his morning walk, and desired us to be at ease on their account, for that in passing the kitchen, he had perceived the Captain fraternizing over some onions, bread, and beer, with our man; while the Colonel was in close conference with the cook, and watching a pan of soup, which was warming for his breakfast. We have learned since, that these heroes were very willing to accept of any thing the servants offered them, but could not be prevailed upon to approach us; though, you are to understand, this was not occasioned either by timidity or incivility, but by mere ignorance. --Mr. D_____ says, the Marquise and I have not divested ourselves of aristocratic associations with our ideas of the military, and that our deshables this morning were unusually coquetish. Our projects of conquest were, however, all frustrated by the unlucky intervention of Bernardine's *soupe aux choux*, [Cabbage-soup.] and Eustace's regale of cheese and onions.

"And with such beaux 'tis vain to be a belle."



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Yours, &c.

Amiens, Dec. 10, 1794.

Your American friend passed through here yesterday, and delivered me the two parcels. As marks of your attention, they were very acceptable; but on any other account, I assure you, I should have preferred a present of a few pecks of wheat to all your fineries.

I have been used to conclude, when I saw such strange and unaccountable absurdities given in the French papers as extracts from the debates in either of your Houses of Parliament, that they were probably fabricated here to serve the designs of the reigning factions: yet I perceive, by some old papers which came with the muslins, that there are really members so ill-informed or so unprincipled, as to use the language attributed to them, and who assert that the French are attached to their government, and call France “a land of republicans.”

When it is said that a people are republicans, we must suppose they are either partial to republicanism as a system, or that they prefer it in practice. A little retrospection, perhaps, will determine both these points better than the eloquence of your orators.

A few men, of philosophic or restless minds, have, in various ages and countries, endeavoured to enlighten or disturb the world by examinations and disputes on forms of government; yet the best heads and the best hearts have remained divided on the subject, and I never heard that any writer was able to produce more than a partial conviction, even in the most limited circle. Whence, then, did it happen in France, where information was avowedly confined, and where such discussions could not have been general, that the people became suddenly inspired with this political sagacity, which made them in one day the judges and converts of a system they could scarcely have known before, even by name?—At the deposition of the King, the French, (speaking at large,) had as perspicuous a notion of republics, as they may be supposed to have of mathematics, and would have understood Euclid’s Elements as well as the Social Contract. Yet an assemblage of the worst and most daring men from every faction, elected amidst massacres and proscription, the moment they are collected together, declare, on the proposal of Collot d’Herbois, a profligate strolling player, that France shall be a republic.—Admitting that the French were desirous of altering their form of government, I believe no one will venture to say such an inclination was ever manifested, or that the Convention were elected in a manner to render them competent to such a decision. They were not the choice of the people, but chiefly emissaries imposed on the departments by the Jacobins and the municipality of Paris; and let those who are not acquainted with the means by which the elections were obtained, examine the composition of the Assembly itself, and then decide whether any people being free could have selected such men as Petion, Tallien, Robespierre, Brissot,

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Carrier, Taillefer, &c. &c. from the whole nation to be their Representatives.—There must, in all large associations, be a mixture of good and bad; but when it is incontrovertible that the principal members of the Convention are monsters, who, we hope, are not to be paralleled— that the rest are inferior rather in talents than wickedness, or cowards and ideots, who have supported and applauded crimes they only wanted opportunity to commit—it is not possible to conceive, that any people in the world could make a similar choice. Yet if the French were absolutely unbiassed, and of their own free will made this collection, who would, after such an example, be the advocates of general suffrage and popular representation?—But, I repeat, the people were not free. They were not, indeed, influenced by bribes—they were intimidated by the horrors of the moment; and along with the regulations for the new elections, were every where circulated details of the assassinations of August and September.*

* The influence of the municipality of Paris on the new elections is well known. The following letter will show what instruments were employed, and the description of Representatives likely to be chosen under such auspices.

“Circular letter, written by the Committee of Inspection of the municipality of Paris to all the departments of the republic, dated the third of September, the second day of the massacres:

“The municipality of Paris is impatient to inform their brethren of the departments, that a part of the ferocious conspirators detained in the prisons have been put to death by the people: an act of justice which appeared to them indispensable, to restrain by terror those legions of traitors whom they must have left behind when they departed for the army. There is no doubt but the whole nation, after such multiplied treasons, will hasten to adopt the same salutary measure!”—Signed by the Commune of Paris and the Minister of Justice.

Who, after this mandate, would venture to oppose a member recommended by the Commune of Paris?

—The French, then, neither chose the republican form of government, nor the men who adopted it; and are, therefore, not republicans on principle.—Let us now consider whether, not being republicans on principle, experience may have rendered them such.

The first effects of the new system were an universal consternation, the disappearance of all the specie, an extravagant rise in the price of provisions, and many indications of scarcity. The scandalous quarrels of the legislature shocked the national vanity, by making France the ridicule of all Europe, until ridicule was suppressed by detestation at the subsequent murder of the King. This was followed by the efforts of one faction to strengthen itself against another, by means of a general war—the leaders of the former presuming, that they alone were capable of conducting it.



