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LIFE AND TIMES

OF

MADAME DE STAËL.

BY

MARIA NORRIS.

"Chi opera per sincera coscienza può errare, ma è puro innanzi a Dio."—SILVIO PELLICO.

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MDCCCLIII.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LORD JOHN RUSSELL, M.P.

My Lord,

If my respect for those high and noble qualities, the hereditary virtues of the house of Russell, could give a proportionate value to the offering I bring, my tribute would be a golden one indeed. Ardently believing in the justice of liberty, civil and religious, and cherishing its instincts as the divinest elements of this world's life, it is a very natural thing that I should wish to inscribe this little book to one who has amply redeemed the traditional glories of such a name. For the permission which puts the pleasure of this dedication within my reach, I am sincerely indebted; and can assure your Lordship that however the many imperfections of the book may deteriorate from the value of the tribute, they cannot impair the veneration and regard with which I have the privilege to subscribe myself,

Your Lordship's obliged servant,

Maria Norris.

London, June, 1853.

PREFACE.

WHEN a royal prince deigns to visit a subject, it is customary for the host so honoured to greet his guest at the threshold, and there to make his obeisance as a preliminary to any further intercourse. Much more should I, young, ignorant, and inexperienced, be careful to offer my courtesies to the royal public at the threshold of this little book.

For the opinions expressed therein no apology is offered; they have been honestly thought out to the best of my judgment; but if I should be hereafter convinced of their incorrectness—and Heaven forbid I should live to count that an impossibility—I trust they may be as honestly changed; and that in avowing the alteration, I may blush not for the reform, but the mistake.

It must be owned that the greater part of this sketch has been written with keen interest; it was not, indeed, begun with that feeling, but the nobleness of the subject has grown upon me to such a degree, that when I put the final pen-stroke I felt as though I had lost a friend. It would savour of affec-

tation were I to tell of the depth of regard with which the noble memory of Madame de Staël has inspired me, but I reproach myself that I have so ill reflected it; I am sure, for her sake, I wish it had been possible to prevent my many immaturities of thought and arrangement.

However unpopular may have been, during her life, her opinions and those of her father, the progress of society has, since her death, abundantly vindicated their truth and beauty. Her ideas are now the current coin of intellectual Europe, though, as they are not stamped with her name, she frequently misses the tribute of gratitude we owe her. She came too soon; properly she belongs to the *latter* half of our century, her mind, at any rate, was prophetic of our more extended light; and even yet we have not reached the sublime altitude of her enthusiasm and her tolerance —enthusiasm that could undertake, and tolerance that could pardon, aught but meanness and subtertuge.

It seems impossible to conclude this preface without a glance at the wonderful progress, both social and public, which England has made since Madame de Staël's day. At the time of her last visit, and long afterwards, religious toleration was rather an agreeable fiction than anything more; dissenting Protestant congregations were weekly insulted or interrupted at their worship; and the disciples of the Romish communion had still harder usage to lament.

I suspect many of us will be surprised to find, as the world goes forward, that all intolerance is hateful—no matter whether it wear the scarlet stockings of the cardinal, the shovel hat of the Anglican clergyman, or the straight-cut garb of the modern puritan. We may find that divine Christianity is not fully enfolded in any human system; and when we have learned this, we have acquired, at least, the alphabet of charity. Much of the progress we have made has been in no small degree aided by one who has allowed his name to be set in the fore-front of this volume: for him, and for all the liberal and enlightened statesmen of England, how great should be the respect of the generation now entering into the labours of their fathers!

What the remaining portion of the nineteenth century will do for us, it is perhaps difficult to imagine; there is no reason to fear that progress will be slackened—every session of parliament brings some improvement in the administration; every rolling month, some more practical and earnest development of our national life. Nor need we confine our hopes selfishly to this dear and cherished English fatherland; everywhere aspirations after liberty and truth ascend to the throne of mercy, and certainly the Ear that listens to the cry of the young ravens, is not deaf to any human prayer. In France, Germany, Italy, expectation and hope are on the alert; may Providence only deign to effect peacefully the revolutions that

must come. How has Europe been gently led by the hand since the sword of Wellington was honourably sheathed after the fight of Waterloo! In that period, we have, perhaps, made thrice the progress which in any former time of similar duration we had accomplished.

Reasoning from the past, there seems, then, every warrant for the most sanguine and religious hope regarding the future; it is a fiction of the poets that the Golden Age is over—we have it yet to come. But, before we be fit for that age, every country in Europe has, no doubt, discipline to endure: our social frauds, our practical impieties, our ignorances, and selfishnesses, will probably be stripped away with no tender hand. Amen! for all that is worthy of life, will wax stronger for the purification; and whether it be my error or thine, reader, the world will be well rid of it.

And now, committing this little bark to the perilous sea of public favour, and pushing from the shore with, it may be, a trembling hand, the unskilful commander is launched upon a voyage where many have been wrecked, and from which, perhaps, none have brought back all the delights which the imagination had pictured as the results.

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LIFE AND TIMES

OF

MADAME DE STAËL.

CHAPTER I.

THE antagonism of Right and Might is almost as old as the world itself. The result of their very first contest was that the righteous Abel fell, and that the unrighteous Cain lived, to found cities and to perpetuate his race. Still, so dazzled are we by external brilliancies and grandeur, that it is a struggle for us to support the weak rather than the strong, it is to us so natural to believe that virtue and heroism invariably command victory. As an abstract truth, we acknowledge, no doubt, that virtue often misses its reward, but in the practice of life we are all too apt to forget it.

Nevertheless, Success, eminently the god of this world, is not a deity invariably favourable to virtue. What was the world's reward of the brightest, purest heroism it ever saw? Let the shameful cross tell; the name is too holy to be written here.

Society, however, we believe, has begun honestly, though abstractly, to acknowledge the truth; but the enlightenment has come at the expense of many of

her noblest citizens: Socrates and Aristides, in the old days, were among its martyrs, and are not perhaps without their counterparts in modern times.

Our truth is, we confess it, a hard one to believe: the wicked and false principle of the trial by ordeal is hidden deep in our human nature; it is a difficult thing to receive, that he who signally fails may be most right of all.

A life which shows that principle can firmly and heroically oppose unrighteous power—a life which displays somewhat of the old heroic courage, cannot but be a useful study. If in only these regards could the character of Madame de Staël be placed before the public, her biography might fitly enough ask a share of the world's attention; but we believe that her genius gives a picturesqueness to every turn of her story, and adds a grace to truths which a humbler subject might as faithfully believe, and as conscientiously live out, without being able so attractively to recommend.

About the year 1749, came to Paris, from his native Geneva, a youth of fifteen years old, with little pretension, little patronage, little of this world's wealth. He had, however, something that overbalances all these wants—faith in God, faith in human nature, faith in himself. We are not told that any bells rang out to tell *this* Whittington of the fortunes that awaited him; but he applied himself to the fulfilment of his end as earnestly as if he were assured of the result.

* See Appendix, Note A.

He began life as clerk in a banking-house. His steady perseverance, rare integrity, and honesty of purpose, met with success; he rose from grade to grade, until he had made himself a man of mark; the fortune he had been sent to earn, he secured, and he proved his disinterested moderation by retiring from the prosecution of business on his own account, at a time when his prospects were daily widening around him. It is a rare thing to say of him, that he put down, half-drained, the cup of worldly riches.

He had provided enough for luxury, even for splendour; but to leave millions behind him was not his object. In the prime and vigour of life he turned aside from the race after riches, and began to employ for others the talents which he had so happily used on his own behalf.

His greatest commercial honour was, perhaps, his presidency of the French East India Company; his first public employ was the representation of his native Geneva, as her minister at Paris—a distinction not so splendid, but almost dearer than those he subsequently obtained. He tells us with honest pride, that when, in some crisis of her affairs, Geneva was contemplating the choice of a special messenger to Paris, the then first minister of France assured him it was unnecessary. "I will have nothing to do in this affair," said the statesman, "with any one but yourself, Monsieur Necker." And Geneva trusted him.

It was towards the close of his twenty years' commerce that he married; his wife was Susanne Curchod, daughter of the Protestant clergyman of

Crassy, Switzerland, a woman whose high conscientiousness and extended acquirements entitle her to our respect.

She was one of those persons with whom duty is a necessity, rather than a choice; the rightness of a thing constitutes for such a supreme reason for pursuing it at any cost, at any sacrifice. She was of the stuff that makes heroes and martyrs; hard and unbending, doggedly obstinate, if she were not backed by the right: as she was so backed, we call her courageously persevering.

We are almost justified in saying, that to such souls as Madame Necker's, the sacrifice of inclination, interest, affection, anything to duty, is a pleasure rather than a pain. Every human spirit is many-sided; and the deeds which cost us the greatest mental suffering, are often those we contemplate most proudly, even while the struggle endures. Had Madame Necker been a Catholic, it is probable that of the seven sacraments she would have preferred penance; for there is food for pride in self-mortification, and hers was a proud nature—one that loved to battle with and conquer itself. The senator's wife, moving amid her splendid saloons, may have this pride in as high perfection as ever Simon Stylites had it on his pillar in the desert.

The testimony of her husband is, that she needed nothing to make her perfectly amiable, but something to forgive in herself; a sentence which seems to contain an epitome of her entire character—a sentence which shows us the perfect demeanour she displayed in the intimate relations of life, and the

severity with which she judged all things. Conscientious herself, she was unable to pardon the want of conscientiousness in others; her friends would probably speak of her as a right-thinking, rather than an amiable or pleasing woman: and she was, most likely, somewhat deficient in some very beautiful dispositions, which the world has generally expected to find on the feminine side of human nature.

So natural is it for such constitutions to count on sacrifice as a part of duty, that they scarcely trust themselves to call that duty which fails to involve self-denial; they are apt sternly to question all which has instinct and inclination to recommend it; and we may feel tolerably sure that Madame Necker was not the mother to lavish caresses on her child, or in any such way to display that beautiful maternal nature, whose excesses would make many women ridiculous, if they did not show the female disposition in so loveable a light.

But if her kisses and her caresses were somewhat too unfrequently bestowed, we may be perfectly sure, on the other hand, that her chastisements were never inflicted passionately or inconsiderately—no mean advantage to set against the absence of that maternal fondness which is far more common than just and reasoning affection, and which often discards its objects when it can no longer dandle and play with them.

And yet we are free to confess, that this stern, but true and perfectly honourable nature is not one with which we can very heartily sympathize: it is a

nature which we would rather admire at a distance as a model, than live with and share as a friend; something warmer and more impulsive seems to us appropriate to season the hard daily bread of human experience, to give a zest to friendship, and to heighten the dearest affections of the family.

Such a nature as Madame Necker's seems almost perfect; but to remain in its almost perfection a cold outline merely; and we own we could sacrifice some of the mathematical correctness for the sake of a little more geniality. We can pardon the neglect of some particular rule of art, when the painter makes the very infringement a cause of variety and beauty to his picture; or, to vary the simile, we would not contend too rigidly for the unities, when the drama stirs the feelings and affects the heart in spite of their non-observance.

At the same time, natures after the fashion of Madame Necker's are never very plentiful: the generous and impulsive creature is a far less uncommon type of humankind than the stern and just, and for this sufficient reason, that very faulty characters constitute the greater part of the human family; and it is natural for our nature to overlook in others the fault we ourselves commit. The one who needs "much forgiveness" "loves much," and will hardly be very severe on her erring neighbours.

The moral side of Madame Necker's nature having been thus faintly sketched out, we may add, as regards her mental acquirements, that her father had educated her with uncommon care, and to a degree rare among women.

She had lost her father before she became acquainted with Monsieur Necker; and, as she was left without fortune, found it necessary to gain a subsistence by the exercise of her talents. When Necker became acquainted with her in Paris, she had recently resigned a situation as teacher at a school in Geneva, and her dowry consisted only of her many excellences; but we may suppose that a man of his noble and generous make, was only too happy, to be able to place in a situation of easy wealth the woman he loved; and she, proud as was her nature, loved him so well as to feel the many obligations she bore him no burden. Like a flower suddenly plucked from the solitude of the forest where it has grown, to grace the haunts of life, she passed from the retirement of the Swiss school-house to an exalted position in the capital city of France—we may almost say, of Europe; and we believe she never disgraced her circumstances: her manners might be rather nearer classic simplicity than were the courtly habits of those days, but her rusticity was not rudeness; truth in action, and dignity, naturally belonged to her; and if her carriage were remarked for anything, it might be called a little too formal in its bare simplicity—never, certainly, underbred and familiar. She had already mixed with some really good society: Gibbon, the historian—himself the son of an English gentleman, and familiar with refinement—was, when a young man on his travels, captivated by Mademoiselle Curchod, and offered her his hand, which, it is said, she accepted; but his father threatening him with disinheritance if he persisted in

wooing a penniless bride, both gave up the engagement with so much philosophy, as to prove that there was little love in the case.

This fact may answer, perhaps, for her freedom from anything like uncultivated manners: at the same time, the air of her Swiss parsonage-home probably mingled with her deportment, and gave it the piquancy of nature—a piquancy strange in an overgrown and artificial society.

Rule and order were with her rather passions than habits; she liked everything digested into systems; the method, at any rate, of the Chinese philosophers would, we suspect, have been welcome to her, had she studied Oriental literature. All her thinkings and doings seem to have had a certain mathematical proportion, excepting on one or two occasions, when the one passion that ruled her life made her forgetful of her rigid sense of "the fitness of things." She carefully sought a reason, and the best reason, for most actions and situations of her life.

A stern critic was she, we may conclude, over books of other folks' writing: too stern a critic, perhaps, to write much herself, for delicate shades of thought and expression will not wait to be analysed and criticised, but must be caught and perpetuated just as they appear above the mental horizon, or they escape us for ever, like that subtle natural fluid which has as yet baffled the chemist's art.

Nevertheless, she sometimes used her pen. Monsieur Necker, however, disliked any appearance of regular literary employment in his wife: he did not

wish, when he entered her apartments, to feel that he interrupted a serious occupation; so she wrote a little now and then by stealth, and was always ready to relinquish her pursuits, and devote herself to him whenever his wearisome career allowed him leisure to enjoy her society. Her love for her husband was the one element in her character which was quite uninfluenced by her methodical precision; in this regard it is probable she went beyond less reasonable women; it was the only true sanctuary of her heart's affections, and the worshipper was constant to the shrine.

The truest love reigned between them; the love of such a woman and of such a man must be true. She wrote two letters to be delivered to him after her death: he was so unhappy as to live to receive these beautiful consolations of her affection, which are models in their kind; in these she felt the necessity to loose the floodgates of affection, and to allow the hidden things of her soul to flow forth. Certain it is, that beneath her outward coldness, there was a depth and heat of affection for him, and that he reciprocated it. His "last thoughts" committed to paper, when he had been some years a widower, chronicle the memories of her whom he had cherished, and his hopes of rejoining her.

CHAPTER II.

BEFORE the time of Necker, France had not been wanting in great ministers. Richelieu and Mazarin, Sully and Colbert, had made illustrious the reigns and councils of their respective masters; diplomacy, with men of other nations an acquired art, seemed the natural possession of the ministers of the gay, lively, intriguing French nation: and by the greatness of her ministers, rather than by the excellence of her government, or the character of her sovereigns, had she won herself a foremost place among the peoples of Europe.

A hundred years had not elapsed since the death of Colbert, when Necker assumed the superintendence of the finances. The French memory is peculiarly tenacious in all that concerns its own magnificence and glory, and the remembrance of Colbert was a household treasure yet, when Necker was called upon to repair the deficiencies of the exchequer.

Colbert had filled a gigantic place in the splendid reign of Louis XIV. Necker desired to occupy a useful one in the less ambitious time of Louis XVI. Perpetual comparisons were instituted between the two ministers, not unfrequently to the disadvantage of Necker.

"Après Napoléon, il fallait plus qu'un homme,"

says a modern French poet. "After Colbert," we may also say, "more than an ordinary man was necessary."

More than even an extraordinary man, who had several circumstances, particularly those of birth and religion, against him: to say nothing of the character of the unhappy sovereign he guided, nor of Necker's profound but somewhat unpopular spirit of common sense, and his freedom from every enthusiasm but that of virtue. When, in the sketch he drew up for the proceedings of the States General, he argues that long and expensive wars had exhausted the resources of the nation, and recommends, that for the future only defensive wars be undertaken, he is answered somewhat defiantly by a writer of his day, that never were the wars longer or more expensive than in the time of Louis XIV., and yet, says the assailant, "Colbert always found money to enable *his* sovereign to pursue his victories." A comparison of this kind is almost sure to be to the disadvantage of the present as opposed to the past, for it is the perverse disposition of our nature to over-value what is gone from us, and to underrate what lies within our reach. Indeed, who has not for himself searched them out, would hardly credit the grossness of the libels, which in his time of unpopularity, the polite French people heaped on this useful minister.

Monsieur Necker not being a Frenchman, had not the appetite for "glory" which is at once the inspiring motive and the avenging curse of that nation, but we believe he seriously desired and laboured for her good: and had she been content to adopt and carry out the just and temperate policy he advocated,

it is probable that she would have been enjoying at this time rational liberty, secured to her by the free exercise of political rights.

A native of the free city of Geneva, of that mountain land which seems made by Nature to be the impregnable home of freedom, Monsieur Necker had, perhaps, a preference for her manner of government, though he doubted its applicability to a great nation, whose outskirts are far removed from the capital. Yet he knew that the real secret of public happiness is not a perfect theory, but a wise administration; he knew that the republic supposes and requires in the citizen more virtue and honour than any other kind of power; and no special stigma is cast on the French nation, when we say that he could not have resided long in Paris, without being certain that the France of that day was not ready for such an ideal form of government. To purify, not to destroy the monarchy, was, we may be sure, his laudable and useful aim; and as he had been twenty years face to face with the difficulties of life, he no doubt trusted he had gained experience to help him through all the perplexities of government.

In looking round for a model after which he might shape his doings, he fixed upon the English as that example of a limited monarchy whose constitution France might, to some extent, copy with benefit; but when we remember what the English laws of that day were, we shall rather regret that he found nothing better to imitate, than feel pride at his choice. His liking for England was not calculated to increase his popularity in certain quarters; a long inheritance of hatred had sharpened the jealousy which our Henrys

and our Edwards had created by their victories; absurd prejudices, fostered by ignorance, were rife against us in France, and were met on the English side by prejudices quite as absurd, and by ignorance quite as dense.

The government of the house of Brunswick was, indeed, not likely to be favourably accepted as a model by the French court: everybody was familiar with the story of the gracious reception which Louis XIV. had, in the true spirit of chivalry, accorded only a hundred years before to the exiled royal family of England; and it was expecting too much from a romantic people, to suppose that they could take as a pattern the very sovereign whose house had risen to authority, and acquired greatness, by principles and a policy decidedly anti-Stuart.

The great Louis had offered men and money to wrest the government from William and Mary, and restore it to the old branch: and it would have belied all traditional propriety if Louis's descendant had come to the successors of William and Mary for lessons in the art of ruling. And yet, if he *had* so come, the Bourbons might have been still on the throne of France, and that noble country might have been spared the humiliation of several political failures.

"Mediocrity," says the old proverb, "is hateful to gods and men;" and a middle course in politics rarely contributes to the popularity, however it may promote the usefulness, of a minister. "As a merchant and as a financier, as a statesman and as a writer," says Lanjuinais, "Necker has been covered with glory,

and yet unceasingly afflicted by reverses and opposition."

His first movement of reform was accepted with delight by the body of the people, but his prudence delayed his progress, while they, impatient from long restraint, were mad to demolish every appearance of servitude and weakness. They gave themselves no time to consider that an ancient edifice, unless repaired and altered with the greatest care, will fall a sacrifice even to the hand that designs its improvement. The popular party triumphed, but their whole political fabric fell in with a crash, whose consequences shook every throne in Europe, excepting the one from which Louis XVI. was too proud to take a lesson.

Count Lanjuinais, from whom we have already quoted, says, in reference to Necker and his favourite example, "Seeking a model of the limited monarchy necessary to France, Monsieur Necker reverts constantly to his cherished example, to that controverted accumulation of customs and abuses and contradictory bills, in which consists the English constitution; better undoubtedly as better developed (and as really very favourable to trade and industry), than any constitution, written, but not observed, can possibly be. It is this English model which he praises without restriction, as Montesquieu has done before him, and which he desires above all things to establish—an infatuation, excusable in his time, perhaps, but one which can no longer lead any one astray." This was the verdict of Lanjuinais in 1823. We of 1853 may incline to the opinion, that even now Monsieur

Necker's "infatuation" would be a very good chimera for the French people to run after.*

His grandson, Monsieur de Staël, as the inheritor of Necker's political opinions, will give us a picture rather more favourable than that drawn by Lanjuinais.

"From the first," (of his public career,) "he applied himself to the reduction of all superfluous expenses, and of all useless or illicit profits, persuaded that no tax is legitimate until all the resources of economy have been tried."

Passionately attached to order and to justice, these two great ideas presided over all his determinations, and to the pursuit of these ideas his downfall was owing. The golden sentence that "no tax is lawful until all the resources of economy have been tried," is one which has many believers at the present day; but one can easily see that Monsieur Necker was far before his age when he enunciated the idea. The time was not ripe for it; the splendour of a court of the old *régime*, sustained by heavy and iniquitously partial taxation, was not to be shorn of its brilliancy by the absurd dreamings of an honest and straight-

* The French author whom we have thus cited goes on to make out a decided case against England; her immense sinecures, the extravagant incomes of her bishops, her rotten boroughs (which made the House of Commons to consist, in a great measure, of the nominees of peers), her religious intolerance, are presented as formidable defects. One cannot but feel proud of a country whose people have had the courage to demand, and whose aristocracy has had the grace to yield, successive improvements, which render Lanjuinais' objections, with one exception, almost forceless. It requires no keen eye to discern *why* the English constitution has outlived so many others, theoretically more perfect.

forward minister. Like the *ignis fatuus*, or those rank vegetable productions which flourish amid decay and dissolution, such courts shone in proportion to the density of the corruption about them.

The philosophers of the (then) new school had done no mean service to the cause of liberty, and though the change was admitted rather than assured, the condition of Europe at the time of the French revolution was probably not only not worse, but better than it had ever before been. It is to be regretted that their philosophy had none of the divine spirit of Christianity, which would have made it a preserving principle; but most of its followers had been reared in the bosom of a church, which by denying liberty, has often driven her children to licentiousness.

The dearest object of Necker's heart was, we believe, to go neither too fast nor too slowly for the spirit of reform and transition which was gradually assuming authority in society: or, as his grandson finely remarks, "he wished to prepare the ways of liberty by order and morality in the administration, but his ideas ought not to, and could not go beyond this."

The private life of a statesman—if a statesman have any time for a private life—may well possess every attractiveness which affection can impart to it, every circumstance of ease which wealth can purchase, without rendering him, after all, an object of great envy to the more rational portion of mankind, especially if to his other possessions be added a conscience.

The unceasing responsibility, the acute anxieties which attend on even successful statesmanship, must be sufficiently wearing; but the proud consciousness

of successful genius and patriotism is a very good set-off against these inevitable cares.

Far otherwise is it with the man who sees the current of affairs getting too strong for his hand to stem, who hears the echo of discontented voices in every public breath which reaches him; vanity in such a case is struck to the heart, and more than vanity is hurt, if in the future prospects of the country he has tried to save, he sees only ruin and regret.

CHAPTER III.

THE private life of Monsieur Necker is a pleasant subject for contemplation; one of the most agreeable houses in Paris, presided over by a woman whose character and abilities attracted the best society, was at his command: and Parisian society at that day was a brilliant and a valued thing.

The delightful letters of Madame de Sévigné (which date about a hundred and ten years before the Revolution,) express in forcible terms the high esteem in which Parisian society in her day was held. She pities her daughter for being compelled to reside at so many leagues from Paris; though the Countess de Grignon had in Provence a feudal court, which resembled rather the establishment of a petty sovereign, than the retinue of even a wealthy subject. Not to be a Frenchman was in those days a crowning grief; after that ranked the misfortune of living at a distance from the beloved city. France was the eye of the world, and Paris its apple.

In England, where country life is so much more esteemed, and where the municipal corporations are all so many centres of authority and power, we can scarcely understand how important to France even down to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was

its capital. It was (and is still) the heart of the empire, the seat of life, heat and power.

The French kings, regarding the nobles in the spirit of the old feudal law, were not afraid of them as rivals; they saw in them only vassals, and loved to gather the flower of the kingdom about them. In Louis XIV.'s time to dismiss a nobleman from the court was to issue a sentence of death against his popularity, pleasures, and happiness; he was banished if sent to his patrimonial estate, whose tenants were to him little more than food-producing machines, and he generally saw no happy day, until the favour of his monarch with the gay life of the court and city was restored to him.

This regard to the capital did not by any means diminish in the interval that elapsed between the Fourteenth and the Sixteenth Louis. Monsieur Necker probably and his family had as keen a sense of the advantages of Paris as any Seigneur of the preceding century: for the Neckers were intellectual people; and for such there was positively no satisfactory communion but in Paris. There they met in the social life which is carried to perfection, perhaps, nowhere but there; there the greatest men, and the wittiest and gracefullest women of the brilliant city, associated and practised that art of conversation which the French, better than any other people, understand. In such meetings, in such conversations, tinged with philosophy, romance, and infidelity, were started the ideas whose wider development among a furious and uninstructed people led to that terrible tragedy of history known as the French Revolution.

Among the brilliant phantoms of the time which our fancy pictures to us, we see Monsieur Necker move with a somewhat stately air. Though he has risen from obscurity, his native dignity, and perhaps a republican pride (there *is* such a thing), prevent his adopting that easy tone which prevails just now among the better classes in Paris. Perhaps, too, the old noblesse are a little haughty to one who has been a simple "commis" in a banker's office, and we may be sure that in high bearing such a man as Necker is not to be outdone, for there is no man really so proud as a conscientiously virtuous man. Often, while all around him are talking gaily, he is silent: some may attribute the fact to his official anxieties, but those who know him well, know that in these moods he is a keen, often an amused, though silent observer of others. Genial and natural are his tastes: with young people he is always at home; indulgent to their faults, and just to their merits, he has succeeded in making himself their favourite.

Want of method he can pardon (though perhaps Madame Necker would rather he did not say so); but emptiness, vacuity of mind, real dead-level stupidity, is unbearable to him. And yet the last thing one would say of him is that he is clever; for, as an acute observer remarks, "cleverness and good nature are never thrust forward but when there are no other good points to display."

He was almost too proud, we are told, himself to give that first impulse which conversation wants to raise it above the commonplace; and yet of all those engaged in it, he would, perhaps, suffer most ennui

from the absence of that nameless charm, that fresh originality, that consistent variety, without which conversation is either pedantic or contemptible.

He was used to what might truthfully be called *good* company; among his contemporaries were men of talent and honour, and with these the Neckers exchanged the courtesies of society, and engaged in that paradoxical commerce of agreeable offices, in which each seems to take more than he gives without diminishing the common stock.

Among these valued friends would naturally come his colleague, the Receiver-General of Paris, Charles Jacques Louis de Meulan.

This gentleman's daughter, better known as Madame Guizot, must have mingled in the same kind of society as the daughter of Necker, whose biography we are tracing; it was a favourable life for female development; the men were absorbed in politics without abandoning society, consequently the talk of the salons was of a kind to provoke inquiry, discussion, consideration; it was of a higher class than every-day drawing-room small-talk, while being hedged round by the proprieties and amenities of private life, it was protected from the storms that often make charity a forgotten virtue in the tribune. The life of society gained thus in vigour and in interest, without losing in propriety and liberality.

Among the illustrious circle, too, was that fair and spiritual beauty whose fancied inspirations were at a later period the counsellors of Alexander of Russia. The Baroness von Krüdner, wife to the Russian ambassador, full of innocent grace and youthful beauty,

is a flower transplanted hither from the shores of the Baltic. Sometime hence she will write that curious romance called Valérie, of which she herself will be the heroine, of whose incidents her remembrances will be the sources, and into which she will put her own Baron—a little idealised of course. These are times when conjugal felicity is not very common; "it is the fashion," say the writers of the day, "for husband and wife to see little of each other, and to take small heed of each other's doings." And the pretty Juliana von Krüdner, folks say, never occupied herself so much with her Baron, as when she drew his portrait as the Count in "Valérie." She has not yet begun to play the missionary, the preacher; she is but a very vain and pretty woman of the world, and loves nothing better than to be well-dressed, and to know herself one of the loveliest creatures in Paris.

The splendid city is to her an agreeable sojourn. "The high noblesse of the north," says Monsieur de Sainte-Beuve, "were at that time drawn by an invincible charm towards Paris, that Athens of art and pleasure. Princes and kings were honoured by coming hither for a brief space, just to take, as one may say, their degrees as wits or philosophers."

The same lively author gives us a picture of this charming Von Krüdner, which dates some years later, but shows her still enchanting.

"In 1801 she was still young and beautiful, elegantly graceful, white and fair. Her lovely hair was of that uncommon half-dark brown hue, which she has given to Valérie: her eyes were deep blue; her voice, like that of most Livonian women, exquisitely

sweet and musical; as for her dancing, it was exquisite, especially in the waltz. When she was at Berlin, every courier brought her fresh dresses from Paris, and she arranged her toilettes so artfully that they suited nobody but herself, while to her they were perfectly becoming."*

Monsieur Necker, who was always charmed with grace in a woman, would no doubt much admire the lovely shadow just flitting by; but we fear Madame Necker looks at her in a rather sterner light, and pronounces her a sad trifler.

We also number among Necker's friends, Marmontel, Secretary to the French Academy, author of *Les Incas* and *Bélisaire;* the Abbé Raynal; who, trained as a Jesuit, had the courage to fling off his disgusting servitude; Baron de Grimm; and our own Gibbon; with whose names we might enwreathe many another; but these must suffice.

Such were the associates of Madame de Staël in her youth.

* See Appendix, Note B.

CHAPTER IV.

In the year 1766 (just about the time Madame von Krüdner was born at Riga), Monsieur Necker's daughter was born at Paris; born, as it seemed, to a heritage of uncommon happiness and brilliancy. What seems wanting to a human lot when we have enumerated wise parents, good and liberal culture, intellectual friends, ample fortune, splendid talents, and health both mental and physical?

Few children, indeed, come into the world with prospects and advantages so promising as those to which the parents of Anne-Marie-Louise-Germaine-Necker might, without presumption, look forward on their daughter's behalf. It seems as if the victim had been purposely adorned to add force and grace to her sacrifice.

Such parents as hers were people possessing too much freshness and originality of character to have a home after the common pattern; we have attempted to breathe a little life into our idea of Madame Necker; her husband's character is much more difficult to hit off; more varieties of light and shadow are needed; he had more sympathies than his wife; she loved but him — he loved the whole human family.

Monsieur Necker, whatever may be our opinion of the wisdom of his political course, must secure our

admiration for his punctual, unselfish discharge of his public and social duties; to say that those who knew him best, best loved him, is to convey that his virtue was not a garb put on to dazzle the public, but that it was the honest fruit of his inner life, and might be gathered in sweetest profusion by those who could enter the penetralia of his existence.

Mademoiselle Necker was very early distinguished by the force of her imagination: this is, perhaps, of all a young child's faculties, the one which needs the most judicious training. An engine of terrible power is it; overwork it, the whole mental system is out of proportion; repress it too sternly, and you quell the brightest source of interest which a nascent intellect possesses. Perhaps, a too powerful and active imagination is better kept in check by a particular cultivation of the judgment and the memory, than by any treatment addressed especially to itself. Perhaps, we can better enlarge other faculties, than we can curtail the proportions of this most spiritual of all our mental powers.

Every gifted little child has some garden of the imagination wherein he loves to exercise his faculty, some mental enclosure where his fancy walks abroad, and suns itself in its own warmth; the shape and colour of his dreamings will be, of course, largely regulated by his individual peculiarities.

Mademoiselle Necker's favourite amusement consisted in cutting out of paper, kings and queens, and in making them play tragedy; one would be interested in knowing what kind of royal grief the mind

of a little child could compass. Madame Necker either did not care to know this, or considered such a play of the fancy very idle occupation; accordingly, paper and scissors for this purpose were forbidden luxuries; and tragedy was prohibited.

One can scarcely call this wise: tyrannical government has the same effect on a child as on a people. Tyranny invariably fosters deception and hypocrisy; and, perhaps, for every child who lies from innate dishonesty, ninety-nine lie from an excessive fear of punishment. Besides, a strong natural inclination is not, we believe, to be conquered by a prohibition which is a command, and no more; which does not address the judgment, by pointing out the unworthiness of the prohibited thing. We know how it is with man. Even in Eden, the *forbidden* fruit was the one he greatly cared to eat: and it is not likely that a little child possesses more moral courage than the human being fully developed, and a thousand times less curious than he.

Everything is so fresh to a little child, the exercise of his faculties is such a great delight—his interest in all is so intense; he has exhausted nothing; vague dawnings of beauty break in upon his every sense; every thought is a spirit-picture, and every pursuit a passion.

So is it, at any rate, with a child of Mademoiselle Necker's calibre: she felt in her earnest, undeveloped mind, the necessity for utterance of some sort, and found an outlet in playing tragedy with paper kings and queens. A childish pursuit, certainly; but childish and contemptible are not interchangeable

epithets. The world has seen childish religion, devotion, love, heroism, before now; and these things were not contemptible.

Men and women, some few years after, played tragedy with kings and queens *not* of paper. Certainly, this last was not a justifiable pursuit; and could Madame Necker have stopped it, she would have possessed more influence over the public than she held over her little daughter, who, after the maternal edict, played her tragedy with a closed door, and, on any sudden surprise, would hide her whole company in her bosom, or behind some protecting screen.

Fortunate was it for the little girl, that her father hated hypocrisy, and had a quick eye for pretences of every kind. To his clearsightedness and wise indulgence she owed the truthfulness which so highly distinguished her. In later years she thus owns the fact:—"I owe to the wonderful penetration of my father, whatever candour my character possesses. He unmasked all false pretensions, and from him I acquired the habit of believing that people saw straight into my heart."

To our mind, the closed door and the hidden paper-royalties were more replete with evil, than any mere idleness of spirit. Real mental idleness is, to such a mind as Mademoiselle Necker's, almost impossible; but the deceit nurtured by the concealed pursuance of any habit, must injure the moral stamina, unless there be a strong counteracting influence elsewhere at work. Such influence came to Mademoiselle Necker from the pure atmosphere which her father's high moral sense seemed to create about him.

The training of their daughter was to Monsieur and Madame Necker a matter of immense importance. Madame Necker, like all mothers of any talent, had a theory of her own about education, and it is possible that her method might have been too rigorously carried out, had not the character of the father thrown in a balance-weight.

It is probable that Madame Necker early felt the want of a suitable companion for her daughter; without either brother or sister, the little girl must have been dull and lonely had she been an ordinary child; for her as she was, no doubt, her teeming thoughts, and the books she read, were sources of abundant interest; but she was always strangely sensitive to the voice of friendship; and a companion of her own age, to whom she could pour out the riches of her soul, was a desirable acquisition.

Such a companion was found in Mademoiselle Huber, who had been educated with great care, and was member of a family noted for its intelligence and science, with which family Madame Necker's had long held connexion and friendship.

To Mademoiselle Huber we are indebted for the following notice of her first introduction to her friend, then about eleven years old. She tells us that Mademoiselle Necker was transported at the idea of having a companion, and promised to cherish her eternally.

"She addressed me with a warmth and fluency which were already eloquence, and which made a great impression upon me. We did not play like children; she asked me what were my lessons, if I knew any foreign languages, and if I often went to

the theatre. When I told I had only been twice or thrice, she cried out, and promised me we should often go together to see comedies; adding, that on our return, we must write down the subject of the pieces, and the parts that struck us: this, she said, was her custom. 'And besides that,' she continued, 'we will write to each other every morning.' Then we entered the drawing-room. By the side of Madame Necker's arm-chair was a little wooden stool, on which her daughter was expected to sit, and to keep herself very upright. Hardly had she taken her accustomed place, when three or four old people came round her, and spoke to her with the tenderest interest. One of them, who wore a little round wig, took her hands in his, where he kept them a long time, talking to her all the while, as if she had been five-and-twenty years old. This was the Abbé Raynal; the others were MM. Thomas, Marmontel, the Marquis de Pesay, and Baron de Grimm.

"We placed ourselves at table. Mademoiselle Necker's very manner of listening was uncommon. She did not open her mouth, yet she seemed to speak in her turn, so much expression had her mobile features. Her eyes followed the looks and movements of those who talked, so that one almost thought she anticipated their ideas. She seemed acquainted even with political subjects, which at that period already formed an interesting topic of conversation. After dinner, a great deal of company dropped in. Every one in approaching Madame Necker, said a word to her daughter either in the shape of a compliment or a pleasantry. She answered all easily and with grace;

people seemed pleased to attack her, to embarrass her, to excite her imagination, which was already so brilliant. The most remarkable men were those who took most notice of her, and who provoked her to talk. They asked for an account of her reading, recommended books for her perusal, and gave her a taste for study in talking to her of what she knew or of what she had yet to learn."

Baron de Grimm gives us a picture of her a year later. "While Monsieur Necker passes decrees which cover him with glory, and will render his administration eternally dear to France; while Madame Necker renounces all the sweets of society to devote herself to the establishment of an hospital, in the parish of St. Sulpicius, their daughter, a girl of twelve years old, who already evinces talent beyond her age, amuses herself by writing little comedies after the manner of Monsieur de St. Mark. She has just completed one in two acts, entitled 'The Inconveniences of Life in Paris,' which is not only astonishing for her age, but appears even superior to her models. It represents a mother who has two daughters, one brought up amid the simplicity of rural life, the other amid the proud airs of the capital. The latter is the favourite from the talents and graces she displays; but this mother falling into misfortune through the loss of a lawsuit, soon learns which of the two is in reality most deserving of her affection. The scenes of this little drama are well linked together; the characters are consistently supported, and the development of the intrigue is natural and full of interest. Monsieur Marmontel, who saw it performed in the drawing-

room at St. Ouen, Monsieur Necker's country-seat, by the author and her young companions, was affected even to tears."

Mademoiselle Necker inherited from her mother that spirit which prompts to sacrifice; but what the elder lady yielded to justice, the younger one seemed to devote from generosity. Her disposition had a warmer tone, a more impulsive flow, than her mother's, though in some regards her character is less perfect.

One anecdote of her youth is amusing. Gibbon, the historian, seems to have had more philosophy than falls to the lot of some lovers; at any rate, he did not disdain Madame Necker's friendship because another had secured her hand; and his company and conversation were greatly esteemed by the Neckers. Our poor little heroine, eager to do something to show her regard for her parents, and witnessing the pain which it gave them to part from Gibbon, conceived the idea of marrying him, in order that they might constantly enjoy his society.

She even confided this plan to her mother. We are not acquainted with Madame Necker's answer; but we cannot but feel that intrigue was busy in society, when a child of ten years old devised such a plan. No English girl of the same years would dream of this method of showing her filial attachment.

Madame Necker may have thought that her daughter's imagination required sobering by hard study; at any rate, she kept her so constantly at her books, that in 1780 Mademoiselle Necker had a severe illness.

The physician who was called in expressed an opinion that she had bent too continuously over her books, and, forbidding all study, prescribed, as a restorative, country air.

It seems that Madame Necker was a little disappointed at this. She had worked at her daughter's education, and had come to love it as the artist loves his work — the offspring of his brain. She had formed a very brilliant ideal of what she should make of the fine materials which Nature had so prodigally afforded her in the child, and to have her work interrupted at such a critical period in the development of a mind, was sad disappointment. She had laboured by line and by rule; all system was now forbidden; and the mother appears to have been disheartened, and to have abandoned the edifice she was no longer permitted to build up after her own methodical fashion.

CHAPTER V.

THE germs of knowledge once fairly implanted, however, such an intellect as Mademoiselle Necker's may, like the forest sapling, be left to its own healthy powers of growth. Debarred from regular lessons, and roaming with her young companion, Mademoiselle Huber, through the rural scenes of St. Ouen, her mind was gradually enriching itself by the observation of nature, and concentrating its powers of thought and reflection.

During this period, she amused herself by the composition of little dramas, in whose representation she also took an active part; nor does this interval of leisure and freedom seem to have diminished her application; for in the following year, she made extracts from Montesquieu's "Esprit des Lois," which she accompanied by reflections of her own.

How very natural, when we consider her inherited likings, her childish associations, and this girlish study of Montesquieu, does her love for England appear, — that love for England which was, we verily believe, one moving cause of the persecution she endured at the hands of Napoleon. This epoch in her life seems marked by the increasing pride and confidence of her father in his daughter: every moment he could spare from official duties, he de-

voted to her, and the many conversations they held together, no doubt, purified and perfected whatever was best in her mind and heart.

These conversations, however, were not always quite to Madame Necker's taste; her daughter, no doubt, already showed a spirit of sturdy independence, of firm adherence to opinion, which the mother would probably think very presumptuous at her age. Madame Necker would wish her to remain for some time yet a child-like and docile disciple. There was in the daughter a superabundance of vitality, which the calm, Christian mother could not understand, and which seemed to her a dangerous thing for a woman.