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To the miseries of war were added revolutionary tribunals, revolutionary armies and committees, forced loans, requisitions, maximums, and every species of tyranny and iniquity man could devise or suffer; or, to use the expression of Rewbell, [One of the Directory in 1796.] "France was in mourning and desolation; all her families plunged in despair; her whole surface covered with Bastilles, and the republican government become so odious, that the most wretched slave, bending beneath the weight of his chains, would have refused to live under it!"

Such were the means by which France was converted into a land of republicans, and such the government to which your patriots assert the French people were attached: yet so little was this attachment appreciated here, that the mere institutions for watching and suppressing disaffection amount, by the confession of Cambon, the financier, to twenty-four millions six hundred and thirty-one thousand pounds sterling a year!

To suppose, then, that the French are devoted to a system which has served as a pretext for so many crimes, and has been the cause of so many calamities, is to conclude them a nation of philosophers, who are able to endure, yet incapable of reasoning; and who suffer evils of every kind in defence of a principle with which they can be little acquainted, and which, in practice, they have known only by the destruction it has occasioned.

You may, perhaps, have been persuaded, that the people submit patiently now, for the sake of an advantage in perspective; but it is not in the disposition of unenlightened men (and the mass of a people must necessarily be so) to give up the present for the future. The individual may sometimes achieve this painful conquest over himself, and submit to evil, on a calculation of future retribution, but the multitude will ever prefer the good most immediately attainable, if not under the influence of that terror which supersedes every other consideration. Recollect, then, the counsel of the first historian of our age, and "suspend your belief of whatever deviates from the laws of nature and the character of man;" and when you are told the French are attached to a government which oppresses them, or to principles of which they are ignorant, suppose their adoption of the one, and their submission to the other, are the result of fear, and that those who make these assertions to the contrary, are either interested or misinformed.

Excuse me if I have devoted a few pages to a subject which with you is obsolete. I am indignant at the perusal of such falsehoods; and though I feel for the humiliation of great talents, I feel still more for the disgrace such an abuse of them brings on our country.



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It is not inapposite to mention a circumstance which happened to a friend of Mr. D____'s, some little time since, at Paris. He was passing through France, in his way from Italy, at the time of the general arrest, and was detained there till the other day. As soon as he was released from prison, he applied in person to a member of the Convention, to learn when he might hope to return to England. The Deputy replied, "*Ma soi je n'en sais rien* [Faith I can't tell you.]—If your Messieurs (naming some members in the opposition) had succeeded in promoting a revolution, you would not have been in your cage so long—*mais pour le coup il faut attendre.*" [But now you must have patience.] It is not probable the members he named could have such designs, but Dumont once held the same

language to me; and it is mortifying to hear these miscreants suppose, that factious or ambitious men, because they chance to possess talents, can make revolutions in England as they have done in France.

In the papers which gave rise to these reflections, I observe that some of your manufacturing towns are discontented, and attribute the stagnation of their commerce to the war; but it is not unlikely, that the stagnation and failures complained of might have taken place, though the war had not happened.—When I came here in 1792, every shop and warehouse were over-stocked with English goods. I could purchase any article of our manufacture at nearly the retail price of London; and some I sent for from Paris, in the beginning of 1793, notwithstanding the reports of war, were very little advanced. Soon after the conclusion of the commercial treaty, every thing English became fashionable; and so many people had speculated in consequence, that similar speculations took place in England. But France was glutted before the war; and all speculations entered into on a presumption of a demand equal to that of the first years of the treaty, must have failed in a certain degree, though the two countries had remained at peace.—Even after a two years cessation of direct intercourse, British manufactures are every where to be procured, which is a sufficient proof that either the country was previously over supplied, or that they are still imported through neutral or indirect channels. Both these suppositions preclude the likelihood that the war has so great a share in relaxing the activity of your commerce, as is pretended.

But whatever may be the effect of the war, there is no prospect of peace, until the efforts of England, or the total ruin of the French finances,* shall open the way for it.

* By a report of Cambon's at this time, it appears the expences of France in 1792 were eighteen millions sterling—in 1793, near ninety millions—and, in the spring of 1794, twelve and a half millions per month!—The church bells, we learn from the same authority, cost in coinage, and the purchase of copper to mix with the metal, five or



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six millions of livres more than they produced as money. The church plate, which was brought to the bar of the Convention with such éclat, and represented as an inexhaustible resource, amounted to scarcely a million sterling: for as the offering was every where involuntary, and promoted by its agents for the purposes of pillage, part was secreted, a still greater part stolen, and, as the conveyance to Paris was a sort of job, the expences often exceeded the worth—a patine, a censor, and a small chalice, were sent to the Convention, perhaps an hundred leagues, by a couple of Jacobin Commissioners in a coach and four, with a military escort. Thus, the prejudices of the people were outraged, and their property wasted, without any benefit, even to those who suggested the measure.