And we must own, that perhaps there was a little jealousy of the perfect mental correspondence between father and daughter; for while Monsieur Necker explained his ideas to his wife, his daughter would meet them half way, and seem, by an instinctive adoption of them, to make them as much hers as they were his.

The girl had suffered from the restraint under which her mother had kept her. From the very best motives that restraint had been exercised; but the bitter feeling it excited in a heart naturally overflowing with kindliness, is, we think, a sufficient proof that the severity of it had been sometimes unwise.

Years of life's sad experience reconciled Madame de Staël to the course her mother had adopted towards her; these years threw a veil of tenderness over the past; she could look back uncomplainingly, but she proved that her own judgment in such matters

was at variance with Madame Necker's, by the manner in which she educated her own children.

The great evil of the mother's dictatorial government was, that it roused a spirit of contrariety in the daughter. With young women of the ordinary stamp, this well-meant exercise of authority, which saves the child the trouble of using her own discrimination, may do very well; but it is not fit for a vigorous mind like Mademoiselle Necker's.

Mademoiselle Necker aimed at contrasting with her mother in many things, because she had suffered from certain dispositions of her parent. "The daughter wished to be the example of natural gifts, as the mother was the model of acquired qualities. This intention, which herself, perhaps, scarcely acknowledged, held for a long time an injurious influence over the judgment of Madame de Staël. Her admiration of instinctive virtues was too exclusive, too systematic. When her ideas had become ripened by reflection, and when religion, better understood, had shed for her a new light upon all things, Madame de Staël acknowledged that she had erred in her manner of thinking." The lapse of years, also, helped her to appreciate better her mother's merits. "The longer I live," she said, on one occasion, "the better I understand my mother, and the more my heart feels the necessity to be at one with her."

In spite, however, of this antagonism between them, we believe no word derogatory to Madame Necker ever passed the lips of her daughter.

* Madame Necker de Saussure.

CHAPTER VI.

AMONG the gifts wherewith the fairies had clustered around the cradle of Mademoiselle Necker, there was not found that winning yet imperious beauty which exerts so large an influence over society: beside the fair blossom of the north, Madame von Krüdner, she looks almost homely; her chief attraction must have been in expression, and that is a grace so evanescent and changeful, that the artist strives after it in vain. Her friends praise her eyes so vehemently, that we are tempted to suspect there was little else to admire in her personal appearance; that her eyes deserved their admiration we can most readily credit: her fine imagination would kindle beauty in eyes even naturally ordinary; but hers were full and black, and, as we are told, "sparkled with wit and kindness."

Her features were strongly marked rather than delicate; and, indeed, there was in her whole frame a vigour, almost a coarseness of development, far removed from the delicate roundness and flowing lines essential to beauty. A certain wit who saw her during her appearance in London society mentions that her neck resembled "the front of a chest of drawers"—a vulgar but forcible comparison, decidedly unsuggestive of loveliness. Beauty of expression she must have possessed; but, as we have said, no portrait

can give any adequate idea of such a charm; yet this is the beauty that grows, and is, perhaps, lovelier as life flows on, for high thoughts and large sympathies, nurtured and cultivated for years, leave surer traces upon the countenance than nature puts there at first; and the physiognomy of a mobile character is an unfinished, ever-growing record while life endures: but allowing her every grace of fine expression, we cannot call her beautiful; happily, however, there is something more important than beauty—even to a woman.*

Her hands and arms were finely shaped and almost transparently white: with the childlike frankness which characterised her, she owned that she dressed so as to make as much as possible of the only charm she possessed.

Her feet were exceedingly clumsy. On one occasion, she was attired to represent a statue, the face being veiled. The company were to guess from the attitude and bearing who was the lady thus concealed. One gentleman to whom the question was put, glanced at the feet of the statue, and answered, "*Je vois le pied de Staël*" (*le piédestal*).

In a "portrait," written by a literary man, her friend, about the year 1786, we get the following glimpse of her. The piece purports to be translated from a Greek poet.

"Zulma is only twenty years of age, and is the most celebrated priestess of Apollo: she is the favourite of the god, she is the one whose incense is most agreeable, whose hymns are dearest to him;

* See Appendix, Note C.

when she will, she can persuade him by her accents to descend from the skies, and mingle among mortals. . . . From the midst of these sacred maidens (the priestesses of Apollo) one suddenly advances, whom my heart will always cherish. Her great black eyes sparkle with genius; her black hair falls back on her shoulders in wavy curls; her features are rather strongly marked than delicate; one discerns in her countenance the promise of something above the usual destiny of her sex.

"Such as she is, one would paint the Muse of Poetry, or Clio, or Melpomene. I have formerly seen the Pythoness of Delphi, I have seen the Sibyl of Cumæ; but they have an appearance of madness, and their movements are convulsive; they seemed rather devoted to the Furies than filled with the presence of a god. *This* young priestess is animated without excess, and inspired without madness. Her charm is free, and everything supernatural about her is so well interwoven as to seem a part of herself . . . . . .

"I listen to her, I look at her with transport; I discover in her features something superior to beauty. How much play and variety has her countenance! How many shades of expression the modulation of her voice! What a perfect agreement is there between her thoughts and her physiognomy! She speaks; and if her words do not reach me, the inflections of her voice, her gestures, her looks, suffice to interpret her meaning. She is silent for a moment, her closing accents resound in my heart, and I find in her eyes ideas which her tongue has not yet spoken.

"She is altogether silent, and the temple echoes with

applause; her head is modestly bent downwards, her long eyelashes veil her eyes of fire, and our sun is hidden behind the clouds."

Allowing for the tone of poetical exaggeration which marks this quotation, we can see that Mademoiselle Necker's talents were early valued, and can also discern the absorbing influence which they exerted over a certain class of French society. She was the queen of conversation, at a time when the commerce of society, both in its social and political regards, was regulated and ruled by conversation.

Although we should not always identify the author with the creature of his brain, yet in the highly finished creation of a great author, there will be generally found many points of resemblance between the fictitious character and the real man, its maker. As God created man in his own image (at a vast distance and with immeasurable differences), so man creates his works in the image of himself. In the "Corinne" of Madame de Staël,—that bright and beautiful work of her perfect talent,—we may see many traits of likeness between the writer of the book and its heroine. Without rigorously associating the two, or following the comparison out to all its details, we may interpret the one by the other.

Is not the following picture of Corinne, very much like Mademoiselle Necker? "the priestess of Apollo," as we have just seen her described.

"She was dressed as the Sibyl of Domenichino; an India shawl was arranged about her head, and with the shawl her fine black hair was mingled; her robe was white, a blue drapery encircled her waist, and

her costume was very picturesque, without being so far from received usage as to betray affectation. Her attitude on the car was noble and modest; one perceived that she was well pleased to be admired, but a sentiment of timidity mingled with her joy, and seemed to ask indulgence for her triumph; while the expression of her physiognomy, of her eyes, of her smile, interested one for her. . . . . Her arms were of the most dazzling beauty; her figure, which was tall, and after the manner of the Greek statues, rather strongly developed, was energetically characteristic of youth and happiness; her look had in it something inspired. In her fashion of accepting and acknowledging the applause she received, there was an unsophisticated air, which contrasted with the splendour of the extraordinary situation in which she found herself;* she suggested the twofold idea of a priestess of Apollo going up to the Temple of the Sun, and of a woman perfectly unaffected in all the ordinary relations of life; so that all her movements had a charm which excited interest and curiosity, astonishment and regard."

* Corinne is here described as on her way to the Capitol, where she was to receive the crown her talents had merited.

CHAPTER VII.

THE genius of Mademoiselle Necker very early showed itself, and her remarkable advantages of education, united to her familiarity with all the great models of literature, circumstances which would have depressed mediocrity, only quickened her ardour. When we consider the method and perfectness of her training, her originality is almost startling. She accumulated materials on every side, and turned all to account, without enslaving herself to the authors from whom she borrowed them. Her power of mental assimilation was immense, while we must allow that her capacities of every sort were uncommon.

Not only had she this methodical education as a foundation for her mental exercises, but as we have seen, she was accustomed, from a very early age, to associate with the great and clever men who loved to visit her father. The little girl, who at eleven years of age listened to, and enjoyed, the conversation of Marmontel, Gibbon, Raynal, and Grimm, and who seemed even at that time to comprehend something of the discourse when it assumed a political turn, does not surprise us much at fifteen, when we find her making extracts from Montesquieu, and adding thereto her own reflections. Nor is it remarkable that she so early interested herself in politics; her

father lived honestly and entirely for the people whose affairs he administered; and a daughter whose filial devotion was so earnest, could not well see her father absorbed by a subject, without endeavouring to lift up her mind to some comprehension of it.

When her father left office in 1781, she addressed to him a very remarkable anonymous letter, whose style, however, soon led him to recognise his daughter's hand; the subject of the letter was the *Compte Rendu*, or account given of the receipt and expenditure of the public monies during the ministry of Necker, a theme neither very interesting nor very intelligible for most girls of fifteen, but one which her love for her father rendered sufficiently attractive to her.

Through her affections, indeed, all that interested her exerted over her a terrible power; her intense sensibility has in it something almost terrific, when we consider the thousand accidents and chances to which in this mortal life we are subject; and this sensibility added a sting of deadly power to every distress through which hereafter we shall have to trace her path.

In spite of her mother's many efforts, Mademoiselle Necker's sensibility seemed to gather nourishment from all quarters, but principally from the theatre, and from books. Madame Necker does not seem to have circumscribed her daughter's reading within such narrow limits as we might expect; she permitted her to read the works of Richardson; and Madame de Staël, in proof of her strong imagination, tells us that the abduction of Clarissa was an event of her

youth. With some of us life seems like a crowded procession from which we stand aside, watching its course rather with interest than with eagerness; not so with her, she loved action, her sympathies were quick, and she busied herself intensely with the world and its concerns.

In 1781, when her father retired from office, she went with her parents to Coppet, near Geneva, where Necker had bought an estate, and here she principally resided until his resumption of official duties in 1787 recalled the family to Paris. During this retirement her pen was busy; the dramatic form seems to have been the one which most recommended itself to her opening powers: probably because her first efforts in that kind had met with praise and encouragement. As belonging to this period we note a comedy entitled "Sophie, ou les Sentiments secrets," and two tragedies, one on the subject of Lady Jane Grey, and the other styled Montmorency; in the last the character of Richelieu is drawn with considerable force, but compared with her later efforts, these were mere buddings of promise.

In the choice of Lady Jane Grey for a subject, we see again her interest in England. Whether her hereditary prejudices in favour of our country were strengthened by any tender sentiment, we cannot tell; but Sir John Sinclair, in his correspondence, "mentions a marriage projected between the son of Lord Rivers and Mademoiselle Necker, and regrets that it did not take place, as it would have withdrawn her family from the vortex of French politics." This may or may not be fact; but at any rate, her fa-

ther's transmitted predilections, her mother's strictly Protestant training, her association with Gibbon and other well-informed Englishmen, had inspired her with a decided regard for our country; and she gives her Corinne an English lover.

Not only were her talents early developed, they were early appreciated. We have seen Raynal, "in his little round wig," hold her hands in his, and talk to her as if she were five-and-twenty. We have heard Baron de Grimm tell how the accomplished Marmontel shed tears, when he witnessed the performance of one of her little dramas; and she was but fifteen years old, when Raynal, contemplating the execution of a great work, begged her to write for it a piece on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

Her early success, and the brilliancy of her conversation, no doubt, somewhat alarmed Madame Necker; she feared, perhaps, lest so much incense might turn her daughter's head: and when we read the description of "Zulma, the Priestess of Apollo," there really does seem no little danger; for Madame de Staël, as she says of her own Corinne, was "well-pleased to be admired." She never prevaricated in this matter, but owned honestly that she esteemed the good opinion of her friends, and that their praises pleased her. And if we were all equally candid, who would not confess the same? We may be proud if in our measure we have been as free from purchasing praise; if we have as honestly lived out our opinions, heedless of the consequences, though not without having counted the cost.

But one cannot blame Madame Necker for her

anxiety, lest her daughter's impulsive temper, firm opinions, and facility of expression, might, by the attention and admiration they excited, disturb the balance of her judgment, or give her a dogmatical habit, unsuited to her sex and years. We may suppose that Madame Necker discoursed to her on the propriety of deference to others, and warned her against being anxious to shine in public. In consequence of such hints, Mademoiselle Necker, not to show contrariety, would place herself modestly behind her father's chair. We are told, that on such occasions, one great man would steal from the circle to her side, then another, and a third, until her corner became the centre of attraction. However Madame Necker might chafe at what seemed the decree of fate, her kind and genial husband would smile as he saw the defection of one of the company after another, and would perchance turn his chair and bodily join the traitors.

One cannot but sigh to think of those gay, brilliant, earnest conversations, and long to have heard them. But our task is different; we are to learn and apply the history which those men were weaving.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE man who entered the lists with the view of becoming son-in-law to Madame Necker must needs, we think, have been a somewhat bold one. Honour, and nobleness, and moderate talent might, indeed, content Monsieur Necker; but Madame Necker was a woman to canvass rigorously the pretensions of all claimants to the hand of her daughter.

In the first place, he must be a Protestant; this proviso, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, was unalterable. Years of residence in a Catholic city, years of commune with wealthy and noble Catholic society, had not dimmed the purity of that single-hearted, simple, beautiful Protestant faith, which was almost the only thing Susanne Curchod inherited from her father. Not that she was intolerant. She had mingled with the liberal society of Paris too much for that; but she was conscientious, and foreseeing, and wisely judged that only a Protestant would make a fit husband for her daughter. Any other judgment would have been out of keeping with the rest of her character. Whether in choosing her Protestant she chose wisely, is another thing.

Eric Magnus, Baron de Staël Holstein, a Swede by birth, and Secretary to the Swedish Ambassador, was on many accounts an eligible suitor. Madame

Necker could not object to his faith, for he was a Protestant; the young lady could not take any exception to his appearance, he was a handsome man; and as for Monsieur Necker, if he saw his wife contented with the connexion, what more could he require? He loved his daughter, his daughter loved him; her great anxiety was to keep near him, and near those friends whose society made life agreeable to her.

Suppose her settled in a distant province; what became of her interest in society, her talent to be its ornament? Conjugal contentment, as the end and aim of life, was not to be thought of. Who had it in those days? Her parents, an exception to the rule of their time, are as bright an example as, perhaps, any age can afford; and they, with intervals of retirement, had lived in society, in Paris. She did not hope, we imagine, for felicity like theirs. A bright ideal she may have formed—every young woman of her calibre does—of what domestic life ought to be; but she knew that such happiness as that of Monsieur and Madame Necker was extremely rare—so rare, that she longed to keep near the home of her childhood, near the father who was to her the interpreter of everything great and good; near the mother whose severe Christian propriety applied a searching test to every attraction and pleasure of life.

The Baron de Staël does not seem to have possessed any intellectual features to render him a suitable claimant for the hand of Mademoiselle Necker; but he offered her a residence in Paris, for his sovereign,

Gustavus III. of Sweden, recalled his French ambassador from that city, appointed De Staël in his place, and promised to assure him the post for some years, in order to get over Mademoiselle Necker's objection to bind herself to a residence anywhere else.

For this royal patronage, several motives may be assigned: in the first place, Mademoiselle Necker was to have a large fortune, and Gustavus was not ill-pleased to secure this to a subject of his own; in the second, her talents were already known, and their report may have rendered the Swedish king willing to transplant their owner to his own somewhat dull and sluggish country; but exotics must be delicately dealt with, and he will not rudely tear her from the associations she prizes; in the third place, Baron de Staël was a favourite with Count Fersen, and Count Fersen was influential at the French court. The Baron seems to have been one of those who "have greatness thrust upon them." Marie Antoinette liked him; everything, in short, seemed to favour his suit, excepting the inclinations of the young lady herself, and these were bought over by her mother's approval of the suitor, and by the promise of a residence in Paris.

The bridegroom was amiable, his person handsome, his manners courtly; what more could the most fastidious require? Any marriage of the intellectual qualities, without which union marriage is degraded and outraged, it was not the fashion of those days to put in the bond. Mademoiselle Necker married the Baron de Staël in the year 1786, and he received from her father on his wedding-day, eighty thousand pounds.

What must have been the feeling of attachment to her father, to her country, which induced this young creature, full of genius and vitality, to unite herself to a man in age her senior, in every way her inferior, it is not easy to imagine.

Some would persuade us that Monsieur Necker urged his daughter to consent to a match so agreeable to the Queen and to Count Fersen, in the hope that the court influence, thus propitiated, might recall him to office; such a suspicion, however, is utterly at variance with all we know of Necker's character. It is far more likely that the idea of her father's recall should find birth in the daughter's brain, and that she should ennoble her sacrifice by giving it the name of filial devotion.

An imaginative woman of twenty years old can look the unpromising future in the face, and see nothing very terrible therein; Mademoiselle Necker had not fathomed the depths of her own nature when she gave her hand to Monsieur de Staël; we venture to say that ten years later no maternal persuasion, no fatherly approval, rather looked than spoken, and on that account all the more touching, would have induced her to marry thus. It is a mystery how her parents could have sacrificed a creature so vehemently affectionate, so full of kindliness and gentle instincts, at such a shrine.

But after all, perhaps, she felt less horror at the union than we suppose; there was one bright redeeming point in the matter, the residence in Paris; and perchance she was attracted by the prospect of the brilliant salons which, as wife of the Swedish

ambassador, she could fill with all who were distinguished in diplomatic affairs; perchance she foresaw with pleasure that her father's celebrity as a minister, and her own rising reputation as a genius, added to Marie Antoinette's liking for the baron, would enable her to choose her company among politicians, men of letters, and courtiers. All the brightest and the best would unite to make her house brilliant, if not happy.

Such a prospect to a woman of her temper is no trifle; let her have had perfect domestic happiness in her first marriage, we doubt whether she would have found it a guarantee against the want of society, the love of conversation, the full flow of life in Paris. And before we condemn her on this account, let us remember that illustrious and intellectual company had surrounded her almost from her cradle; that intercourse with great minds was a daily necessity, not an occasional luxury to Madame de Staël.

Baron de Staël's principal fault seems to have been an utter disregard for the value of money—a curious failing for so near a connexion of the greatest financier then living: it is said that on his wedding-day he made over to his friend, Count Fersen, the whole of his ministerial allowance; whether to reward the Count's energy in promoting the successful issue of his suit, is not added. The immense dowry which Monsieur Necker gave with his daughter, speedily felt the influence of the baron's thoughtless liberality, and had not Madame de Staël subsequently placed herself and her children under the protection of Monsieur Necker, it is likely that the improvident baron would have diminished, if not destroyed, the fortunes of his young family.

CHAPTER IX.

We cannot doubt that Madame de Staël was contented with her position in life, when she opened her house in Paris to the great men whose friendship she had inherited, as well as to a host of clever people, who were attracted by the light and warmth of her rising genius. As a friend of her own said, "Paris, of all places in the world, is that where one has least need of happiness to make life agreeable." Madame de Staël, who on the banks of lake Leman regretted the Rue du Bac, was not a woman to waste her energies in unavailing regrets, while she had the brilliant life of Parisian society perpetually within her reach.

Her capacities for suffering and enjoyment were only gradually developing. If we may use the comparison, the flowering of her intellectual powers commenced when she was very young, but her moral being, like those vast forest-trees which are destined for long existence, achieved its full growth but slowly. Her nature was of that noble make, which waxes stronger and better, in proportion to the thickness of the clouds which envelope it; and in these bright first times of her married life in Paris, we do not see presages of the heroic endurance which we shall find her displaying hereafter.

She was as yet a stranger to herself; and all of

us who have any depth and force of being, are self-unknown during great part of our lives; if we belong to those shallow souls from whom great occasions and accidents can bring forth nothing, self acquaintance is easily achieved. But in more complex organisations, the human being may be ignorant of much that is in him, until some peculiar combination of circumstances bring forth the hidden things of the soul, like the sudden lightning which illumines the midnight landscape, and shows us for an instant, scenes which, before the flash, had for us no existence. Othello knows not he is jealous, until Desdemona is suspected.

Madame Necker must have been annoyed by the want of thought and method which her daughter sometimes displayed; we are told that before Madame de Staël's talents had quite fixed her high place in society, Paris was full of anecdotes of her little carelessnesses and infringements of stiff etiquette. Sometimes a torn flounce marred her appearance at court; on one occasion, when she visited Madame de Polignac, her cap fell off in her carriage unperceived, and she made her courtesy without it. This thoughtlessness displayed itself also in conversation. When she was about seventeen, she was one day talking to the Maréchale de Mouchy, one of the stiffest dames of the old *régime;* she suddenly electrified the punctilious heiress of a thousand proprieties, by asking her, "And pray, Madame, what do you think of love?"