—The Convention, indeed, have partly relinquished their project of destroying all the Kings of the earth, and forcing all the people to be free. But, though their schemes of reformation have failed, they still adhere to those of extirpation; and the most moderate members talk occasionally of “vile islanders,” and “sailing up the Thames.”*—

* The Jacobins and the Moderates, who could agree in nothing else, were here perfectly in unison; so that on the same day we see the usual invectives of Barrere succeeded by menaces equally ridiculous from Pelet and Tallien—

"La seule chose dont nous devons nous occuper est d'écraser ce gouvernement infame."

Discours de Pelet, 14 Nov.

“The destruction of that infamous government is the only thing that ought to engage our attention.”
Pelet’s Speech, 14 Nov. 1794.

"Aujourd'hui que la France peut en se débarrassant d'une partie de ses ennemis reporter la gloire de ses armes sur les bords de la Tamise, et écraser le gouvernement Anglais." Discours de Tallien. “France, having now the opportunity of lessening the number of her enemies, may carry the glory of her arms to the banks of the Thames, and crush the English government.” Tallien’s Speech. *"Que le gouvernement prenne des mesures sages pour faire une paix honorable avec quelques uns de nos ennemis, et à l'aide des vaisseaux Hollandais et Espagnols, portons nous ensuite avec vigueur sur les bords de la Tamise, et détruisons la nouvelle Carthage." Discours de Tallien, 14 Nov.* “Let the government but adopt wise measures for making an honorable peace with a part of our enemies, and with the aid of the Dutch and Spanish navies, let us repair to the banks of the Thames, and destroy the modern Carthage.” Tallien’s Speech, 14 Nov. 1794.



No one is here ignorant of the source of Tallien's predilection for Spain, and we may suppose the intrigue at this time far advanced. Probably the charms of his wife (the daughter of *Mons. Cabarrus*, a French speculator, formerly much encouraged by the Spanish government, afterwards disgraced and imprisoned, but now liberated) might not be the only means employed to procure his conversion.



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—Tallien, Clauzel, and those who have newly assumed the character of rational and decent people, still use the low and atrocious language of Brissot, on the day he made his declaration of war; and perhaps hope, by exciting a national spirit of vengeance against Great Britain, to secure their lives and their pay, when they shall have been forced to make peace on the Continent: for, be certain, the motives of these men are never to be sought for in any great political object, but merely in expedients to preserve their persons and their plunder.

Those who judge of the Convention by their daily harangues, and the justice, virtue, or talents which they ascribe to themselves, must believe them to be greatly regenerated: yet such is the dearth both of abilities and of worth of any kind, that Andre Dumont has been successively President of the Assembly, Member of the Committee of General Safety, and is now in that of Public Welfare.—Adieu.

Amiens, Dec. 16, 1794.

The seventy-three Deputies who have been so long confined are now liberated, and have resumed their seats. Jealousy and fear for some time rendered the Convention averse from the adoption of this measure; but the public opinion was so determined in favour of it, that farther resistance might not have been prudent. The satisfaction created by this event is general, though the same sentiment is the result of various conclusions, which, however, all tend to one object—the re-establishment of monarchy.

The idea most prevalent is, that these deputies, when arrested, were royalists.*

* This opinion prevailed in many places where the proscribed deputies took refuge. “The Normans (says Louvet) deceived by the imputations in the newspapers, assisted us, under the idea that we were royalists: but abandoned us when they found themselves mistaken.” In the same manner, on the appearance of these Deputies in other departments, armies were collecting very fast, but dispersed when they perceived these men were actuated only by personal fear or personal ambition, and that no one talked of restoring the monarchy.

—By some it is thought, persecution may have converted them; but the reflecting part of the nation look on the greater number as adherents of the Girondists, whom the fortunate violence of Robespierre excluded from participating in many of the past crimes of their colleagues, and who have, in that alone, a reason for not becoming accomplices in those which may be attempted in future.

It is astonishing to see with what facility people daily take on trust things which they have it in their power to ascertain. The seventy-three owe a great part of the interest they have excited to a persuasion of their having voted either for a mild sentence on the King, or an appeal to the nation: yet this is so far from being true, that many of them were unfavourable to him on every question. But supposing it to have been otherwise,

their merit is in reality little enhanced: they all voted him guilty, without examining whether he was so or not; and in affecting mercy while they refused justice, they only aimed at conciliating their present views with their future safety.



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The whole claim of this party, who are now the Moderates of the Convention, is reducible to their having opposed the commission of crimes which were intended to serve their adversaries, rather than themselves. To effect the dethronement of the King, and the destruction of those obnoxious to them, they approved of popular insurrections; but expected that the people whom they had rendered proficient in cruelty, should become gentle and obedient when urged to resist their own authority; yet they now come forth as victims of their patriotism, and call the heads of the faction who are fallen—martyrs to liberty! But if they are victims, it is to their folly or wickedness in becoming members of such an assembly; and if their chiefs were martyrs, it was to the principles they inculcated.