To Madame Necker, who looked on everything gravely, and somewhat austerely, these little faults

no doubt gave trouble. Monsieur Necker took the more reasonable part of laughing at them; he loved to tell anecdotes in which his daughter appeared to some disadvantage, and she was well pleased to amuse him, even when the joke was against herself.

CHAPTER X.

MONSIEUR NECKER owed his first ministry principally to the impoverished condition of the finances. We have already mentioned that his talents in fortune-building were no secret; and the ministers of Louis XVI. perhaps thought wisely, when they thought that a man who could so well manage his private affairs, and who had so successfully exerted himself on behalf of the India Company, would prove the very person to repair the grave disorders of the exchequer.

How he was to do this, was to his colleagues at once a profound secret, and a matter of perfect indifference. They wanted money—he knew how to make it; he was therefore the man whose presence was required in the ministerial ranks. Such was the simple logic of a profligate and obsequious ministry.

Perhaps Necker took office with as pure a desire for the public weal as ever induced a man to give up private ease for public exertion. He brought ideas into the French Cabinet which had seldom found a place there; ideas, whose germs Sully and Colbert had implanted, but which, since Colbert's time, had

been effectually banished from the councils of the monarch.

Incompetency, the fault which, perhaps, brings more contempt than any other upon a public man in England, was so usual among the colleagues and successors of Monsieur Necker, that any man of them who was only indifferently acquainted with public business found himself a statesman, by comparison. Such men could not hope for a long ascendancy over even a deeply degraded nation.

There was in 1777, when Necker undertook the Directorship of the Royal Treasures, a great tide of public feeling setting in, and the greatest wisdom on the part of the rulers was necessary to control the mighty flood, to define its just limits, to own its legitimate influence.

But a vacillating policy, refusing to-day the righteous prayer of an oppressed people, and to-morrow yielding to factious clamour more than a suffering nation had dared to ask,—a good-natured king, and a greedy court, are three very significant features in the complexion of those times, and three agents powerful in promoting the ripening of that bitter fruit, which the unhappy heir of long ages of misrule, was to pluck amid the tears and curses of his people.

During the first ministry of Monsieur Necker, he confined his attention to the finances, and left them, on his retirement in 1781, in a flourishing condition. Turgot and Malesherbes, two ministers who would have wrought constitutional reforms corresponding to the changes in the taxation which Necker required to carry out his plans, were successively sacrificed to the

prejudices of the court. Had these three men been suffered to rule the affairs of France, the revolution might, perhaps, have been prevented. But we shall see, hereafter, that every useful measure was baulked by the interference of privileged ignorance.

The history and circumstances of the French Revolution have been, of late years, so traced and illustrated by able pens, that we should be ashamed of our presumption were we to attempt any analysis of that remarkable event, or adopt a mode of treating it which supposed any new views of a subject so worn and familiar. The scenes of that strange transition period will be alluded to by us, only so far as they affect the career and the fortunes of the Necker family.

Monsieur Necker's life in Paris, and his successful direction of the financial business of the country, earned for him a wide-spread esteem and appreciation. We shall glance hereafter more particularly at some of the incidents connected with his retirement in 1781, when we come to consider the circumstances that recalled him to office in 1788.

We have seen that his Protestantism was against his success at court, his economical policy was still more unfavourable in that quarter; and he succumbed to circumstances after a painful struggle which deserves our sympathy.

Monsieur de Calonne, a very rash man, undertook, after Necker, the direction of the exchequer, and adopted a system of policy diametrically opposed to that of his predecessor. The motive power of De Calonne's policy was jealousy of Monsieur Necker's

popularity. He therefore set studiously to work to undermine it. And this, to an unscrupulous man, must have been a very easy thing.

Necker's great motto, "Economy," though recommended by the condition in which he left the royal finances, was not very agreeable to a court like that of Louis XVI. The very people benefited by his retrenchments, were naturally fond of splendour; and when Monsieur de Calonne announced that private extravagance was a public benefit, and begged the court to revive trade by a profuse expenditure, he began in a direction very favourable to his own good repute, and the continuance of his favour at court. His sophistries were soon exposed: the revival of trade turned out to be a considerable deficit in the revenue, and, convening an assembly of the "notables," the brilliant but superficial minister was compelled to own the poverty of the royal coffers. An honest man would have lamented his error, and set about remodelling his policy; but De Calonne was not troubled with qualms of conscience. He acknowledged the deficit, but accounted for it by asserting that Monsieur Necker had rendered a false account to the King, in 1781; that the deficit had at that time commenced, although Necker, in his "Compte Rendu," had endeavoured to exhibit a surplus. A falsehood like this of Monsieur de Calonne, astonishes us by its boldness, but almost provokes a smile at its futility. A question of facts and figures, of receipts and disbursements, is no difficult thing to decide when accounts have been scrupulously kept. Necker was no amateur financier; his memorial to the King had been a *bonâ*

fide account, just such as, when in business for himself, he drew up for his private satisfaction as to the state of his affairs. Therefore he was ready to exculpate himself.

His point of honour was attacked by this accusation; the chief foundation of his popularity had been the almost universal faith in his honour and honesty. Unsuccessful he might be; but the people of France had placed confidence in his good faith. Necker was by no means indifferent to the public voice. Although he would use no dishonourable means of obtaining distinction, he was sensitively alive to the acclamations of his fellow-citizens, and he had left office respected by those whose affairs court influence had compelled him to deliver over into other hands. The consciousness that he had used his power not unworthily, was the dearest thing he carried with him into retirement. An unsullied conscience had made that retirement sweet to himself, and agreeable to his family; and De Calonne's accusation must have stung his pride to the very quick.

Instead of declaiming against his successor, Monsieur Necker prepared a fresh account, in which he so entirely proved the truth of his "Compte Rendu," that Louis XVI. assured him he was convinced of the good faith which had guided his administration; but at the same time commanded him not to make public his justification, lest it should embarrass the ministers. Necker, however, was more anxious to stand in a fair light before his adopted country, than before a sovereign whose pusillanimity was rendered more pitiable by the excellence of his intentions. It seems absurd

and unreasonable to sacrifice Necker at the shrine of Calonne; and, indeed, the ex-minister was not inclined to bleed on such an altar. He claimed the right of making his justification as public as had been the accusation; he saved his credit, but displeased his sovereign.

He was accordingly exiled to a distance of forty leagues from Paris. Madame de Staël tells us, that her sensations on hearing this word "exile," were those of unmitigated terror; yet the treatment of her father in his banishment was kindly, indeed, compared with the degrading surveillance which she lived to endure.

On the day before his exile commenced, the road to St. Ouen (Necker's country-house near Paris), was crowded with carriages; the noblest citizens of France hastened to pay their respects to one who had so well sustained the credit of their country.

The French people are not given to sentimental folly with regard to a man disgraced at court; and we may be certain that Necker deserved all the sympathy he attracted on this occasion.

His daughter, who accompanied him, assures us, that his demeanour in his retirement was calm, and Christianlike. Most impatient to brook an insult, he was most enduring to bear sorrow. We can well imagine that Madame de Staël, who entered vividly into her father's desire for justification, felt the sting of the consequences induced by his courageous persistance, even more than he.

Let us add that Necker's exile was quite unembittered by misanthropy: it is only the Richelieus and

the Machiavels who grow misanthropic by long and intimate knowledge of mankind. The large-souled statesman, whose royal will and great sympathies, added to a clear-sighted prudence, are Heaven's charter to govern—this man, in retirement or in office, is still a hopeful, helpful watcher of the onward tendencies of the human race. That race Necker sincerely loved.

We have no intention of claiming for Monsieur Necker a title to the highest reputation as a statesman—his commercial education had perhaps narrowed his views too much for that: his political system was too exclusively a debtor and creditor account—a system of loans and credit, to obtain a great national popularity. When the public passions were aroused, and the people who had so long suffered heroically, demanded heroism from its rulers, Necker, the great master of finance, was, from the very nature of things, unequal to the management of the administration. His system of economy, of utility, of equalisation in the taxes, required a time of peace and prudence for its development; the bold strokes and noble concessions which might, even at the eleventh hour, have spared the French nation her baptism of blood, it was not in Necker's genius to conceive; and had he conceived them, a timidity about innovations, a cautiousness, healthful to a certain degree in other conditions of government, but fatal in this, would have prevented his striking the decisive blow.

The extreme conditions, prosperity and adversity, are powerful tests of character; we have seen that Necker's moral being was so well balanced as to leave

him very moderate and faithful amid the golden temptations of the first; equally well did he endure the greater ordeal; his exile was devoted to the completion of a work which he thought the age demanded, viz., a lucid exposition of the Christian religion.

There is something infinitely grand and beautiful in this employment of a season of disgrace, and he who could, at such a time, distract his mind from secular affairs and fix it on the contemplation of immutable truth, is as far above our pity as the angels in heaven. We almost forget the weaknesses of his policy while gazing on him in the sublime attitude of a Christian teacher.

We may rather give our pity to his loving and passionate-hearted daughter, who, with terrible powers of sympathy and emotion, flung herself Curtius-like into every opening gulf of her father's circumstances. The shadows were indeed gradually deepening about that woman whose childhood and early youth had been so gorgeously sunned in the light of happiness and good fortune. But there was yet a bright interval before the coming of the storm.

Worthily does Necker contrast with the old courtier under whom he sometime held office, the poor man who frittered away forty years of discipline in sighing after the royal antechambers, and the glories of gold and silver lace; hopeless is the case of these men, for whom sorrowful experiences are dumb. Monsieur de Maurepas returned at last to Versailles, bringing from his exile antique prejudices so rigidly preserved that his long absence from court seems a fable, and childish ignorance so complete as almost to give the lie to the

facts of his history; it seems scarcely possible that such a man could be long seated in the cabinet of any sovereign, let the times and the nation be servile as they may.

CHAPTER XI.

THE necessities of the nation procured Necker's return to office in the August following his banishment, and perhaps his popularity was then at its culmination. How much of it he owed to the antagonism between the court and the people, which induced the latter to respect a man who had proved that public good fame was dearer to him than the favour of the king, it is not necessary here to inquire.

The school called from its work that of the Encyclopædists, though steeped to the lips in the bitter waters of infidelity, had yet enunciated to the world some truths, which were at that time like golden lights ashore to storm-tossed vessels far out at sea. But infidelity proved unable to do more than enunciate, directly she began to apply her theories she lost herself, and became a persecutor through hatred of persecution. Only in the true realisation of an unsectarian Christianity is liberty possible for societies and for nations.

These truths—the dogma of religious liberty, for example—were politely ignored by the court of France. In 1781 Monsieur Necker, just then exposed to a libellous persecution on the part of Maurepas and others, claimed as the price of his continuance

in office, the punishment of his anonymous slanderers, and for himself a seat at the council of the king. He said, and justly enough, that "the minister of finance, charged with asking from the people the sacrifices necessary to keep up war, ought to take part in the deliberations which concerned the making of peace."

Necker was a Protestant, and his seat was denied him, and yet no generous mind, Catholic or Protestant, will hesitate in pronouncing Monsieur Necker a more decided friend to Christianity than his courtly opponent. The minister of finance was not the only man of mark thus humiliated, and the infidels and the Protestants, so diverse in their views and motives, had at least a common cause in the slights put upon them. It might have been better for France had Monsieur Necker overlooked these offences, and forborne to tender his resignation, but a very slight consideration will show us that his situation affords many excuses for his conduct.

Among the circumstances which led to the resignation, was the fact that Monsieur de Maurepas was detained in private by a fit of the gout. Necker had therefore free access to the ear of his sovereign, and he used his privilege to protest against the then recent appointment of a Monsieur de Sartines to the post of minister of marine. His recommendation for this post was, that as lieutenant of police, his conduct had been satisfactory; what relation there is between the duties of a minister of marine and those of a lieutenant of police, it perhaps requires an eye like that of Maurepas to perceive.

The whole duty of the administration had not yet fallen on Necker's shoulders, and complicated his functions; and as a man equal to his own post, he felt humbled and angry to see a high place thus profaned. Nor was his anger unreasonable. Calling on de Sartines a few days after his appointment, Monsieur Necker found the cabinet of the minister of marine hung round with maps and charts which the ex-lieutenant of police was attentively studying. "See what progress I make, Monsieur Necker," said he; "I can put my hand upon this map, and point out to you the four quarters of the world blindfold!"

Monsieur Necker was at that time so tied and fettered, that he saw little hope of any useful result to his labours. The court cried for money; the necessities of the people asked imperiously reform and retrenchment; both parties looked to the minister of finance for the realisation of their wishes, and he was so overridden at court by the worthless parasites of the antechambers, the protégés of Monsieur de Maurepas, that his popular tendencies were looked on with suspicion, his useful aims with disgust. Thus, incompetency in his colleagues, the personal insult heaped upon him, the indifference of the King to his painful situation, the royal favour in which his libellists were held (one of them being his superior in office, another high in the household of the Comte d'Artois), formed a conjunction of circumstances which, if anything could justify his resignation, may be said to exculpate him abundantly. But in his retirement he often reproached himself for having thrown up his functions.

The business of state was, no doubt, easier and pleasanter after he left; there was no one to torment the goodnatured King with the sufferings of the prople, which demanded attention and redress; no one to tell him of the threatening cloud in the future, and to exhort the sovereign courageously to grapple with the inevitable difficulties of the times. For some space all went on gaily. Turgot and Malesherbes, two useful, and at that period popular ministers, had also been dismissed; and the stage of public affairs, denied or rendered shameful to those who were capable of worthily occupying it, was abandoned to a set of courtly adventurers, whose fantastic efforts to play their parts would provoke our laughter, if they had not brought about an awful crisis in human history, which, perhaps, still exerts a large influence over Europe.

It was not to be hoped that the interval from 1781 to 1788, the space of his absence from public affairs, had made Monsieur Necker's task less difficult; on the contrary, he returned to office dispirited by the heaviness of the political sky, but yet as one somewhat bound to wait on the nation in difficulties, which his conscience told him his resignation had rather increased than diminished.

His daughter rejoiced in his recall, she yet hoped all from his interference; but the more prudent and experienced father had a profound conviction that it was too late. "Would to God," he cried, "they had given me the past seventeen months; things are now gone too far."

Madame de Staël, young and hopeful as she was,

could not but perceive that the queen received her coldly: the niece of the Archbishop of Sens (the retiring minister) made her courtesy at the same time; and although the latter lady had been somewhat in disgrace, the queen's bearing towards her was evidently warm and favourable, compared with the frigid tolerance which was accorded to Madame de Staël. Marie Antoinette looked on the recall of Monsieur Necker as a measure involving a sacrifice of kingly dignity to popular opinion. "It is the grand mistake of despotic princes," says Madame de Staël, "to look upon opinion as their enemy," as something necessarily antagonistic to the Crown.

Monsieur Necker was certainly at the period of his recall, in 1788, the darling of the French people; this proud position might, indeed, have afforded him a prevision of the disgrace to follow; for, as the priests of the old mythologies twisted with gold the horns of their victims, and wreathed with flowers the neck devoted to the altar, the French nation generally prepares the sacrifice of a public man by a triumph of popularity. Public confidence at that time ran high: on the morning Necker resumed his post, the funds rose thirty per cent.: this, the real evidence of faith in his honour and stability, was a kind of distinction which De Calonne's brilliant sophistries had never gained for their author. Yet the resumption of his office plunged Necker into a sea of difficulties, to the management of which he was unequal, and upon his failure waited the contempt of France.

CHAPTER XII.

LET us for a moment glance at his position at the period of his recall.

France, although without a representative assembly from 1614 to 1789, was not in 1788 without a parliament of some sort. Besides the local parliaments of the provinces, which were scarcely anything more than agencies to raise the subsidies, the parliament of Paris had been reassembled under the advice of Monsieur de Maurepas, who was assuredly no democrat. But the difficulty of raising the necessary taxes had become increasingly perplexing, and the whole public spirit of the times, such as it was, pointed already so imperiously towards progress that De Maurepas, unable to trust the nation with a representative system, even had he possessed the capability of fathoming her wants, conjured up this shadow of a senate, miscalled the parliament of Paris.

This parliament, which was an assemblage of judges nominated by the king, was at first merely the supreme court of justice in France. It settled appeals from the courts of the barons, and by the moderation and propriety of its proceedings, earned for itself no mean share of public respect. By degrees the kings of France forced upon this parliament of Paris questions with which it had no concern; and, unable at once to assume without ceremony the authority of

despotic monarchs, published their edicts and ordonnances in this assembly, that they might be consented to, and registered here before they were made public and declared to be law. However illegal might be this assumption of authority on the part of the parliament, it is certain that after the dissolution of the states-general by Louis XIII. in 1614, it did to a certain extent operate as a check on the kingly authority. But, as the judges were appointed by the monarch and removable at his pleasure, it is obvious that the parliament of Paris was no representative assembly. Moreover, in the event of any contumacy the king could take his seat among them, and register the disputed edict in solemn silence; "for it was one of the fundamental laws of the French monarchy that, in the presence of the king, the function of every magistrate is suspended for the time." These royal sittings were termed "beds of justice" (*lits de justice*), and of course rendered all opposition not only useless, but impossible.*

Fettered as was the parliament of Paris, it nevertheless frequently acted a useful part in calling the attention of the nation to any fresh act of encroachment; it might thus be compared to an honest watch-dog, chained and forbidden to meddle with the thief, which shows his teeth, though he cannot use them, and gives the alarm by his portentous bark. Louis XV. found even this parliament too great a restraint, and dissolved it in disgust.

* The king dictating the laws to this wretched parliament reminds us of the Emperor of Morocco, who, playing at whist with some of his subjects, exclaims to the person whose place it is to lead, "Play hearts, or I cut off your head."

Every year of abeyance increased the difficulty of reassembling either parliament or states-general, but the necessity for fresh taxes becoming yearly more pressing, Monsieur de Maurepas was compelled to offer the reorganisation of the parliament, as a sop to the nation he wished to coax into complaisance. As a state doctor his finger was not very delicate; but even his hold upon the public pulse, already feverish and excited in its throbbings, told him a tale of a desperate crisis at hand, if some means were not taken to prevent the increase of the disorder.

The clergy and nobility by this time looked on their privileges as prescriptive rights, with whose continuance was bound up the very existence of the French nation; and the bulk of the people, oppressed and dismally laden with the heavy burden of taxation, trudged wearily along the painful path of life, like a sullen beast of burden. A profound hatred for the existing order of things was rife in the breasts of the lower classes, but they had no liberty of speech or of pen, and nursed in secret the sense of their misery and degradation.

Already, however, public feeling had begun to make itself known; the appointment of Malesherbes and Turgot was a sacrifice to this feeling; but De Maurepas, who governed only to keep the king good tempered and the courtiers satisfied, had, after thus yielding to the pressure of the times, capriciously disgraced both those able ministers.

In the year 1788, the nobility, the clergy, and the peasantry were not the only elements of society; a fourth order had arisen distinct from all the rest;

partaking by its intelligence and education of the nature of the superior, and by its birth of the nature of the inferior, classes. This new order, the fruit of the extending commerce of the country, consisted of merchants, artisans, and others, who, although the great source of the prosperity and wealth of France, were as a body altogether unconsidered and unacknowledged by the government under which they lived.

And yet they were not *altogether* unnoticed. An intelligent, active, and thinking class, a large proportion of them belonged to the reformed religion; Henri IV. and Sully had given them toleration and indulgence; Louis XIV., under the influence of the prudish bigot who was the bane of his later years, recalled the precious gift, and unwisely drove many of them into foreign lands, which have since reaped, through the genius and industry of the exiles, rich rewards for the shelter awarded to them in that dark hour of need.

Even the stupid and suicidal policy pursued by France had not rooted out what she, by the mouth of her governments, called heresy; some of the heretics were actually men whom the country could not well spare; Necker (though not by birth a Frenchman) was one of these. It might seem strange to the sages of those days (though the Hebrews had frequently done the thing well beyond dispute) that a heretic Christian should handle matters of finance better than an orthodox Catholic, but so it was; and, as even a Catholic people liked Necker and a surplus better than orthodoxy backed by a deficit, the public, dimly feeling its way after liberty, forced Necker upon the king.

And this popular minister was not the only Protestant of note; the idea was largely abroad that religious liberty was not necessarily anarchy and bloodshed, and public opinion had undergone a change since the parliament of Paris, under Louis XV., refused the confirmation of the edict of Nantes. The country had long ago become sick of old dragonnades and new penal statutes against the Huguenots, and was earnestly disposed to deal with its own real necessities, rather than to quarrel about theological differences.

The advocates of toleration consisted, on the one hand, of those noble and conscientious souls whose idea of religion was purer and simpler than the Romish; and, on the other, of witty and unbelieving men, the disciples of Monsieur de Voltaire—the *petits maîtres* of infidelity. The former class felt deeply and earnestly that justice was their due; they had served the king in almost every department of the state, and in as many had suffered ignominy. They had seen an admiral, a good officer, and high in repute upon the seas, denied by his king the promotion he had earned. The royal reason found a barrier in the Protestant faith of the sailor, and they had marked the indignant reply:—"Sire, when I came hand to hand with your Majesty's enemies, I inquired not whether they were Catholics or Protestants, but fought my hardest for my king and country." They had subsequently seen Necker denied a place at the council of the king on the same ridiculous excuse. As if a man were the worse diplomatist because he rejects transubstantiation! From the general attitude of the times we may gather, that at the time of Necker's recall, there was a widely felt need for reform in such matters.

CHAPTER XIII.

MONSIEUR DE MAUREPAS, though no very wise politician, had had sense to perceive years ago that the existing order of things had in it no element of duration; he had seen that something must be done, and he therefore recalled the parliament of Paris, which though it differed in many respects from a representative assembly, had at least the privilege of assuming, by its formal consent to the edicts of the king, that something, in addition to the royal will and pleasure, ought to have a share in the government of the country. The parliament, convinced that its recall was an imperative necessity, and no evidence of liberal views in the crown, was not slow to declare that it was not the legal council of the nation, and had therefore no right to grant subsidies. Nor did the parliament yield to the royal importunities until it discovered that its obstinacy endangered its political existence. This assembly, however, became more and more difficult to manage, and before Necker returned to office, the royal word was pledged that the states-general should be convened in the month of May, 1789.

Before the recall of Necker, Turgot and Malesherbes had anticipated nearly all the changes which, in 1789, he designed to make. Malesherbes had formerly proposed the re-establishment of the edict of Nantes, the

abolition of *lettres de cachets*, and the suppression of the censorship which rendered the press a mere tool of the court.

Turgot had procured the abolition of the *corvée*, a most vexatious tax, which compelled the agricultural classes to repair the roads at the will of the government, regardless of the season of the year and the pressing necessities of farm business. Turgot had also compassed the idea of making a uniform law of customs, whereas, at that time, many of the provinces had in this regard some peculiar privileges which were perpetual sources of grievance and confusion. He had also pleaded that the clergy and nobles should bear their share of the taxes. This lost him; the privileged classes rebelled, and Turgot was compelled to resign. But these unsuccessful attempts at improvement were not thrown away upon the nation, her attitude became daily more earnest and more defiant.

Monsieur Necker resumed office in 1788, with inevitable difficulties before him. He undertook more than one man, however able and popular, can ever hope to accomplish; and every step he took was canvassed and opposed by the king with a childish pertinacity, which seemed still to doubt whether the royal word were a pledge of accomplishment, or an empty speech which a change of ministers revoked.

"Louis XVI.," says Madame de Staël, "would have made the mildest of despots, or the most constitutional of kings, but was utterly unfit for the period when public opinion was making a transition from one to the other."

CHAPTER XIV.

MADAME DE STAEL, young, ardent, fired by the love of liberty, and literally glowing with enthusiasm, looked forward to the meeting of the states-general with hope and confidence, for she believed in the future of France. How could a heart, full of filial love, doubt the nation which so well appreciated and honoured her father?

Her genius at this time, although it scarcely promised "Corinne" and "L'Allemagne," was fast ripening; the political events which were going on immediately about her, and the growing importance of every liberal influence, added to her joy in the recall of her father, and her own dawning reputation, seem to have given a fresh spring to the energy of her impulsive soul. She had that delicate mental organisation which is profoundly influenced by the state of the world about it, and just then she was breathing an atmosphere full of hope and joy. Her imagination, not yet trained to torment her, painted the future in its freshest, gayest tints; and had a prophet been at hand to tell her of the real experiences that lay before her, experiences fraught with sorrow, insult, and exile, it is probable that she would have considered his predictions mere idle words.

She was enjoying to the full the congenial society

which was ever her brightest source of inspiration; human faces, on which she could call up some reflection of her own enthusiasm, were the pages on which she best loved to write her glowing thoughts—those wonderful and multitudinous thoughts which we should perhaps better appreciate, had she left us fewer. Her thoughts fructified beneath the genial influences of friendly converse (of which it must be conceded she arrogated to herself more than her share), and her brilliant imagination, like a diamond in the sunlight, gathered fresh resplendence from every kindly glance that fell upon her.

In the poetic fervour of this part of her life, Rousseau seems an appropriate theme for her pen: who more fitting to be the apologist of the "apostle of love," than a creature full of passion, and as enthusiastic for virtue as others are for vice? It is true her virtues were those of impulse, rather than of principle, but who can quarrel with an impulse which prompts spontaneously to the course which principle would more slowly, not more certainly, recommend?

Her "Letters on Rousseau" appeared in the year 1788, and seemed to justify, in a measure, the exalted idea of her talents which, from her childhood, her friends had entertained. This work, written in the flush and pride of youth, has merits and faults peculiar to the season of its authorship. A too unreasoning admiration of her subject has betrayed her into some extravagances, which would have been avoided had she treated the theme in after years; but the same cause has given birth to passages glowing with eloquence, and prophetic of the glories she was to achieve.

It is easy to see that her idolatry of Rousseau is partly the fruit of her antagonism to her mother's line-and-rule excellence of which we formerly spoke; had she written on Rousseau thirty years later, when seasons of deep sorrow had shown to her the reality of the excellence of Christianity, and its power in alleviating human sufferings; when the heat and inexperience of her youth had yielded to the chastening touch of time, her estimate of Rousseau would have been a very different thing.

But who wishes to anticipate such experiences? As, in the history of the physical world, each season is lovely in its time, and one would not hasten over the Spring, with her opening leaves and flushing boughs, in order to realize the magnificence of Autumn, so neither can we desire the seasons of man's life to change their course. Our gradual acquisition of the limited knowledge we can acquire, and the perpetual modification and alteration of those opinions which we sometimes fondly consider decided, should teach us humility, and make us wary of assuming the infallibility we are so ready to deny to others. Perhaps there is little hope of a mind which at its outset is cramped by bigotry.

Madame de Staël's error was, certainly, not on this side; had it been so, she would have outraged all hereditary propriety.

Political events, just then very frequent topics of thought and converse, have left somewhat of their form and colour on pages which we might expect to find purely literary; but the "Letters" were not written in literary retirement and abstraction; the

talk of the salons leaves its impress here and there; and filial affection, ever active, contrives to make Rousseau's ovation include a triumph for Necker.

Rousseau, the son of passion, Necker, the child of reason—it is an association suggesting innumerable contrasts; and surely one must be as eager for an occasion, as was Madame de Staël, to find any thread of connexion between the two men.

Her grand interest just at this time was the approaching meeting of the states-general, and the probable consequences of that significant event, and looking onward to their meeting, she thus apostrophises her countrymen.

"O great nation, whose deputies will soon meet to consult upon your rights! Little fitted are ye yet to exercise the power ye have regained, and astonished as ye will be at your novel attitude, I ask not that ye should share the blind devotion which has been my guide. Mistrust not reason. And since the events of the last two years have secured to you, by the pure progress of intellect, those advantages which other nations have acquired at a vast expense of blood, efface not this glorious seal which Destiny affixes to your constitution; but when your unanimous decree shall enable you to attain the objects you have in view, be content to hit the mark, seek not to overshoot it."*

This entreaty, published six months before the opening of the states-general, is almost prophetic in its prayer. Alas! the bright exception of winning peacefully those advantages which other nations had

* *Lettres sur Rousseau.*

bought at a cost almost countless, was not reserved for France! A night of fearful horror was gathering, when the wrongs of ages should be revenged by an insatiable scaffold, and the sword of civil discord outrage every charity of life.

Monsieur Necker, better able to judge of the real state of the political horizon, must have been even more anxious for the result of the tremendous experiment of May, 1789, than was his patriotic daughter; who, although, in the words above quoted, she seems to have caught the paternal spirit of anxiety, was, on the whole, very sanguine as to the event. Her faith in her father rose superior to all the difficulties of his task, and filial devotion hints at comfort and assistance from a very unlikely source.

"Rise, then, from thy ashes, O Rousseau! and encourage in his career the man who, having to deal with extremities of misery, aims at securing for his fellows the perfection of good. Encourage him whom France has called her tutelary angel; who reads in her affection for him fresh reasons for his duties to her; whom all should support as they love the public welfare; who deserves a judge, an admirer, a citizen, like thee!"

The following may serve as an example of the manner in which, arguing we should say against her calmer judgment, she attempts to recommend the study of Rousseau to young women. But, surely, the exhibition of vice, tricked out with all the allurements of sentiment, is a dangerous object to a mind yet unfixed. We question whether more harm be not done by the interest awakened on behalf of the cri-

minal, than all the wholesomeness of the final moral of the story can counterbalance. It is, at any rate, an out-of-the-way school of virtue for an innocent mind: one would hardly send a child to associate with thieves, that he may learn from their fate the evils of dishonesty.

"Our custom"—that is, the custom of French Catholics about her—" is to keep young girls in convents. It need not be feared that this romance (Héloïse) will indispose them for marriages of convenience. They are never independent: all that surrounds them is calculated to prevent their hearts from experiencing sentimental impressions; the virtue, and often, too, the ambition of their parents, watches over them. And men, ever strange in their principles, wait until women are married before they speak to them of love. At the epoch of marriage, all about them changes: the world, far from heating their fancies by romantic sentimentalities, seeks to wither their hearts by cruel jests on all they have been educated to respect. At such a time, they should read Héloïse. They will feel, when they read the letters of Saint-Preux, how far from the crime of loving them are the creatures by whom they are surrounded: they will subsequently see how sacred is the marriage knot; they will learn to understand the importance of their duties, and the happiness they are capable of bestowing, *even when their circumstances borrow no charm from affection.*"

The concluding words seem sadly to hint at the situation of Madame de Staël herself; perhaps it was happy for her that she took such a vivid interest in

the company that frequented her house, and in the politics of the day; for her domestic life offered little to satisfy the cravings of her affectionate disposition. Her own marriage had been truly a marriage of convenience. But for her father, and her pleasure in the exercise of her talents, existence would have had a sadness at the core, even in those bright and prosperous days. She was, however, no egotist, and in the happiness of others could almost find her own.

CHAPTER XV.

HAD the dispositions of the court alone regulated the administration of public affairs in 1788, Monsieur Necker would never have been recalled; his reappointment was a sacrifice on the part of the sovereign to that indomitable desire for progress, which had now taken a firm hold upon the French people. That the king sincerely and earnestly desired, at the period of Necker's recall, or at any other, to remodel the constitution as the wants of the times demanded, we cannot believe. It would be equally wide of the truth to say that he set his face steadfastly against innovation.

The fact is, he was not capable of any steady course of action; the only fixed part of his character consisted of hereditary prejudices directly antagonistic to the spirit of the age; when, therefore, he was recommended to a liberal policy, these prejudices induced him to defer and delay until the lapse of time and

the force of circumstances had rendered his measures matters of bare necessity. He thus defrauded himself of the gratitude of a people not ill-disposed towards him individually, and cherishing many associations of glory connected with his house. His frivolous delays robbed his concessions of their grace, and made them resemble booty seized by thieves rather than favours accorded to subjects.

The principles of economy and justice which were the guides of Necker in his public duties were entirely foreign to the French government of those days. The taxation of the country was most unfairly divided, the nobility and superior clergy bearing little or no part of the burdens of the state. The inevitable results of this vicious system were, the distress of the labouring portion of the community, the crippling of enterprise, and the political slavery of the bulk of the nation.

Not only had the hereditary nobles freedom from taxation, but that odious privilege was extended to such plebeians as could, by paying the king a certain sum of money, make it the sovereign's interest to distinguish them in this manner. The king was not the only person who claimed an interest in the taxes so partially and cruelly collected. The court had about it a throng of worthies, the utterance of whose every deed was—money. Pensions and allowances were common, and still the hungry parasites of the antechambers were unsatisfied.

Much as we may deplore the sequel, we can scarcely wonder that nobility came to be looked on as a crime worthy of death. The common people,

who earn money with great difficulty, look with hatred upon the finger that diminishes their pittance.

So shameless were the courtiers in their demands, that ladies of the aristocracy beset Monsieur Necker during his first ministry, and begged of him any sum they wanted. "What is a thousand crowns to the king?" said one of these. The conscientious minister replied, "A thousand crowns, madam, is the tax of a whole village."

It is therefore scarcely surprising that the taxes, painful as they were to the people, barely sufficed to defray the expenses of the throne and of the army. The public money was exhausted before it had time to get to the prisons and hospitals, which were in the lowest state of misery and destitution. During her husband's ministry, Madame Necker, with praiseworthy heroism, devoted herself entirely to the reformation of these abodes of want and crime; and succeeded in working many important changes in their condition, though no effort of private benevolence could supply the place of efficient public support.

"The art of government" (in France), says Madame de Staël, "had always been a kind of jugglery, which aimed at enriching the king, by extracting as much as possible from the nation."

To all the hangers-on of royalty clamouring for places, privileges, and money, Monsieur Necker, in his own person, set a bright and beautiful example.

Not only was the public money safe in his hands, and public difficulties sure of attention, even when their disentanglement involved the risk of his private

fortune; but the legal emoluments, the just wages of his office, were declined by this conscientious minister; for all his wearisome services, he desired and received no payment, unless the treatment of his adopted country may be held in that light.

That this conduct is not a precedent worthy of universal imitation, we are well aware; its general adoption might, indeed, be fatally mischievous; for, as only very rich men can afford to take office on such terms, the great offices of the state would fall exclusively into the hands of the wealthy; and efficient men, wanting private means to support the charges of a place, would be debarred from serving their country. But the almost universal tendencies of human nature, render it little likely that Necker's self-denial should be largely imitated.

In his time, when court ladies besieged the Minister of Finance, and every insignificant flutterer about the sovereign expected a tangible reward for his loyalty, it was noble to serve the country so arduously, and touch no remuneration.

Was it wonderful that before his retirement in 1781, he had secured the affections of the people? A day or two after that retirement, a piece was played on the Parisian stage, entitled "The Hunting Party of Henry IV." At every allusion to Sully the audience rose, and showed by their cheers that they pointed the references to Necker.

Who can tell how much of horror might have been spared the Europe of the eighteenth century, had Necker then continued in office, and been permitted to carry out such measures as the necessities of the people demanded!

We have hinted, however, at the intrigues and annoyances which induced him to leave office, and must not resume the subject.

The iniquitous system of government which prevailed in France, was discovered in 1788 to have led her to the verge of bankruptcy; and as Necker was looked upon in some degree as a juggler who could fill by sleight-of-hand the royal coffers, his return to office was not objected to, on pecuniary grounds. In other respects his recall must have been a bitter thing to the sovereign.

To all the other difficulties of his place, Necker found added a season of scarcity, involving of course an immense amount of suffering, and some insubordination. His winter (1788-89) was employed in buying grain from all quarters to supply the wants of Paris, and he had little leisure to bestow on other matters.

The approaching meeting of the states-general, however, demanded much preparation on the part of the minister, and, as it drew nearer, seemed more and more fraught with confusion and difficulty.

The opening was finally fixed for the 5th May, 1789.

CHAPTER XVI.

Up to this period, and even somewhat later, it appears to us that most minds not bigoted to conservatism must sympathise with the reform party in France. It were idle, indeed, to deny that reform was necessary; and a reform that began only by reviving the ancient rights of the people, does not, at first sight, look either difficult or dangerous. If the sanction of a prince could give support and credit to the popular movement, the reformers had it in the countenance of the Count d'Artois, afterwards Charles X., brother to the king.

There were many great and noble persons looking forward with mingled hope and fear to the meeting of the states, and among them Madame de Staël seems an object of prominence and interest. Her filial sentiments gave her an immense stake in the experiment about to be tried, for on it her father's reputation, and almost even the reputation of all ideas of reform and progress, depended. If one feeling could be intenser where all glowed so brightly, perhaps patriotism was that which burned most luminously in the soul of Madame de Staël. Let us not forget that she was thoroughly a Frenchwoman. She has given us an epitome of her character in this sentence: "I have always loved God, my father, and my country."

She was proud of France, of her history, of her literature, and anxious to be proud of her institutions. Madame de Staël believed that her father was about to give the country institutions of which she might be justly proud. With complicated feelings of anxiety, hope, love, and pride in her father, "the idol of the French people," she awaited the important 5th May. The glory of France, the happiness of France, were phrases which at any time were sufficient to flush her cheek and provoke her eloquence. With all the ardour of her passionate soul, she longed to see her beloved native land as free as that little island, her father's favourite model, whose shores lay within a few hours' sail of her own country.

To the freedom of debate allowed by the English parliament, to the representation of public opinion by that parliament, and to the general confidence of the people in their chosen representatives, she and her father attributed not a few of England's superior advantages. And it would have been hard to convince her that a Frenchman is less fitted to be intrusted with political rights than his neighbours on the other side of the channel.

She hoped, therefore, that the establishment, or rather the revival of the representative system in France, would lead to the happiest results; perhaps she had not sufficiently considered that the sudden gift of political rights is a thing dangerous in the hands of men who have not been educated to exercise them, or to understand the grave responsibility involved in their possession.

It was, no doubt, with a feeling of hopeful patriotism

that Madame de Staël took her place at a window of the Hôtel de Ville, on the 4th May, 1789. She was about to watch such a procession as the country had not seen for more than a century: such a procession, indeed, in some respects, France had never before beheld. The great event was a tribute to public opinion in a country where, having had no legitimate outlet, that opinion, like all repressed forces, had become dangerous.

She remarks that it seemed appropriate that Louis XVI. should bestow on his people a free constitution; he had already supported the brave American colonies in their resistance to the mother country, and the Dutch in their opposition to their king: by his foreign interferences he had thus installed himself champion of the oppressed. Now the time was come when he could prove the sincerity of his love for liberty, of his regard for the progress of intellect, by raising and relieving his own degraded subjects. The Count d'Artois told the municipality of Paris that a great revolution was about to take place, of which the king, by his virtues, his intentions, and his rank, ought to be the leader. We may, perhaps, dispute the "intentions," and yet there were moments when the king intended to do his difficult duty: these moments unhappily were just those when the public had got before him; moments when he had to follow, not to lead; when all the heroism of any sacrifice he might make, had been anticipated by the determination of a courageous populace to exact it. He knew not how much strength a king gathers from favours conceded; nor how much confidence a country gains with rights extorted.

On the 4th May, the eve of the meeting of the states, the deputies went in procession to Notre Dame, to consecrate, by a solemn act of religious worship, the important duties upon which they were entering. "I shall never forget the moment," says Madame de Staël, "when I saw file past the twelve hundred deputies of France. It was a spectacle alike new and imposing for the French people; all the inhabitants of Versailles, all the curious of Paris had assembled to witness the gathering. This new sort of authority in the state, of which neither the nature nor the strength was as yet comprehended, startled the majority of those persons who had not reflected on the rights of nations."

First, in the order of procession, came the pith and marrow of the states, six hundred men clothed in black; this was the third estate, whose members equalled in numbers the two others united. A formidable array this; containing power enough to crush the two higher orders. Here were merchants, lawyers, men of letters, men who had thought, felt, and read; to say nothing of the education given them by the usage of the world; an education far beyond the routine training of the noble or the priest.

Next came the nobility. The great lords of France were at that day, according to Madame de Staël, "illustrious obscurities;" they had had no motive to cultivate their minds, therefore their minds had remained uncultivated. Horribly was the country revenged upon their obstructive ignorance by the blood of the ancient and honourable houses, which glutted the guillotine, and streamed through the fair cities of France.

An English noble may have an ambition to shine as an orator, or as a statesman. A French noble of 1789 had no opportunity of acquiring renown in the first capacity; and as for the second, he had so little competition to dread in the way of talent, that it was scarcely worth while to trouble himself about qualifying for a place which he had quite as good a chance of obtaining without preparation.

The lower grade of the nobility, the "gentilshommes," were equally undistinguished, the government permitting them to hold no profession but that of arms.

There came after these a part of the nobility which provokes laughter or indignation, according to the mood of the spectator. Even a democrat cannot but admire grace, dignity, and high bearing, though they occur in a man with five hundred ancestors: indeed, there is in us all a tendency to respect what our fathers have called respectable, and some of the hottest republicans turn royalists when they get to court. There is a sort of involuntary homage inspired by the representative of a great historical name, which even the seething, surging minds of the French populace might present to a Montmorency or a Condé. And this without sacrificing the principle that cries out for reform.

But who yields homage to these nobles? Who are they, bearing so ungracefully the *panache* and the sword? Are they recently ennobled for great deeds and attainments, whose value compensates for deficiencies in grace and dignity?

Not so; these are the "*Anoblis*;" their patent of

nobility is righteously their own, if honest payment of purchase-money make a thing so. They have invested so much in the poor, empty, ever-gaping royal coffers, for the privilege of evading the payment of the taxes. And are the *panache* and the sword come to this?