The trial of the Brissotins was justice, compared with that of the King. If the former were condemned without proof, their partizans should remember, that the revolutionary jury pretended to be influenced by the same moral evidence they had themselves urged as the ground on which they condemned the King; and if the people beheld with applause or indifference the execution of their once-popular idols, they only put in practice the barbarous lessons which those idols had taught them;—they were forbidden to lament the fate of their Sovereign, and they rejoiced in that of Brissot and his confederates.—These men, then, only found the just retribution of their own guilt; and though it may be politic to forget that their survivors were also their accomplices, they are not objects of esteem—and the contemporary popularity, which a long seclusion has obtained for them, will vanish, if their future conduct should be directed by their original principles.*

* Louvet's pamphlet had not at this time appeared, and the subsequent events proved, that the interest taken in these Deputies was founded on a supposition they had changed their principles; for before the close of the Convention they were as much objects of hatred and contempt as their colleagues.

Some of these Deputies were the hirelings of the Duke of Orleans, and most of them are individuals of no better reputation than the rest of the Assembly. Lanjuinais has the merit of having acted with great courage in defence of himself and his party on the thirty-first of May 1792; but the following anecdote, recited by Gregoire* in the Convention a few days ago will sufficiently explain both his character and Gregoire's, who are now, however, looked up to as royalists, and as men comparatively honest.

* Gregoire is one of the constitutional Clergy, and, from the habit of comparing bad with worse, is more esteemed than many of his colleagues; yet, in his report on the progress of Vandalism, he expresses himself with sanguinary indecency—"They have torn (says he) the prints which represented the execution of Charles the first, because there were coats of arms on them. Ah, would to god



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we could behold, engraved in the same manner, the heads of all Kings, done from nature! We might then reconcile ourselves to seeing a ridiculous embellishment of heraldry accompany them.”

—“When I first arrived at Versailles, (says Gregoire,) as member of the Constituent Assembly, (in 1789,) I met with Lanjuinais, and we took an oath in concert to dethrone the King and abolish Nobility.” Now, this was before the alledged provocations of the King and Nobility—before the constitution was framed—before the flight of the royal family to Varennes—and before the war. But almost daily confessions of this sort escape, which at once justify the King, and establish the infamy of the revolutionists.

These are circumstances not to be forgotten, did not the sad science of discriminating the shades of wickedness, in which (as I have before noticed) the French have been rendered such adepts, oblige them at present to fix their hopes—not according to the degree of merit, but by that of guilt. They are reduced to distinguish between those who sanction murders, and those who perpetrated them—between the sacrificer of one thousand victims, and that of ten—between those who assassinate, and those who only reward the assassin.*

* Tallien is supposed, as agent of the municipality of paris, to have paid a million and a half of livres to the Septembrisers or assassins of the prisons! I know not whether the sum was in assignats or specie.—If in the former, it was, according to the exchange then, about two and thirty thousand pounds sterling: but if estimated in proportion to what might be purchased with it, near fifty thousand. Tallien has never denied the payment of the money—we may, therefore, conclude the charge to be true.

—Before the revolution, they would not have known how to select, where all were objects of abhorrence; but now the most ignorant are casuists in the gradations of turpitude, and prefer Tallien to Le Bon, and the Abbe Sieyes to Barrere.

The crimes of Carrier have been terminated, not punished, by death. He met his fate with a courage which, when the effect of innocence, is glorious to the sufferer, and consoling to humanity; but a career like his, so ended, was only the confirmation of a brutal and ferocious mind.*

* When Carrier was arrested, he attempted to shoot himself, and, on being prevented by the Gens-d’armes, he told them there were members of the Convention who would not forgive their having prevented his purpose—implying, that they apprehended the discoveries he might make on his trial. While he was dressing himself, (for they took him in bed,) he added, “*Les Scelerats!* (Meaning his more particular accomplices, who, he was told, had voted against him,) they deserved that I should be as dastardly as themselves.” He rested his defence entirely on the decrees of the Convention.

—Of thirty who were tried with him as his



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agents, and convicted of assisting at the drownings, shootings, &c. two only were executed, the rest were acquitted; because, though the facts were proved, the moral latitude of the Revolutionary Jury* did not find the guilt of the intention—that is, the culprits were indisputably the murderers of several thousand people, but, according to the words of the verdict, they did not act with a counter-revolutionary intention.

* An English reader may be deceived by the name of Jury. The Revolutionary Jury was not only instituted, but even appointed by the Convention.—The following is a literal translation of some of the verdicts given on this occasion:

“That O’Sullivan is author and accomplice of several noyades (drownings) and unheard-of cruelties towards the victims delivered to the waves.

“That Lefevre is proved to have ordered and caused to be executed a noyade of men, women, and children, and to have committed various arbitrary acts.

“That General Heron is proved to have assassinated children, and worn publicly in his hat the ear of a man he had murdered. That he also killed two children who were peaceably watching sheep.

“That Bachelier is author and accomplice of the operations at Nantes, in signing arbitrary mandates of arrest, imposing vexatious taxes, and taking for himself plate, &c. found at the houses of citizens arrested on suspicion.

“That Joly is guilty, &c. in executing the arbitrary orders of the Revolutionary Committee, of tying together the victims destined to be drowned or shot.”