Time is it surely for the nobility to purify itself, or for France to fling off the nobility.

Let it die, and bury it decently out of sight, with all the honours due to a decayed respectability, if this life of corruption is the only existence it can compass.

Well might Madame de Staël ask herself what business had these awkward plebeians among the nobility of France.

Last came the clergy, the curés being separated from the prelates by a band of music. The higher clergy, in their robes of gorgeous hues, formed a splendid item in the procession. Authority in their mien, and dignity in their bearing, they seemed to represent a powerful public influence; but their supremacy had already largely declined, not so much by attack from without as by corruption from within. Some of the prelates were men of scandalous lives, and many were entirely absorbed in political affairs. Yet whatever had been the sins of that aristocratic priesthood, their transgressions were to be fearfully expiated on the scaffold or in exile. Their altar was to be thrown down, the church of their fathers abolished, the Goddess of Reason enthroned in place of the Mother of God. They were to read a lesson in the primer their church had endited for the education of the Huguenots, and truly it was a bitter one for both sects.

Necker, by doubling the number of the third estate, had just doubled the democratic element in those states. Whether it was prudent to do this at such a time, may well be questioned. His daughter seems to own as much, for she attempts to defend him, and alleges that the necessities of the times wrung the measure from him. A great statesman, however, will contrive sometimes to control what appears like necessity to a feebler eye. Necker was not a great statesman. He subsequently intended to divide the three estates into two chambers. Had he been able to compass this, he might still have evaded the shock; but the delays and objections of the superior orders hurried on the catastrophe of the revolution, which rendered simple reform impracticable.

Some few nobles, deeply impregnated with popular ideas, had procured themselves election as deputies of the third estate; the most note-worthy of these was the Count de Mirabeau, remarkable alike for his talents and for his vices. The fiery eloquence of this man, which was to convulse the senate, was as yet unknown. His pallid face, hollow yet brilliant eyes, and wild, curling hair, were suitable adjuncts to a figure not easily forgotten by any who had once beheld it.

Madame de Staël had for a fellow-spectator Madame de Montmorin, wife of the minister of foreign affairs, "a woman in no way remarkable." No doubt Necker's daughter was very ready to show the joy she felt, and to express the hopes she cherished. Madame de Montmorin had far different ideas on the subject of the states-general, and said to her san-

guine companion, "You are wrong to rejoice at this; it will bring great disasters on France and on us," —a prophecy no less true than melancholy. Poor Madame de Montmorin and one of her sons subsequently perished on the scaffold: another son drowned himself. Her husband was massacred on the fearful second of September. Her elder daughter expired in the hospital of a prison; and the younger, broken-hearted by the terrible fortunes of her family, died, crushed by sorrow and despair, before she had achieved her thirtieth year. And for a whole family to be thus engulfed by the Revolution was no singular lot. What must have been the sufferings of a nation, which was provoked to such a terrible pitch of rage and revenge! What horrors must they have endured, who could bear to inflict such inhuman retribution!

The next day, the estates met in the avenue of Versailles, in a hall (since destroyed) capable of holding upwards of five thousand persons. Among the four thousand auditors was Madame de Staël, profoundly affected by the applause that waited on her father.

The moderation of Necker was that which wrought his failure: at that time, had he chosen, he might have governed France in his own way; but he was scrupulously loyal, and he allowed the king to ruin himself.

Madame de Staël experienced a sensation of fear when she saw the king take his seat. And what was he, this undecided man, when pitted against six hundred men, armed with more powerful wea-

pons than the king had hired with his German troops? These deputies were eager to have their rights adjusted, and the constitution discussed and settled; they therefore anxiously awaited the king's speech.

Seen in the light of subsequent events, every occurrence of such a time assumes the importance of an omen. Madame de Staël remarked that the queen, who arrived too late, was disturbed, and that the colour of her complexion was altered.

The king's speech contained nothing that could be supposed to satisfy the third estate. Two ministers followed; and the burden of the discourses was finance, and the generosity of the superior classes, who had promised to forego their pecuniary privileges. Even Necker could find nothing more worthy to offer that august assembly than praises of the privileged orders, and projects of financial reform.

To use the words most reverently, they asked for bread, and a stone was given them. At that time, the third estate was not leagued, or inclined to league against monarchy. Had the king acted honestly and nobly—had Necker dared so to act, in spite of the royal weakness, the Revolution had been strangled in its cradle, and the blood of the Bourbons had never cried to Heaven against France.

We must, nevertheless, acknowledge that Necker occupied a most confusing position: ostensibly he was the king's chief adviser, but there was a clique about the royal person, who really ruled the easy monarch, and who fostered his every desire to elude the necessity for liberal measures. We ought to place the king's death to their account.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE nobility, while the vessel of the state was thus impatient to leave her moorings, occupied their time in discussing useless questions of etiquette. They refused to second even the moderate designs of Necker. Meantime, the third estate grew more desperate, and Paris was starving. "The secret council of the king," says Madame de Staël, "differed entirely from his ostensible ministry: there were, indeed, a few ministers who held the views of the secret council; but the acknowledged head of the administration, Monsieur Necker, was precisely the man against whom the efforts of the privileged orders were directed. In England, the responsibility of ministers prevents this double government of the confidants of the king and his official agents. In that country, no act of the royal authority is executed without the signature of a minister; and that signature, if he give it wrongfully, may cost him his life. Supposing the British monarch, then, to be surrounded by advisers who might support absolute power, not one of these courtiers would dare to enforce as a minister, that which as a courtier he upheld.

"Things were not thus arranged in France. Unknown to the principal minister, the court sent for some regiments of German soldiers, because little

confidence was put in the French troops; and the bad advisers of the king imagined that, with the assistance of their foreign mercenaries, they could defeat public opinion in such a country as was then our illustrious France!"

Necker hinted to the king that the army was largely imbued with popular opinions. "The court saw in this hint a factious sentiment; for one of the distinguishing characteristics of the aristocracy in France is, to hold the knowledge of facts to be a suspicious thing. These facts, which are obstinate, have in vain risen ten times over against the hopes of the privileged orders. They persist in attributing the occurrences to the agency of those who foresaw the events, but never dream of tracing circumstances up to the very nature of things. Fifteen days after the opening of the states-general, before the third had constituted itself the national assembly, Monsieur Necker presented to the king a picture of the situation of the monarchy. 'Sire!' said he, 'I fear you deceive yourself as to the sentiments of your army. The correspondence from the provinces induces us to believe that the French soldiers would refuse to march against the states-general. Do not, then, bring the troops to Versailles, as if you intended to employ them against the deputies. The popular party does not positively know the leaning of the army. Use this uncertainty to maintain your authority over opinion; for if once the fatal secret of the insubordination of the troops were known, how would it be possible to control factious spirits? What concerns you, Sire, at the present moment, is, to accede to the

réasonable wishes of France: deign to resign yourself to the English constitution: personally, you will feel no restraint from the authority of the laws: they would never impose on you any barriers greater than your own conscience; and in going forth to meet the desires of the people, you may grant them to-day what they will insist upon having to-morrow.'"

Necker then presented to the king a declaration, which the minister wished to be read to the deputies, on the 23rd of June, on which day a royal sitting was to take place. Twenty-five years after, King Louis XVIII. prepared, in Monsieur Necker's old house at St. Ouen, a declaration similar to the one we have mentioned—an unimportant, but striking coincidence.

Unhappy France! Twenty-five years of anarchy, bloodshed and despotism had been suffered, and yet she had not advanced one step beyond Necker, in 1789.

The deliberation by orders rendered it almost impossible to despatch even the most trifling business, and various schemes were revolved, all of which were aimed at the removal of this difficulty. It was time to act, and to act promptly, for the German troops, commanded by the Marshal de Broglie, were approaching Paris, and soldiers from all parts of the kingdom were collected at Versailles.

This assemblage of the troops placed the third estate in a most favourable position; they seemed to stand opposed to the court and the army, as the guardians of the newly found liberty of the nation.

Irritated by the impossibility of accomplishing

anything while subject to the double veto of the nobles and the clergy, the third estate, on the 17th of June, took the title of National Assembly, and proceeded seriously to accomplish its designs.

The position occupied by Necker was extremely humiliating; his advice was treated with neglect by the king, who, indeed, acted in direct opposition to his well-meaning minister. The declaration Monsieur Necker had prepared for the royal sitting of the 23rd of June was revised by the king's secret committee, who struck out of it whatever was calculated to conciliate the third, and inserted an offensive article declaring void all the proceedings of the so-called National Assembly.

Every insult that could be heaped on this powerful body was now offered to it; the deputies were turned out of their hall on the 20th of June, under pretence of placing therein the dais and carpet preparatory to the royal sitting. Thus ejected, they adjourned to the Tennis-court, where they took a solemn oath to defend their rights. The Count d'Artois interfered with their possession of the Tennis-court, by sending a message to the effect that he should play on the morrow. So the assembly was houseless, but it was rapidly increasing in strength; on Monday, the 22nd, the majority of the clergy joined it, and it met in the church of Saint Louis.

"Monsieur Necker," his daughter tells us, "was but a sentinel whom the court still kept at his post to deceive the enemy as to its manœuvres." He still struggled faithfully to preserve his master's reputation, but he must have felt that the time when his mode-

rate views could meet with acceptance was long ago gone by.

The royal sitting of the 23rd constituted one more triumph for the assembly; the king ordered the deputies to disperse, and endeavoured to revive the deliberation by orders; both the command and the effort proved vain, the king left the hall, and the assembly protracted its sitting, assuming a more decided tone of resistance than it had before taken.

News of Monsieur Necker's dismissal—which was attributed to the influence of the queen—filled Versailles with dismay; the streets were crowded with people, who shouted in his honour; the multitude still had confidence in one who had laboured to be their true friend. If he had been less scrupulous, if he would have consented to accept a triumph at the expense of his master, he might now have done so.

Five or six thousand men in the gardens and apartments of Versailles alarmed the royal family, and on the very evening of the king's sitting, Necker was again recalled. "The king and queen," Madame de Staël says, "begged him in the name of the public safety to resume his place; the queen even went so far as to say that the security of the king's person depended on Necker's continuance in the ministry. She promised Monsieur Necker that, for the future, she would follow no advice but his; such was then her determination, because the popular movement had frightened her; but as she was convinced that any limit to the royal authority was an evil, she soon fell again under the influence of those who thought as she did."

Necker consented to resume his responsibilities with the stipulation, that if Paris were surrounded by troops he should be allowed to resign.

He then passed into the great court, where he reassured the people, who received him most enthusiastically. Their emotion profoundly affected him. Whatever might be his difficulties, could he desert a simple, trusting, oppressed people, who believed he had power to save them?

He was carried in triumph from the king's residence to his own. Writing years after, under widely changed circumstances, Madame de Staël says, "the transports of the people are yet present with me, and revive in me the emotions I felt in those sunny days of youth and hope."

She goes on to tell us that her father's house would hardly contain the visitors who thronged to see him on that memorable day; a minority of the noblesse, a majority of the clergy, and the whole of the deputies of the third, waited upon Monsieur Necker, who, though he could not avoid acknowledging that the latter had the power in their hands, exhorted them to moderation, and implored them not to push their pretensions too far. Necker now proposed that the king should order the clergy to deliberate with the third; many of the curates had already joined the assembly, but the prelates hung back. Yet the secret council taking small heed of the mischief they had brought about on the 23rd of June, advised the monarch to feign acquiescence in Necker's projects until De Broglie, with his German regiments, arrived before Paris.

The purpose for which these troops were summoned

was not unknown to Monsieur Necker, although the king would have willingly concealed it from him. The royal design was to assemble at Compiègne all the members of the states who had taken no part in the innovations of the assembly; to get these members to consent hastily to the taxes and loans necessary to avert bankruptcy, and then—to dissolve the states. A poor ending truly for the revival of those privileges on which Madame de Staël had expended so much emotion.

The court, well aware that such a course would never obtain Necker's sanction, proposed to dismiss him so soon as De Broglie and his troops arrived. A proud man, and Necker was proud, must have felt bitterly the meanness of his position; but fettered by a loyalty little merited by the king, he failed to respond to the expectations of a people who confided in his intentions. Trusted by each party, he served neither, and secured the hatred of both.

"My father," says De Staël, "told us in confidence, evening after evening, that he hourly expected arrest; but added that he had imposed on himself the duty of remaining true to his post, in order that the people might not be aware that he suspected all that was going on." Necker's motive for thus remaining was his consciousness of the fact that the king had placed himself in a most dangerous position.

Necker would not desert the king, but the court persuaded the king to do without Necker, and yet such was the popular sentiment in his favour, that the royal party were afraid to dismiss him, lest there should be a riot. Why did not the king see that in

Necker's popularity lay his last chance of preserving his throne?

The Baron de Breteuil, in the secret committee, advised the king to arrest Necker when his services were no longer wanted, and thus to obviate all danger of his appealing from the decision of the court to that of the people; but Louis XVI. knew too well the nobleness of his minister's heart to consent to any such course. "Gentlemen," said the king, "I will guarantee that Monsieur Necker will strictly obey any order of mine."

In the sequel one hardly knows whether to rejoice or lament over Necker's scrupulous loyalty. He was too respectful to snatch from the king's hand the dagger wherewith the monarch was about to stab himself. That is what Necker's conduct comes to.

Madame de Staël, ever watchful over the reputation of her father, says that even the purest republicans will allow, that a minister who accepts office under a king is bound faithfully to adhere to his master. But we cannot be blinded to the fact that the people and not the king recalled Necker in 1788; he knew perfectly well that only the force of public opinion could have driven Louis XVI. to submit to his return. And surely a minister has a duty towards the nation, as well as towards the sovereign.

Part of this duty to the people he had nobly performed; he had, indeed, gone far beyond duty in his efforts to provide Paris with food. Only a week or two before the dismissal in July, he had written to Messrs. Hope, merchants in Amsterdam, instructing them to purchase corn for the supply of the French

capital. Things, however, looked so uncertain even then, that some security was necessary, and Monsieur Necker gave the Hopes a guarantee to the amount of a million francs on his own private fortune. So far as self-sacrifice went, perhaps no minister has ever equalled this conscientious and generous man.* He had measured himself accurately, nevertheless, when he told the king that so long as financial skill and morality could govern the nation, he could hold the ministry; but that, if ever the time came when Richelieu's powerful will and promptitude of action were required, he should fail.

That time was come, and he *was* to fail. But not yet.

CHAPTER XVIII.

On the eleventh of July, 1789, as Monsieur and Madame Necker were about to entertain at dinner a company of friends, the king's letter was delivered to the minister. It contained his dismissal, and requested him to leave Paris and France as quickly as possible and without any stir.

In the words "without stir," might be traced at once the weakness and cowardice of the court party: they were afraid openly to dismiss Necker on account of the people. Who has not known a stream which, when undirected threatened to overwhelm a neighbourhood, has been made available by a little skill to

* Appendix, Note D.

be the very servant of those who formerly dreaded its violence?

Such a stream might have been the popularity of Necker.

Necker, as we have seen, was just about to entertain his friends, and accordingly, after confiding to his wife the contents of the royal epistle, he sat down to dinner with the party; and no doubt conversed as usual. We should not wonder if a little unusual gaiety heightened the liveliness of his manners; for, so far as private feeling was concerned, he must have felt the removal of his responsibility a great relief.

So scrupulously obedient was he to the letter of the king's command, that not even the minister's beloved daughter was apprized of his intentions.

He was determined, if he were no longer permitted to serve his master, not to stand in the way of those who might. Madame de Staël is eloquent in her father's praises at this point of his history. A more impartial critic of his life may be permitted to believe, that not loyalty alone, but a real gladness to escape from his burden, made Necker so ready to go.

It was the habit of Monsieur Necker to drive out, with his wife, after dinner, in an open carriage; such a recreation would be scarcely practicable for a man of his rank at the present time; but in 1789, the French first minister dined at the modest hour of three o'clock; and on that long July day, made good progress towards the Flemish frontier before night.

In order the more effectually to disarm suspicion,

no travelling preparations were made. The Neckers set out in the full dress worn at dinner; Madame Necker taking her fan in her hand, as if an hour's recreation were her only object. The ever-faithful daughter thus comments on her father's obedience: "Certainly, duty engaged him to obey the king's order; but where is he, who, in obeying, would not have allowed himself to be discovered, to be brought back, in spite of himself, by the multitude? History, perhaps, offers no similar example of a man flying from power, with all the precaution usually taken to escape banishment; for it is necessary to be at once the defender of the people to be banished in this way, and the most faithful subject of the monarch, to sacrifice to him so scrupulously the homage of an entire nation."

We incline to think that Necker felt like an amateur sailor, when a storm approaches—very glad, indeed, to yield up the helm into other hands; albeit too conscientious to run away from his post without a dismissal from the proper quarter.

At the same time were dismissed Monsieur de Montmorin, a man personally attached to the king from his infancy, and Monsieur de Saint-Priest, who was distinguished for wisdom and prudence. Such, at least, is the verdict of De Staël.

With a fatuity almost beyond belief, the French troops were posted near Paris, and had constant communications with the citizens. Some of these soldiers who had been in America with Lafayette, were impregnated with democratic ideas; and such ideas, when newly introduced into a community, are sure to

spread with the rapidity of lightning. The king's only guard consisted of two regiments of Germans, who were planted in the gardens of the Tuileries, and understood no French.

On the 12th of July, Madame de Staël received by courier, a letter informing her that her parents had quitted France, in consequence of the king's order to Monsieur Necker; but their route and their destination were not revealed. At the same time, he ordered her to retire to the country, lest any homage should be paid her in Paris on his account.

But the people had anticipated him. That very morning (12th July) deputations from every quarter of the town had waited on Madame de Staël, and had spoken, in the most urgent terms, on the necessity for her father's return. "I know not," she says, "what my age and my enthusiasm might have induced me to do; but I obeyed my father's orders, and immediately withdrew to a distance of some leagues from Paris."

Directly Necker's absence was known, the streets were barricaded, and the utmost confusion took possession of Paris. The first cockade that was mounted was green, in honour of the dismissed minister, whose liveries were of that colour.* So says his daughter. Michelet tells us, that "on Sunday morning, July 12th, nobody at Paris, up to ten o'clock, had yet heard of Necker's dismissal. The first who spoke of it in the Palais Royal was called an aristocrat, and insulted. But the news is confirmed: it spreads; and so does the fury of the people." "It is impossible,"

* Green was also the colour of the Count d'Artois.

says the *Ami du Roi*, "to express the gloomy feeling of terror which pervaded every soul on hearing that report."

Michelet goes on to say: "A young man, Camille Desmoulins, rushed from the Café de Foy, leaped upon a table, drew a sword, and showed a pistol, crying, 'To arms! The Germans in the Champ de Mars will enter Paris to-night, and butcher the inhabitants. Let us hoist a cockade!' And tearing down a leaf from a tree, he stuck it in his hat; everybody followed his example, and the trees were stripped of their leaves."

It must be something very important to shut the theatres in Paris on a Sunday; Necker's absence did it; the populace were mad after him. The mob seized a wax figure of their idol, and covering it with crape, paraded it about the streets of the city. Armed men were in the procession; in their anger they had taken the first weapon that came to hand, sword, pistol, or hatchet. Thus irregularly accoutred, the procession went up the streets Richelieu, St. Martin, St. Denis, St. Honoré, to the Place Vendôme. A detachment of dragoons received them here, destroyed their image, and put them to flight. Here too the first blood of the revolution was shed; it was that of an unarmed French guard.

Several other persons were killed during the day, and at night the barriers were burnt.

On the Monday, Madame de Staël, accompanied by her husband, set out to rejoin her father and mother, whose place of retreat had been subsequently communicated to her by them. The sight of the

people's enthusiasm for Necker made his daughter appreciate beyond measure the sacrifice he had made in leaving Paris as he had done. So profoundly penetrated was she with the sentiment of love and respect, that on arriving at the inn where her parents awaited her coming, she fell on her knees before her father, kissed his hand, and bathed it with her tears.

She found Madame Necker in indifferent health; both that lady and her husband still wore the dinner-dress in which they had left Paris, and this inconvenient apparel, added to the heat of the weather, the dust of the roads, and a great deal of natural anxiety, had incommoded them very considerably.

The arrival of his daughter, full of enthusiasm, love, and filial loyalty, perhaps rekindled the minister's desire of being useful; his ambition for anything higher, had he ever possessed it, was gone for ever.

There is one circumstance of Necker's journey which deserves mention. We have recorded that, early in July he had given to Messrs. Hope a claim upon his private estate, in guarantee of payment for certain purchases of corn which he commissioned those merchants to effect. Arrived in Brussels, he felt desirous that the report of his exile should occasion no delay in the relief of starving Paris: he therefore wrote afresh to Amsterdam, confirming the offer of the security he had given. France was bankrupt, and her chief city blockaded by famine, when this heretic exile whom she had denied a seat at her council, thus consecrated to her service the legitimate fruits of his industry.