There are thirty-one articles conceived nearly in the same terms, and which conclude thus—“All convicted as above, but not having acted with criminal or counter-revolutionary intentions, the Tribunal acquits and sets them at liberty.” All France was indignant at those verdicts, and the people of Paris were so enraged, that the Convention ordered the acquitted culprits to be arrested again, perhaps rather for protection than punishment. They were sent from Paris, and I never heard the result; but I have seen the name of General Heron as being at large.

The Convention were certainly desirous that the atrocities of these men (all zealous republicans) should be forgotten; for, independently of the disgrace which their trial has brought on the cause, the sacrifice of such agents might create a dangerous timidity in future, and deprive the government of valuable partizans, who would fear to be the instruments of crimes for which, after such a precedent, they might become responsible. But the evil, which was unavoidable, has been palliated by the tenderness



or gratitude of a jury chosen by the Convention, who, by sacrificing two only of this mass of monsters, and protecting the rest, hope to consecrate the useful principle of indulgence for every act, whatever its enormity, which has been the consequence of zeal or obedience to the government.



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It is among the dreadful singularities of the revolution, that the greatest crimes which have been committed were all in strict observance of the laws. Hence the Convention are perpetually embarrassed by interest or shame, when it becomes necessary to punish them. We have only to compare the conduct of Carrier, le Bon, Maignet, &c. with the decrees under which they acted, to be convinced that their chief guilt lies in having been capable of obeying: and the convention, coldly issuing forth their rescripts of extermination and conflagration, will not, in the opinion of the moralist, be favorably distinguished from those who carried these mandates into execution.

December 24, 1794.

I am now at a village a few miles from Amiens, where, upon giving security in the usual form, we have been permitted to come for a few days on a visit to some relations of my friend Mad. de _____. On our arrival, we found the lady of the house in a nankeen pierrot, knitting grey thread stockings for herself, and the gentleman in a thick woollen jacket and pantaloons, at work in the fields, and really labouring as hard as his men.— They hope, by thus taking up the occupation and assuming the appearance of farmers, to escape farther persecution; and this policy may be available to those who have little to lose: but property is now a more dangerous distinction than birth, and whoever possesses it, will always be considered as the enemies of the republic, and treated accordingly.

We have been so much confined the last twelve months, that we were glad to ride yesterday in spite of the cold; and our hosts having procured asses for the females of the party, accompanied us themselves on foot.— During our ramble, we entered into conversation with two old men and a boy, who were at work in an open field near the road. They told us, they had not strength to labour, because they had not their usual quantity of bread—that their good lady, whose chateau we saw at a distance, had been guillotined, or else they should have wanted for nothing—*"Et ste pauvre Javotte la n'aurait pas travaille quant elle est qualsiment prete a mourir."* ["And our poor Javotte there would not have had to work when she is almost in her grave."]*"Mon dieu,"* (says one of the old men, who had not yet spoke,) *"Je donnerais bien ma portion de sa terre pour la ravoir notre bonne dame."* ["God knows, I would willingly give up my share of her estate to have our good lady amongst us again."]*"Ah pour ca oui,"* (returned the other,) *"mais j'crois que nous n'aurons ni l'une l'autre, voila ste maudite nation qui s'empare de tout."* ["Ah truly, but I fancy we shall have neither one nor the other, for this cursed nation gets hold of every thing."]



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While they were going on in this style, a berline and four cabriolets, with three-coloured flags at the windows, and a whole troop of national guard, passed along the road. "Vive la Republique!"—"Vive la Nation!" cried our peasants, in an instant; and as soon as the cavalcade was out of sight, "Voyez ste gueusaille la, quel train, c'est vraiment quelque depute de la Convention—ces brigands la, ils ne manquent de rien, ils vivent comme des rois, et nous autres nous sommes cent sois plus miserables que jamais." ["See there what a figure they make, those beggarly fellows—it's some deputy of the convention I take it. The thieves want for nothing, they live like so many kings, and we are all a hundred times worse off than ever."]—"Tais toi, tais toi," ["Be quiet, I tell you."] (says the old man, who seemed the least garrulous of the two.)—"Ne crains rien, ["Never fear."] (replied the first,) *c'est de braves gens*; these ladies and gentlemen I'm sure are good people; they have not the look of patriots."—And with this compliment to ourselves, and the externals of patriotism, we took our leave of them.

I found, however, by this little conversation, that some of the peasants still believe they are to have the lands of the gentry divided amongst them, according to a decree for that purpose. The lady, whom they lamented, and whose estate they expected to share, was the Marquise de B____, who had really left the country before the revolution, and had gone to drink some of the German mineral waters, but not returning within the time afterwards prescribed, was declared an emigrant. By means of a friend, she got an application made to Chabot, (then in high popularity,) who for an hundred thousand livres procured a passport from the Executive Council to enter France. Upon the faith of this she ventured to return, and was in consequence, notwithstanding her passport, executed as an emigrant.

Mrs. D____, who is not yet well enough for such an expedition, and is, besides, unaccustomed to our montures, remained at home. We found she had been much alarmed during our absence, every house in the village having been searched, by order of the district, for corn, and two of the horses taken to the next post to convey the retinue of the Deputy we had seen in the morning. Every thing, however, was tranquil on our arrival, and rejoicing it was no worse, though *Mons.* ____ seemed to be under great apprehension for his horses, we sat down to what in France is called a late dinner.

Our host's brother, who left the army at the general exclusion of the Noblesse, and was in confinement at the Luxembourg until after the death of Robespierre, is a professed wit, writes couplets to popular airs, and has dramatized one of Plutarch's Lives. While we were at the desert, he amused us with some of his compositions in prison, such as an epigram on the Guillotine, half a dozen calembours on the bad



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fare at the *Gamelle*, [Mess.] and an ode on the republican victory at Fleurus—the last written under the hourly expectation of being sent off with the next *fournée* (batch) of pretended conspirators, yet breathing the most ardent attachment to the convention, and terminated by a full sounding line about tyrants and liberty.—This may appear strange, but the Poets were, for the most part, in durance, and the Muses must sing, though in a cage: hope and fear too both inspire prescriptively, and freedom might be obtained or death averted by these effusions of a devotion so profound as not to be alienated by the sufferings of imprisonment, or the menace of destruction. Whole volumes of little jeux d'esprit, written under these circumstances, might be collected from the different prisons; and, I believe, it is only in France that such a collection could have been furnished.*

* Many of these poetical trifles have been published—some written even the night before their authors were executed. There are several of great poetical merit, and, when considered relatively, are wonderful.—Among the various poets imprisoned, was one we should scarcely have expected—Rouget Delille, author of the Marseillois Hymn, who, while his muse was rousing the citizens from one end of the republic to the other to arm against tyrants, was himself languishing obscurely a victim to the worst of all tyrannies.

Mr. D____, though he writes and speaks French admirably, does not love French verses; and I found he could not depend on the government of his features, while a French poet was reciting his own, but kept his eyes fixed on a dried apple, which he pared very curiously, and when that was atchieved, betook himself to breaking pralines, and extracting the almonds with equal application. We, however, complimented Monsieur's poetry; and when we had taken our coffee, and the servants were entirely withdrawn, he read us some trifles more agreeable to our principles, if not to our taste, and in which the Convention was treated with more sincerity than complaisance. It seems the poet's zeal for the republic had vanished at his departure from the Luxembourg, and that his wrath against coalesced despots, and his passion for liberty, had entirely evaporated. In the evening we played a party of reversi with republican cards,* and heard the children sing "Mourrons pour la Patrie."

* The four Kings are replaced by four Genii, the Queens by four sorts of liberty, and the Knaves by four descriptions of equality.

—After these civic amusements, we closed our chairs round the fire, conjecturing how long the republic might last, or whether we should all pass another twelve months in prison, and, agreeing that both our fate and that of the republic were very precarious, adjourned to rest.



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While I was undressing, I observed Angelique looked extremely discontented, and on my enquiring what was the matter, she answered, "*C'est que je m'ennuie beaucoup ici,*" ["I am quite tired of this place."] "Mademoiselle," (for no state or calling is here exempt from this polite sensation.) "And why, pray?"—"Ah quelle triste societe, tout le monde est d'un patriotisme insoutenable, la maison est remplie d'images republicaines, des Marat, des Voltaire, des Pelletier, que sais-moi? et voila jusqu'au garcon de l'ecurie qui me traite de citoyenne." ["Oh, they are a sad set—every body is so insufferably patriotic. The house is full from top to bottom of republican images, Marats, and Voltaires, and Pelletiers, and I don't know who—and I am called Citizen even by the stable boy."] I did not think it right to satisfy her as to the real principles of our friends, and went to bed ruminating on the improvements which the revolution must have occasioned in the art of dissimulation. Terror has drilled people of the most opposite sentiments into such an uniformity of manner and expression, that an aristocrat who is ruined and persecuted by the government is not distinguishable from the Jacobin who has made his fortune under it.

In the morning Angelique's countenance was brightened, and I found she had slept in the same room with Madame's *femme de chambre*, when an explanation of their political creeds had taken place, so that she now assured me Mad. Augustine was "*fort honnete dans le fond,*" [A very good girl at heart.] though she was obliged to affect republicanism.—"All the world's a stage," says our great dramatic moralist. France is certainly so at present, and we are not only necessitated to act a part, but a sorry one too; for we have no choice but to exhibit in farce, or suffer in tragedy.—Yours, &c.

December 27, 1794.

I took the opportunity of my being here to go about four leagues farther to see an old convent acquaintance lately come to this part of the country, and whom I have not met since I was at Orleans in 1789.

The time has been when I should have thought such a history as this lady's a romance, but tales of woe are now become familiar to us, and, if they create sympathy, they no longer excite surprize, and we hear of them as the natural effects of the revolution.