Surely there is a touch of Roman grandeur in this one act.

What would have been easier than to excite the passions of the people in his favour by making these supplies of corn dependent on his continuance in office? Right or wrong, a hungry people will support the man who brings them food. But such was not Necker's mode of action.

"O my country! O my countrymen!" exclaims Madame de Staël, in narrating this story of generosity; "it was thus my father served you!"

He had set out with such precautions against discovery, that he carried no passport; at Valenciennes the authorities refused to let him proceed, until he displayed the king's letter, which proved passport enough. But the official sighed bitterly as he read the royal missive, and shook his head as he glanced from the living Necker before him, to a portrait of the minister which the *commandant* had suspended in honour of the popular idol. At Valenciennes, as at Paris, the departure of Necker meant tyranny, insult, rebellion.

In consequence of Madame Necker's ill-health, she and her daughter went only slowly towards Switzerland. Monsieur Necker and his son-in-law hurried on to prepare Coppet for their reception. But they were not to reach Coppet this time. At Frankfort the ladies were overtaken by the messenger of the king, Monsieur de St. Léon, who brought letters from his master, and from the national assembly, containing earnest requests for Necker's return.

An extract from a letter written by Monsieur Necker to his brother, and bearing date 24th of July, 1789, will best explain his real feelings on an occasion so flattering to vanity. After detailing the circum-

stances of Monsieur de St. Léon's arrival he thus continues:—

"These occurrences have rendered me miserable. I was just touching the port, and took pleasure in the prospect; but this harbour would have had neither peace nor tranquillity for me if I had had to charge myself with cowardice, or if people could have said and thought such and such misfortunes happened because I would not prevent them. Therefore I return to France—the victim of the esteem wherewith the nation honours me. Madame Necker is even more sorry than I am, and our change of plans is an act of self-denial for both of us. Ah, Coppet! Coppet! I shall soon, perhaps, have greater reason to regret thee! But one must submit to the laws of necessity, and follow the leadings of an incomprehensible destiny. In France all is in movement, there has just been a scene of disorder and open sedition at Strasbourg. It seems to me that I am flinging myself again into the chasm."

The king and the national assembly were equally anxious to have him back; and, from the period of his return, he was a political scape-goat, upon whose back the failings of both parties were laid. The assembly had decreed, on Monday, the 13th of July, "that Monsieur Necker bore with him the regret of the nation;" and this regret had so manifested itself, that the king was eager to retrace his steps, and reinstate the popular minister.

On the 14th of July, the mob had taken the Bastille, that cruel prison, "the stronghold of despotism," the confidant of a thousand frightful secrets. The

revolutionary party was not as yet divided into factions, and the taking of the Bastille wears something like the dignity of a national act.

If the revolution were to be quelled, it was now certainly time to set about the work; for Paris, almost as by miracle, had raised an army of a hundred thousand men.

As Necker, on his return, travelled towards Paris, he visited at Bâle Madame de Polignac, whom he had left high in favour at Versailles. This beautiful woman, the friend of Marie Antoinette, had become notorious as an intriguing adviser of that unhappy queen, and was now an exile, alone and wretched. Monsieur Necker, whose political course she had opposed with all her might, could not forbear to offer her sympathy and kindness. Indeed, whatever were his mistakes as a minister, he well deserves to wear eternal laurels for his magnanimity and generosity. To be unhappy was to have a claim upon him, no matter to what party one belonged; and forbearance to his enemies seems to have been so natural to this man, that we can scarcely give him credit for it as a Christian virtue.

His road from Bâle to Paris was beset by members of the aristocracy who were flying from Paris in all directions. He wrote letters innumerable to ensure the safety of these alarmed fugitives, who placed more confidence in his handwriting than in the passports they had obtained in the capital.

What had royalty gained by all her sacrifices of the nation to the aristocracy? At least one would expect, in return, the devotion of the privileged class

towards the monarch. Alas! at the first symptom of danger, they decamped, leaving the poor king to bear the onus of the public discontent.

Madame de Staël was in a perpetual excitement of pleasure during the journey to Paris. The women in the fields—those fields this year so terribly barren—stopped their labour, and knelt, as the carriage of the returning minister rolled by. In the towns, the chiefest of the citizens contended who should play postilion for him. Everywhere the people brought their tribute of applause, and their prayer for the future. Oh! had there been but a William III. to guide the issues of this revolution, and to preserve the people in their faith and innocence!

Who can tell on what accidents (as we term them) the unfoldings of history depend? Two or three good harvests, and a wife who would have incited the immobile, passive king in favour of concession, and where would have been the revolution? That fearful tragedy was born of tyranny and hunger.

CHAPTER XIX.

When we think of that awful scaffold whereon died heroically Louis XVI., and Marie Antoinette, all the best tendencies of our nature go to make us ultra-royalists; yet pity must not cause us to forget principles. If a death of heroism wiped out a life of crime or error, many a man, but ignoble company for royalty, might share the royal martyrs' fame. The death of these unhappy princes no more excused the

errors of monarchy, than the expiring tortures of an Indian chief atone for the cruelties himself has exercised. We may dispute the validity of the proceedings that tried them, and contend that their death was compassed by illegal means. Be it so: let us not, however, by the solemn shadow of that awful event, be prejudiced against the true cause of human right and liberty.

It is somewhat astonishing that the country, of all countries the most careful to exclude females from the succession to the throne, should have been more largely, and perhaps fatally, under female influence than any other. Mistress, wife, or mother, over and over again has her spell prevailed; now it is Louise of Savoy who intercepts the pay of the troops in Italy, and drives the Constable de Bourbon to take arms against his sovereign; now it is Madame de Maintenon who procures the revocation of the edict of Nantes; now it is Joan of Arc restoring the crown to Charles VII.; now it is the lovely Théroigne de Méricourt inciting the people to take the crown from Louis XVI. As regents, Anne, daughter to Louis VIII., Catherine de Medicis, Mary, of the same house, and Anne of Austria, amply vindicated the right of their sex to power,—if a capacity for cruelty and intrigue, or for prudence and management, can accomplish such vindication.

The age of Louis XVI., though the virtues of the king prevented such a kind of influence as had held in durance more than one of his predecessors, yields no exception to the fact that female intrigue was powerful at court. The queen was a true

sovereign of the old school; having the courage of a hero, and the ignorance of a child. Her nature was not an unkindly or an unfaithful one; she loved her family, she loved her friends, and she was true to her own sympathies. But she had had the unhappiness to be educated in all the absurdities of etiquette: between her and the people lay a great gulf. Absolute power she considered an indispensable condition for a ruler, though she would not have wished to see it cruelly exercised. Princes of this class can never understand that the people possess far too large a stake in the government to leave all to that "happy accident"—a goodnatured king. Besides, there is in man a pride which disdains to take as alms, what ought to be free to him of right. This too she could not understand.

"The right divine to govern wrong" was the only right she fully believed in.

Little did the courtly Metastasio anticipate the fate which lay before the baby archduchess when he assured her imperial mother that, although Count Dietrichstein had lost a wager by the birth of a princess, the whole world had gained, if the report of her resemblance to Maria Theresa were true. And when he penned mellifluous verses "to be sung by the archduchesses Carolina and Antonia, on the occasion of their august mother's birthday," he might have put a sad song into the mouth of the five-year-old Antonia, could he have looked forward some few years.

Poor little Antonia! Flattered and knelt to, and beset by every temptation to error, who can wonder that she believed in the monstrous falsehood then called a royal

education? Who can remember her eager movement to raise the little Mozart when he had fallen on the ground, without feeling that, had she possessed different means of training, she might have extended her sympathy beyond one little musician on the floor, to thousands of her fellow-creatures, down-pressed and trodden under feet?

But when a child is taught from the cradle that his safety is in "things as they are," who shall blame him for being, when he attains his manhood, averse to change and progress?*

Nor was the influence of woman ended with Marie Antoinette and her partisans: the revolutionary side too, had its heroines.

We have mentioned incidentally the name of Théroigne de Méricourt, the heroine of Liège. Who that has seen her portrait can ever forget the chivalrous bearing of this womanly knight? Who fail to put a generous interpretation on the fire of those fine fresh eyes? That gallant little figure with her rippling dusky hair, her round youthful form, her plumed hat, riding-dress, and delicate hand clasping the sword, seems born to inspire patriots.

Then there was also the beautiful flower-girl, Louison, who penetrated to the royal presence; and overcome by the stress of emotion could utter only one word—"Bread!" A terrible prayer. Besides these there were female revolutionists whose names cannot be numbered; it was the women of Paris, as we shall see, who brought the king from Versailles to the capital on the 6th October. Merely political causes would

* Appendix, Note E.

not thus have inspired women, but Louison's petition for bread had been preferred by their suffering little children to these women of Paris; and they could answer the prayer only by tears.

These poor women we may imagine were among the warmest of Monsieur Necker's partisans: they knew the efforts he had made to supply Paris with food. During his short absence, too, the story of his conduct to the Hopes would get about, and where is the woman who does not admire a man who makes a sacrifice to give her children bread? No wonder the women knelt in the scorched and barren fields as the wheels of the bread-giver carried him along the road.

CHAPTER XX.

MADAME DE STAEL has, in the following words, given us an epitome of her father's character:—"His mind had an incapacity for action, he was susceptible of uncertainty; he calculated on all chances, and never shunned the consideration of a possible inconvenience; but when the idea of a duty was presented to him, all the prudential powers of reason were forgotten in the presence of a superior law; and whatever might be the consequences of a resolution that virtue imposed upon him, in such a circumstance, and then only, he showed no hesitation."

The Necker family were yet ten leagues from Paris, when their carriage was stopped by the friends of the Baron de Besenval, an old man who had been

in command of one of the German regiments, and who was now a prisoner of the people, and on his way to Paris by order of the commune of that city. The worst consequences were to be apprehended if he fell into the hands of his implacable enemies at such a moment.

Monsieur Necker, who, it will be remembered, had strenuously opposed the hiring of these foreign troops, was asked to write to the authorities who were conducting Besenval to the capital, and to suspend, on his sole responsibility, the orders of the commune of Paris. This was just one of those cases of duty in which he knew nothing like irresolution; he immediately penned on his knees, as he sat in his carriage, a letter to Besenval's conductors, running this bold risk for the sake of a man who had been acting in direct opposition to his advice. But his behaviour to Besenval and the aristocrats told against him in the minds of the people. They were too angry to admire mercy just now.

On the 4th of August, the day after his return to Paris, Necker judged it fit to present himself at the Hôtel de Ville, and explain his conduct regarding Besenval. So well did he plead the cause of mercy and forbearance, that a general amnesty was conceded on the part of a large crowd who were within reach of his eloquence. Thus powerful was the living voice in a country where public speaking had been but little known.

The display of affection towards the minister seemed to grow with every word he uttered: he had but to speak, they agreed to all he asked. On his

right hand stood Madame Necker, who had so often exerted herself to relieve the want and crime of Paris. She, too, was a friend of the people. The history of her family, despoiled of their all by the revocation of the edict of Nantes, gave her a special interest in questions of toleration and reform.

On the left hand of the minister stood his daughter, a young woman bright with the energy of youth, and inspired with genius. Cheer as you may, O Paris, her heart goes beyond you in love for Monsieur Necker; his very failures call forth fresh tenderness on her part; she is kinder to his faults than you to his successes!

"It is given to very few women," says De Staël, speaking of the applause that greeted her father on this occasion, "to hear the names of those they love thus joyfully proclaimed."

This general verdict in Necker's favour, reversing the late ungrateful decision of the court, had such an effect upon her that she fainted with delight.

She looks back afterwards, in years of lonely exile, to the joys of these happy days—so soon, alas! to end in woe and terror.

Monsieur Necker had a Damocles' sword suspended above him in the fact of the frightful famine which was gradually taking possession of Paris. Every day there were thousands to feed and no bread to give them. His anxieties on this account brought on a malady which was subsequently the cause of his death.

Whatever *prestige* had been created in his favour by his liberal principles was soon destroyed; Mirabeau

and Barnave opposed the amnesty; they contended that Paris had no right to act for the nation—if even the city had chosen to decide with Necker; but the crowd assembled about the Hôtel de Ville on the 4th of August did not represent the capital. The amnesty was decided to be an informal thing, and Mirabeau consulted the sections of Paris, and procured its abrogation.

Necker's exertions on behalf of the emigrants whom he had assisted on his road, were also construed into something hostile to the popular cause; neither the people whom he had served, nor the king whom he now tried to serve, placed confidence in him. Necker, like his master, was made for times of peace. In England, in this century, he might have been an excellent statesman; but a man of sterner stuff was wanting to do the work of France in 1789. The times cried out for a Cromwell, but none came. Lafayette, to whom some applied the name, was not equal to the representation of the character. Opportunities were rife, but men as well as opportunities are wanting to build up a system of liberty.

Sir Walter Scott, whom none can suspect of democratic prejudices, gives Necker very great credit as a financier, and asserts that if his system of reform had been allowed a few years for its development, the great crash might have been avoided. He also says that the expectations of the people in August, 1789, were such as no mere financier, however great, could meet.

For a minister of reform none can deny that Necker had been unusually tender in dealing with the privileged classes: he had wished to induce them to

resign their unjust exemptions, and thus to secure a place in the affections and regard of the people. But his proposals were most distasteful to the great body of those orders, and although they gave promises, more or less vague, to the effect that all necessary sacrifices should be made, they delayed the accomplishment of their undertaking.

The assembly, however, daily gaining in power, soon began to decide the important questions of the day without particular reference to the feelings of the interested parties. On the 4th of August the feudal *régime* was abolished; two days after, the estates of the clergy were claimed for the people; and on the 11th, tithes were suppressed.

It is evident that at this time it was the assembly, not the king, that ruled the nation. As a matter of form, however, his adoption of the resolutions was required. But the clergy violently opposed the attack upon their property, and the king sided with them. Necker would have had the king sincerely adopt the Revolution, and save from the wreck all that was worthy to form part of the new constitution; but the all-powerful influence of the queen went the other way.

"I conclude," says Machiavel (as quoted by Guizot), "that a prince who has the love of his people need take little heed of conspiracies; but if the people be his enemy, let him fear everything and every citizen."

Now the conspiracies up to August, 1789, were not against the king, or against monarchy; but simply against the monstrous injustices of the old *régime*. Even Robespierre, if his private letters tell his real

mind, was at that time a monarchist. Had Louis XVI. trusted himself to the love of his people, and mistrusted the privileged orders, who proved by their subsequent conduct how little they truly cared for the master who had so deferred to them, he might have been, as the Count d'Artois said he ought, the founder and leader of the Revolution. But the king behaved as if his subjects were his enemies, before they had a thought of being so.

Louis's last chance—the popularity of Necker—was soon thrown to the winds. Mirabeau, after the affair of the amnesty, was constantly seeking to undermine the reputation of the people's idol, and he too soon succeeded. Marat, in his paper *L'Ami du Peuple*, published the most atrocious libels against Necker; the title of one of the reproaches hurled at him sufficiently proves its spirit—"The Giant become a Dwarf." This name shows how great were the expectations of the public on Necker's return, and how signally they were disappointed.

With or without Necker, the assembly had realised some of his dearest projects. "The Declaration of the Rights of Man" insisted not on toleration, which implies a favour granted, but on the equality of all sects. Religious vows might still be voluntarily taken, but the state no longer insisted on their perfectional power to bind the persons who had entered monasteries. This gave a chance of retrieving their steps to those unhappy creatures who regretted the world outside the convent walls.

Trial by jury was established, and the odious *lettres de cachet* abolished. The absurd feudal laws too,

insulting to the common sense of human nature, were for ever abrogated. By those laws, a hundred thousand nobles had pleaded exemption from the taxes. By those same laws, a noble was excused from giving any explanation of an insult offered to a citizen, or to a soldier of the third estate, "because these latter were considered to belong to another race."

"No officers could be chosen from the third, *excepting in the artillery and engineering departments, which required more education and intelligence than fell to the lot of the provincial nobles.*"

This sentence in italics contains in itself part of the secret of the Revolution. It is evident that feudality can only hold its own while the lord is in all things superior to his vassal. The system had its value and its time, but both were now over. Some of the nobles had the generosity to own, that they could not blame the people for sacking the castles with a view to find and burn the feudal archives. And the clergy were not indisposed to sacrifice the nobles; but when the nobles returned the compliment, the ecclesiastical order was provoked beyond measure.

Poor Monsieur Necker meantime was eagerly persuading the king to accede to the wishes of the nation; and Madame de Staël, interested in the novel aspect of society, was listening to the speeches of the deputies, admiring the eloquence of Mirabeau, though she doubted his sincerity, and beginning to see that the victory of the Revolution must sacrifice not only the privileged orders, but her dear father—the citizen-minister, the friend and advocate of liberty.

To increase the confusion of both king and assembly,

the people of Paris, infuriated by hunger, began to parade the streets of the city, demanding bread; trade was at a standstill; and the sufferings of the lower orders will scarcely bear description. In this strait, it began to be rumoured that the supplies of grain and flour were intercepted by the agents of the royal authority: the Archbishop of Paris was accused by name of having bribed a miller not to grind. A civil war was dreaded, and in order to avoid that possibility, it was proposed to fetch the king to Paris, and to force him to accept the constitution. The populace either feared, or pretended to fear, that the court would carry him off. As for himself, he was almost passive. Madame de Staël very truly says, that "royalty is not like the old Roman tragedies, where one actor speaks, while another performs for him all the gestures proper to his part;" in his present difficulty, none but the king could help the king.

Victor Hugo says touchingly, "*Louis XV. fut le coupable, Louis XVI. fut le puni;*" and it was indeed too true. One cannot but feel deeply for the unhappy monarch, as we see him pacing his chamber at Versailles, and frequently turning to gaze on the picture of Charles I. The dreamy sadness of those strange melancholy eyes, which Vandyck so well knew how to paint, must have struck like a prophecy on the vision of the irresolute king. Yet Charles was represented in the field—Louis never himself headed the troops against his subjects. He was too kindly perhaps to take such a step, if not too irresolute. Had the virtues of a martyr been less natural to him, the Revolution of 1789 might have had a far different result.

CHAPTER XXI.

On the morning of the 5th of October, Madame de Staël was informed that the people were marching towards Versailles, and as her father and mother were established there, her anxiety on their account induced her to follow her parents. She accordingly set out, but not by the ordinary road, lest she should fall in with the crowd; she went, probably, through the Bois de Boulogne, and after a quiet drive reached Versailles without perceiving anything unusual.

The king had been hunting, and the men who had accompanied him were lingering about the gates of the château; there was nothing remarkable in this, but she soon learned that the king had been summoned from his pleasure to listen to Mounier, the president of the assembly, who, attended by a crowd of women, had come from Paris to Versailles, in a pouring rain, to ask the king's signature to the Declaration of Rights, and other acts of the assembly.

Monsieur Necker hurried to the château as soon as the evil news reached him, and his wife, every instant more alarmed by the threatening news from Paris, went into the antechamber next the king's cabinet, in order to be able to follow her husband if any necessity for leaving Versailles should arise. Madame de Staël followed her mother, and found

the antechamber filled with persons, attracted thither by very various motives.

There was much discussion in this saloon as to the part the king would play. Would he, thus besieged in his palace, leave Versailles altogether? Ever and anon there were rumours of the disturbances going on without. The Flemish regiment had been ordered to fire on the people, but had been won over by the unstudied eloquence of Théroigne de Méricourt, and had coalesced with the National Guard of Versailles, so far, at any rate, as to give these latter part of their cartridges.

An effort on the part of the royal family was made to leave the palace. Five carriages approached the iron gates in train for departure; the Guards shut the gates which the Swiss troops had opened. It was asserted that her majesty was going to Trianon. The guard replied that it would be dangerous for her majesty to leave the château. So the carriages withdrew; the king felt himself a prisoner. His people had planted cannon about his gates, and were ready to fire them on the slightest provocation. A woman had ridden on one piece, from Paris to Versailles, with a lighted match in her hand.

The crowd had been kept outside the château in the rain, from three o'clock until eight; Mounier, the president of the assembly, and twelve only of the women had been allowed to enter. Among them was Louison de Chabry, the flower-girl, who was touched by the kindness of the king, and went out crying "*Vive le Roi!*" For this the women outside were disposed to hang her, but she escaped, and returned to the

royal presence to redeem her character by obtaining a written order for corn. Mounier was kept waiting for his answer: the king was still unwilling to sign the Declaration of Rights.

In the evening, the waiting party in the antechamber were startled by the apparition of a young man, dressed like one of the lower orders, and pale with fear. This was Monsieur de Chinon, who had joined the procession of a fresh crowd just arrived from Paris, and who had thus disguised himself in order to travel with safety.