Madame de St. E__m__d is the daughter of a gentleman whose fortune was inadequate both to his rank and manner of living, and he gladly embraced the offer of Monsieur de St. E__m__d to marry her at sixteen, and to relinquish the fortune allotted her to her two younger sisters. Monsieur de St. E__m__d, being a dissipated man, soon grew weary of any sort of domestic life, and placing his wife with her father, in less than a year after their marriage departed for Italy.—Madame de St. E__m__d, thus left in a situation both delicate and dangerous for a young and pretty woman, became unfortunately attached



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to a gentleman who was her distant relation: yet, far from adopting the immoral principles not unjustly ascribed to your country, she conducted herself with a prudence and reserve, which even in France made her an object of general respect. About three years after her husband's departure the revolution took place, and not returning, he was of course put on the list of emigrants. In 1792, when the law passed which sanctioned and facilitated divorces, her friends all earnestly persuaded her to avail herself of it, but she could not be prevailed upon to consider the step as justifiable; for though Monsieur de St. E__m__d neglected her, he had, in other respects, treated her with generosity and kindness. She, therefore, persisted in her refusal, and her lover, in despair, joined the republican army.

At the general arrest of the Noblesse, Madame de St. E__m__d and her sisters were confined in the town where they resided, but their father was sent to Paris; and a letter from one of his female relations, who had emigrated, being found among his papers, he was executed without being able to see or write to his children. Madame de St. E__m__d's husband had returned about the same time to France, in the disguise of a post-boy, was discovered, and shared the same fate. These events reached her love, still at the army, but it was impossible for him to quit his post, and in a few days after, being mortally wounded, he died,* recommending Eugenie de St. E__m__d to the protection of his father.—

* This young man, who died gallantly fighting in the cause of the republic, was no republican: but this does not render the murder of his father, a deaf [There were people both deaf and dumb in the prisons as conspirators.] and inoffensive man, less abominable.—The case of General Moreau's father, though somewhat similar, is yet more characteristic of the revolution. *Mons.* Moreau was persuaded, by a man who had some interest in the business, to pay a debt which he owed an emigrant, to an individual, instead of paying it, as the law directed, to the use of the republic. The same man afterwards denounced him, and he was thrown into prison. At nine o'clock on the night preceding his trial, his act of accusation was brought him, and before he had time to sketch out a few lines for his defence, the light by which he wrote was taken away. In the morning he was tried, the man who had informed against him sitting as one of his judges, and he was condemned and executed the very day on which his son took the Fort de l'Ecluse!—*Mons.* Moreau had four sons, besides the General in the army, and two daughters, all left destitute by the confiscation of his property.

—A brother officer, who engaged to execute this commission, wrote immediately to the old man, to inform him of his loss, and of his son's last request. It was too late, the father having been arrested on suspicion, and afterwards guillotined, with many other persons, for a pretended conspiracy in prison, the very day on which his son had fallen in the performance of an act of uncommon bravery.



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Were I writing from imagination, I should add, that Madame de St. E__m__d had been unable to sustain the shock of these repeated calamities, and that her life or understanding had been the sacrifice. It were, indeed, happy for the sufferer, if our days were always terminated when they became embittered, or that we lost the sense of sorrow by its excess: but it is not so—we continue to exist when we have lost the desire of existence, and to reason when feeling and reason constitute our torments. Madame de St. E__m__d then lives, but lives in affliction; and having collected the wreck of her personal property, which some friends had concealed, she left the part of France she formerly inhabited, and is now with an aunt in this neighbourhood, watching the decay of her eldest sister, and educating the youngest.

Clementine was consumptive when they were first arrested, and vexation, with ill-treatment in the prison, have so established her disorder, that she is now past relief. She is yet scarcely eighteen, and one of the most lovely young women I ever saw. Grief and sickness have ravaged her features; but they are still so perfect, that fancy, associating their past bloom with their present languor, supplies perhaps as much to the mind as is lost by the eye. She suffers without complaining, and mourns without ostentation; and hears her father spoken of with such solemn silent floods of tears, that she looks like the original of Dryden's beautiful portrait of the weeping Sigismunda.

The letter which condemned the father of these ladies, was not, it seems, written to himself, but to a brother, lately dead, whose executor he was, and of whose papers he thus became possessed. On this ground their friends engaged them to petition the Assembly for a revision of the sentence, and the restoration of their property, which was in consequence forfeited.

The daily professions of the Convention, in favour of justice and humanity, and the return of the seventy-three imprisoned Deputies, had soothed these poor young women with the hopes of regaining their paternal inheritance, so iniquitously confiscated. A petition was, therefore, forwarded to Paris about a fortnight ago; and the day before, the following decree was issued, which has silenced their claims for ever: "La Convention Nationale declare qu'elle n'admettra aucune demande en revision des jugemens criminels portant confiscation de biens rendus et executes pendant la revolution."*

* "The National Convention hereby declares that it will admit no petitions for the revival of such criminal sentences, attended with confiscation of property, as have been passed and executed since the revolution." Yet these revolutionists, who would hear nothing of repairing their own injustice, had occasionally been annulling sentences past half a century ago, and the more recent one of the Chevalier La Barre. But their own executions



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and confiscations for an adherence to religion were to be held sacred.—I shall be excused for introducing here a few words respecting the affair of La Barre, which has been a favourite topic with popular writers of a certain description. The severity of the punishment must, doubtless, be considered as disgraceful to those who advised as well as to those who sanctioned it: but we must not infer from hence that he merited no punishment at all; and perhaps degradation, some scandalous and public correction, with a few years solitary confinement, might have answered every purpose intended. La Barre was a young etourdi, under twenty, but of lively talents, which, unfortunately for him, had taken a very perverse turn. The misdemeanour commonly imputed to him and his associates was, that they had mutilated a Christ which stood on the Pont-neuf at Abbeville: but La Barre had accustomed himself to take all opportunities of insulting, with the most wanton malignity, these pious representations, and especially in the presence of people, with whom his particular connections led him to associate, and whose profession could not allow them entirely to overlook such affronts on what was deemed an appendage to the established religion of the country. The people of Abbeville manifested their sense of the business when d'Etalonde, La Barre's intimate friend, who had saved himself by flight, returned, after a long exile, under favour of the revolution. He was received in the neighbourhood with the most mortifying indifference. The decree of the Convention too, by which the memory of this imprudent young man was re-established, when promulgated, created about as much interest as any other law which did not immediately affect the property or awaken the apprehensions of the hearers.

Madame de St. E__m__d told me her whole fortune was now reduced to a few Louis, and about six or seven thousand livres in diamonds; that she was unwilling to burden her aunt, who was not rich, and intended to make some advantage of her musical talents, which are indeed considerable. But I could not, without anguish, hear an elegant young woman, with a heart half broken, propose to get her living by teaching music.—I know not that I ever passed a more melancholy day. In the afternoon we walked up and down the path of the village church-yard. The church was shut up, the roof in part untiled, the windows were broken, and the wooden crosses that religion or tenderness had erected to commemorate the dead, broken and scattered about. Two labourers, and a black-smith in his working garb, came while we were there, and threw a sort of uncouth wooden coffin hastily into a hole dug for the purpose, which they then covered and left without farther ceremony. Yet this was the body of a lady regretted by a large family, who were thus obliged to conquer both their affection and their prejudices, and inter her according to the republican mode.*



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* The relations or friends of the dead were prohibited, under severe penalties, from following their remains to the grave.

I thought, while we traversed the walk, and beheld this scene, that every thing about me bore the marks of the revolution. The melancholy objects I held on my arm, and the feeble steps of Clementine, whom we could scarcely support, aided the impression; and I fear that, for the moment, I questioned the justice of Heaven, in permitting such a scourge to be let loose upon its works.

I quitted Madame de St. E__m__d this morning with reluctance, for we shall not meet again till I am entirely at liberty. The village municipality where she now resides, are quiet and civil, and her misfortunes make her fearful of attracting the notice of the people in authority of a large place, so that she cannot venture to Amiens.—You must observe, that any person who has suffered is an object of particular suspicion, and that to have had a father or a husband executed, and to be reduced to beggary, are titles to farther persecution.—The politics of the day are, it is true, something less ferocious than they were: but confidence is not to be restored by an essay in the *Orateur du Peuple*,* or an equivocal harangue from the tribune; and I perceive every where, that those who have been most injured, are most timid.

* "*L'Orateur du Peuple*," was a periodical paper published by Freron, many numbers of which were written with great spirit.— Freron was at this time supposed to have become a royalist, and his paper, which was comparatively favourable to the aristocrats, was read with great eagerness.

The following extract from the registers of one of the popular commissions will prove, that the fears of those who had already suffered by the revolution were well founded:

"A. Sourdeville, and A. N. E. Sourdeville, sisters of an emigrant Noble, daughters of a Count, aristocrats, and having had their father and brother guillotined.

"M. J. Sourdeville, mother of an emigrant, an aristocrat, and her husband and son having been guillotined.

"Jean Marie Defille—very suspicious—a partizan of the Abbe Arnoud and La Fayette, has had a brother guillotined, and always shewn himself indifferent about the public welfare."

The commissions declare that the above are condemned to banishment.

I did not reach this place till after the family had dined, and taking my soup and a dish of coffee, have escaped, under pretext of the headache, to my own room. I left our poet



far gone in a classical description of a sort of Roman dresses, the drawings of which he had seen exhibited at the Lyceum, as models of an intended national equipment for the French citizens of both sexes; and my visit to Madame de St. E__m__d had incapacitated me for discussing revolutionary draperies.



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In England, this is the season of festivity to the little, and beneficence in the great; but here, the sterile genius of atheism has suppressed the sounds of mirth, and closed the hands of charity—no season is consecrated either to the one or the other; and the once-varied year is but an uniform round of gloom and selfishness. The philosopher may treat with contempt the notion of periodical benevolence, and assert that we should not wait to be reminded by religion or the calendar, in order to contribute to the relief of our fellow creatures: yet there are people who are influenced by custom and duty, that are not always awake to compassion; and indolence or avarice may yield a too ready obedience to prohibitions which favour both. The poor are certainly no gainers by the substitution of philosophy for religion; and many of those who are forbidden to celebrate Christmas or Easter by a mass, will forget to do it by a donation. For my own part, I think it an advantage that any period of the year is more particularly signalized by charity; and I rejoice when I hear of the annual gifts of meat or firing of such, or such a great personage—and I never enquire whether they might still continue their munificence if Christianity were abolished.—Adieu.