He told an awful tale. An innumerable crowd of women and children, armed with pikes and scythes, were collecting about Versailles from every quarter. He had heard the most awful language, the most deadly threats. The appearance of this poor young Duke de Richelieu, as he related these horrors, was so ghastly, that every one shared his alarm.

The king, no doubt, was extremely anxious to leave Versailles, but Necker advised him on several accounts not to make the attempt. The minister thought that the only way of keeping any vestige of authority, was to assume its entire possession. Any effort at escape would let the people know at once how completely the king was their prisoner. For this conduct Necker has been severely blamed by the aristocratic party; they accuse him of having brought about the king's death. But with all the inconsistence of grief and passion, they make a similar charge against every minister who aided in procuring the slightest measure of reform. The emigrant clergy attributed the misfortunes of Paris, no doubt, to the suppression

of the tithes. There are never wanting those who interpret the events permitted by Providence, after a fashion which goes to show that Heaven prospers the world in the same degree as the world prospers themselves.

The impossibility of escape was probably the chief reason why Necker deprecated the attempt; an unsuccessful effort to get away must be manifestly hurtful to the royal cause.

Frightened by the report of the Duke de Richelieu, at ten o'clock, the king unwillingly signed the Declaration of Rights. Mounier departed to carry his answer to the assembly. He found the hall filled with women clamouring for bread. Some of these poor creatures had not eaten for thirty hours. Mounier ordered in provisions, and they greedily assuaged their hunger, enquiring if the king's signature to the Declaration would provide Paris with food.

Lafayette, with his National Guards, who were sworn to defend the law and the king, arrived that evening at Versailles, and the outer posts of the castle were entrusted to his care, the Body-guard defending the interior.

The crowd had dispersed, many had gone to Paris with the Declaration of Rights, and a vast number to the assembly. When at three in the morning the deputies broke up, the people found shelter in the churches and wherever else they could.

Madame de Staël passed the night in her parents' residence, at Versailles.

Very early in the morning of the 6th, she was aroused by the entrance of an old lady, a stranger to

her. The venerable woman was overcome with terror, and begged for refuge. She announced herself as Madame de Choiseul Gouffier.

The refugee brought heart-rending news. In spite of Lafayette's National Guard (the old *régime* of course assert the connivance of the marquis), one entrance to the château had escaped notice on the part of all but some assassins, who found an easy ingress, and had penetrated even to the chamber of the queen, first murdering the guards at her door.

Awakened by the cries of her unhappy servants, Marie Antoinette had managed to save her life by escaping through a secret door into her husband's apartment.

Almost at the same time Madame de Staël learned that her father was already at the château, and that her mother intended to follow him. She dressed hastily, and joined Madame Necker.

The apartments inhabited by the minister at Versailles, were separated by a long corridor from those in the occupation of the royal family. Crossing this corridor, Madame de Staël and her mother heard gunshots from the courts about the château; and in one place the floor was stained with recent marks of blood. This morning gave a frightful premonition of what the Revolution really was to be.

Lafayette had prevented the people from attacking the Body-guards: and these latter, penetrated with gratitude, were embracing the National Guards, and exchanging their badges for the tricoloured cockade, the distinctive mark of the revolutionary party. The colours, red and blue, were the badge of the city of

Paris; but as they also composed that of the Orleans family, white, the ancient colour of France, had been added. The Body-guards were now lustily calling, "*Vive Lafayette!*"

The populace, awakened long since from their slumbers on the doorsteps and in the church-porches, were shouting clamorously, that the king and the royal family must go with them to Paris. The king sent a message of consent; and shouts of joy, and the firing of numerous guns announced the ecstasy of the mob.

Madame de Staël and her mother finally reached the saloon; and the queen, too, entered shortly afterward. Her lovely hair was in disorder, and her face very pale; but she looked firm and dignified—the true daughter of Maria Theresa.

The people shouted for her to come out upon the balcony, which overlooked the Court of Marble. This court was filled with men. An innumerable array of firearms seemed ominously pointing towards her. Madame de Staël says, her countenance, for a moment, betrayed a horrible fear; then, inspired by the divine maternal impulse, she caught her children by the hand and presented herself to the crowd. Lafayette, the noble Lafayette, attempted to influence the assembled Parisians in the queen's favour; he came with her on the balcony, and kissed her hand.

At one o'clock the royal family quitted Versailles, that monument of the splendour of Louis XIV. The queen said to Madame Necker, before they set out, "They will force us to go to Paris—the king and myself—and will carry on their pikes the heads of our murdered guards." This was literally accom-

plished. A poor, half-crazy creature, of a ferocious appearance, who was accustomed to earn his bread by playing model for the artists at the Academy, had actually severed the heads of the dead guards from their trunks; and, of course, in a multitude excited to the pitch of madness, there were not wanting those who were proud to be entrusted with these ghastly tokens of victory.

So they went to Paris: the royal family as prisoners: the rabble hooted, swore, and shouted; the rain fell in torrents, and the carriage of the king could proceed only at a walking pace.

Monsieur Necker and his family, whether by design or accident, waited until later in the day, and then proceeded to the capital by the road through the Bois de Boulogne. By this same Bois de Boulogne Madame de Staël and her father had journeyed to Versailles, at the period of his recall, in 1788. She remembered, no doubt, how the soft, still moonlight had encircled them on that hopeful night; resembling in its brightness and calmness the smile of heaven. Did she remember how her father had checked her raptures, by assuring her that it was now too late? Did she remember his mournful exclamation, "Oh, had they but given me the seventeen months of the Archbishop of Sens!"

The day had cleared before the Neckers left Versailles on the 6th of October; scarcely a breeze stirred the leaves of the trees in the forest; those glorious trees just reddening into the golden glow of autumn; the sun was bright, and the peace and beauty of nature strangely contrasted with the worn

and troubled spirits of our family of travellers. "How often," says Madame de Staël, "in the course of our life, is this contrast repeated between the serenity of nature and the sufferings imposed by man!"

The king was conducted to the Hôtel de Ville, whither the queen accompanied him. "I come with pleasure to my good city of Paris," said Louis to the mayor. "And with confidence," added the queen; a falsehood for which one could hardly blame her had it been less transparent. But it shows a right royal spirit.

The next day Marie Antoinette received at the Tuileries the diplomatic circle, and the persons who composed her court. This palace, uninhabited by royalty for more than a century, was in a state quite unfit for occupation. In the queen's reception-room she had been obliged to place two little beds for her children, so few were the habitable apartments. Touching was it to hear this proud daughter of kings apologise to her guests for the rude accommodation at her command; "you know," she said, tearfully, "I did not expect to come here."

One can easily believe that her subjects could answer her only by tears.

The nation had now put itself in a false position; a state can derive no real good from the wanton and unnecessary humiliation of its chief.

By the side of the queen stood the king's young sister, Madame Elizabeth, who had early manifested a desire to take the vows, but had been unable to obtain the consent of her family to a step unusual for a princess of her rank. On this sad 7th of October,

she seemed agitated when she looked towards her august brother and sister, but otherwise displayed a demeanour perfectly calm.

When this poor princess completed her martyrdom, good Catholics tell us gravely that a scent, as of roses, filled all the neighbourhood of the guillotine. "Nothing uncommon," says Madame de Genlis, quite seriously—"nothing uncommon at the death of a saint."

Protestant incredulity may doubt the truth of this pretty legend, but may well ask whether the freedom of a great nation needed to be baptised in the blood of women and children?

O France! bitter has been the fruit of that cruel and unjust seed-time.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE king was now to all intents and purposes a prisoner in his own capital; though Necker, from the same motive which prompted him to oppose the abandonment of Versailles, refused to acknowledge this fact in any of the public documents he issued. He still tried to act as though the king were master; but, forced in the end to yield, he finally left Paris on the 8th of September, 1790. There had been latterly, indeed, no chance for a moderate minister, and such Necker was, in spite of the calumnies of the old *régime*, who call him by all the names an old Roman might hurl at Catiline.

Before he left, he entered a protest against the immense issue of paper-money, whereby the people

hoped to escape some of their difficulties. He predicted that this system would work the ruin of the public creditors, but did not withdraw his own two millions of francs from the treasury.

How had a year changed his situation! His name, owing partly to his inability to meet the crisis of affairs, partly to his moderation and faithfulness to the king, and still more to the shameless libels of his enemies, was as universally detested as it had been respected. Imitation is a powerful habit in France, and when a man there has one enemy, he may be certain that ere long it will be the mode to hate him, if his foe be a man of any note. Sadly journeying towards Coppet by Bâle, he was arrested at Arcis-sur-Aube, and at Vesoul threatened with death. An order from the assembly, however, procured his release; and so he passed along the road which fifteen months before had been to him such a scene of triumph. The libels had penetrated into every corner of France; everywhere he found himself hated.

One of the greatest rulers England ever had, when congratulated on the popular shouts which followed some victory, said wisely and sadly, "They would shout just as loudly were I hanged to-morrow."

The French populace deserved no better character. They were as eager to pull down their idol as they had been to set him up. He, poor man, had never been over-elated by prosperity, or now he must have lost his reason. Cut to the heart, but grieving quite as much for France and the king as for himself, he retraced his path to reflect, in long years of retirement and solitude, over the successes and failures of a

wrecked public life. Madame Necker pressed him to depart. She feared lest his life, which had been threatened, might be attacked; for his house was beset by his enemies. Madame de Staël, who so eagerly participated in all the pleasures of her father's prosperity, was infinitely afflicted by his reverses; not only her father's loss of popularity grieved her, but she feared lest the cause of liberty, so long identified with his name, might suffer for his failures.

She had, however, just now, an alleviation to her sorrow, which might well absorb most of her thoughts. On the 31st of August, 1790, one of the two children who survived her was born, and a heart so impulsive as hers needed little else to fill it, for some time at least. Her illness prevented her accompanying Monsieur Necker into Switzerland, and she awaited news of him with intense anxiety. Her hopes of legitimate and solid liberty were all scattered as a fresh breeze scatters the loose-hanging autumn leaves; her desire for a French parliament after the English fashion was further than ever from realisation; the bright period of her youth had terminated, and her life henceforth was to be a long struggle against despotism, in one form or other. There was, indeed, a brief space of quiet at the close; as, when a morning of gladness and promise is succeeded by a stormy day, the clouds just part to leave the sunset room.

On her recovery she proceeded to Coppet, where she found her dear father melancholy, but resigned. She walked with him in the shadow of the trees there; and in those gardens, where her spirit and his may yet be fancied to linger, many were the grave,

earnest, sorrowful, and religious conversations they held together. Monsieur Necker's mind, but for his Christian faith, would have been morbidly affected by the loss of public esteem, for no man ever prized reputation higher than he. He was ready, too, to blame himself almost as severely as his enemies blamed him, and his excessive conscientiousness gave them always plenty of means to wound him.

Meantime his beloved daughter was his advocate with himself, and her post was no sinecure; when she had restored his peace for a space, some fresh thought of self-reproach found a new commencement for her labours. Grateful to the fallen minister must have been the unvarying faith of this companion of his soul; whoever libelled him, whoever hated him, this one liberal enthusiastic creature clung to him and to the dogmas of his political creed with unvarying tenacity.

No man was ever so beloved in his family, without being a really good man. His daughter, and after her, her children, speak of him in the same eloquent strains, as their friend, their guide, their playfellow. His active political life was over; his pen he employed in the preparation of various works at different intervals, most of them bearing on the public affairs of France; but Prospero's books were destroyed, and nobody cared much what the retired minister thought about France and her fortunes—he was a magician no longer. Like Cinderella at the fatal stroke of midnight, so had the French people seen him when the hour of the Revolution smote the public ear. He was no longer to them a great financier, a good minister,

a commander of plenty; but a simple Genevese banker, who had been pushed into a position for which he was unfit.

To speak very gravely, Paris is not the only city where the cry of "Hallelujah!" has been changed for that of "Crucify him!"

Let no man reckon on the continuance of public favour, it is as fickle as the wind. If it come, well—if not, let us be great without it. Not all of happiness is shut up in a coach-and-six, and a place at court.

There is, however, a grief admissible in Necker's circumstances, which we may reasonably suppose him to have indulged. The majority of mankind are ruled—the minority rule. Even the minority, born with talents of state-craft, are infinitely more useful after a practical initiation into the difficulties of administration, than when, glowing with ardour, they first undertake their responsible task. And in the course of time these occupations of office, these daily cares for others, grow dear; to say nothing of the gratification which any minister, not dead to every generous feeling, must experience at being trusted by his fellow-citizens. The perpetual flow of business, the constant necessity for action, are cruelly missed when circumstances occur to break the chains of habit; or, if a man be grateful for the first days of leisure, and find pleasure in the change, this feeling dies out with the fatigue that gave it birth; and qualities trained to, and rejoicing in exertion, are tormenting companions in idleness and solitude. It is thus with all of us. Persons accustomed to literary pursuits, for instance, may hail the dawn of a holiday; but we suppose the pleasure of again using the pen infinitely transcends that

of laying it aside. To wear out—not to rust out—is the ambition of most natures. Necker had been a busy man all his life, and felt the necessity for action and utterance as keenly as any one, and the blankness of an existence all leisure must have spread before him sadly.

The entire structure of his political credit too, had fallen in with no common crash. We can imagine that

> "More true joy Marcellus exiled feels,
> Than Cæsar with a senate at his heels."

But Necker had not the unwavering faith in himself and his doings, in the wisdom and justice of his course, which makes exile and even death, more than endurable. He was tormented by ceaseless questionings within; so long as he succeeded he could be tolerably satisfied he was right; but the first little unforeseen misfortune raised a host of dangers and doubts which he had not force to dissipate.

CHAPTER XXIII.

We need not pursue at length the melancholy story of the captive King of France; it is well known, and, besides, has little connexion with the thread of this narrative.

Of the melancholy evolvement of that sad history, Madame de Staël was an attentive and sympathising observer. She had never been a favourite at court, and the treatment her father had too often received at the hands of his sovereign might not very unreasonably be remembered with some little asperity.

But the nobleness of her disposition rendered such feelings impossible; and, even had she indulged them in the time of the royal prosperity, the first frown of adversity would have disarmed her. There was that gentle heroism in Madame de Staël, which marks the great nature: she never hit her enemy while he was on the ground.

Madame de Staël attributes the fall of the throne to the proposed interference of the foreign powers, who designed to reseat Louis XVI. on the throne of his fathers, and to restore the ancient order of things. This idea justly revolted all France, excepting the absolute monarchists. The project of foreign intervention was humiliating to the pride of the nation, and she began to assume a defensive attitude.

Meantime the fallen king was made to grace every triumph of his foes. The 5th and 6th of October were the inauguration of the reign of the Jacobins—the extreme revolutionary party; and after this commenced, peace and order were wild and impossible dreams. There had been a party friendly to liberty, and also friendly to monarchy; had this section and the absolutists been able to coalesce, there was a time when reconciliation was possible, but that time had long ago passed by. And the men of both opinions, startled by the abhorrent aspect which society was fast assuming, fled, as from a plague-stricken city. Mounier and Lally thus deserted the assembly, and Mirabeau's death left a blank which was never filled. Friend after friend (for even Mirabeau had come to be so counted) fell away from the ranks of the king, and his enemies grew more and more insolent.

On the 14th of July, 1792, the anniversary of the

Revolution was celebrated with great pomp in the Champ de Mars. The king and queen were present. "I shall never forget," says the kind-hearted Madame de Staël, "I shall never forget the expression of the queen's face; her eyes were drowned in tears; the splendour of her dress, and the dignity of her bearing contrasted strangely with the Body-guard which surrounded her. A few National Guards separated her from the populace. The armed men who were gathered together about the royal pair, had the air of being assembled rather for a riot than for a holiday. The king went on foot from the tent under which he had been, to the altar raised at the extremity of the Champ de Mars. There he was to swear, for the second time, fidelity to a constitution destined to crush his throne. Only a few children cheered him. No character but that of a martyr—and he always preserved it—could have borne so meekly such a situation. His manner of walking, his features, had something particular about them; on other occasions one might wish him to possess more grandeur, but to be just what he was, in such a circumstance, was to be sublime.

"I followed with my eye, his powdered head in the midst of the crowd; his coat, too, embroidered as of old, stood out against the costume of the common people, who pressed him on all sides. When he mounted the steps of the altar, he seemed like a victim voluntarily going to the sacrifice. He came down again, and passing once more through the disordered ranks, he sat down by the queen and his children. After this day, the people saw him no more until they saw him on the scaffold."

La Fayette, a moderate monarchist, was faithful to his oath of fidelity, and offered the king protection under his troops at Compiègne; but the few courtiers who yet remained to mislead that unhappy prince, hated a moderate monarchist worse than a Jacobin; just as extremely orthodox Catholics might place a Jansenist below a heathen. La Fayette's offer was declined; and the Jacobins attempted to obtain a decree of the assembly, against the soldier who had thus made overtures of service to his sovereign. 480 votes out of 670 acquitted him. But the Jacobins had not learned in vain the art of stirring the base passions of the multitude; they appealed from the assembly to the people, and La Fayette was deprived of his command. In the same way, when the deposition of the king was demanded of the assembly and refused, they appealed to the populace; as though a mob but yesterday down-trodden by the iron heel of despotism, had become inspired with wisdom to decide questions of king or no king, of life or death.

The constitutional party who might, as we have hinted, at one time have saved the throne but for the violent conservatism of the old *régime*, were looked on by both extremes with infinite contempt. In vain they attempted to penetrate to the king's confidence, in vain they offered to defend him. The little knot of friends (his worst foes) who still clung to the traditions of absolute monarchy, made the king mistrustful of the moderate party. Still faithful to their king, and unable to assume the position of his enemies, the constitutionalists wandered about the château which held their master, "as if," says Madame de Staël, "the chance of being massacred for his sake

consoled them for the want of an opportunity to fight in his defence."

The constitutional party, in spite of their fidelity to Louis, were in bad odour at court; Necker had been their minister, and the extreme royalists looked upon Necker as the author of the Revolution. Whatever favourable prospect this moderate section may, at one time, have possessed, was completely gone; there was no longer any hope of a middle course; the king was daily insulted by the meanest of his subjects, and the Reign of Terror, the blackest spot in the world's civil history, was fast approaching.

In the world's civil history; for let us remember that, however we may be horror-stricken at the sanguinary enormities of Robespierre and his companions in cruelty, he did no more than several zealous princes have done, only he killed in a different cause. The Christians under Nero and some others of the Roman emperors, the Protestants under the Inquisition, suffered perhaps quite as severely as the royalists under Robespierre.* A long course of initiation in cruelty had prepared the French for their saturnalia of revenge. They had been accustomed to the use of the rack and the wheel; their masters had inflicted cruel deaths on the guilty, and inhuman tortures on the suspected; it was natural that the common people should have ideas suited to such a barbarous condition of government. Refinement and Mercy are never born of harsh rule.

Poor Madame de Staël must have suffered fearfully in the dreadful days we are about to approach; the

* But perhaps not so numerously. The Revolution is computed to have cost, reckoning men, women, and children, two millions of lives.

remembrance of her intense sensibility may help us to comprehend how deep must have been her agony, in the midst of perpetual scenes of bloodshed and violence. She inherited a feeling of religious respect for human life, which must have been to her, in those days, a constant source of torment.

No common, no cowardly nature, could have stood the test of such a period as that Reign of Terror, and not have dropped its mask; at a time when, to use a most expressive scripture phrase, every man had his life "in his hand," any attempt to do good to others, to preserve others, involves more than charity; that common charity which is often only the revolting of our natural feelings at the sight of misery.

But what a contrast is this period of her life to that happy, studious, busy childhood and youth which we have faintly pictured to ourselves! All the brilliant society to which she had been accustomed from her cradle was proscribed, or hiding in holes and corners of the city they had made so glorious. The glowing dreams of her youth were fled and had given place to an awful reality. Liberty, the theme of her childish pen, because her father loved it, and the theme of her own womanhood because she had learned to love it too, was metamorphosed into a bloodthirsty monster, the terror, not the boon, of all good men.

Madame de Genlis, who criticises every one, and sees all foibles but her own, tells us that Madame Necker brought up her daughter very ill; that she was allowed to mix with literati and savants when she should have been shut up in her chamber with her school-books; that she talked too much, and was too demonstrative. Madame de Genlis, in spite of all

her experience, was not well enough acquainted with human nature to know that some characters live only while they are demonstrative: our verdicts on our neighbours are rather ridiculous. One may as well quarrel with the Corinthian order because it lacks the severe simplicity of the Tuscan, as with Madame Necker's daughter because she lacked her mother's well-schooled and severe dispositions. An education that developed every kindly inclination, and left room for the growth of high social virtues, cannot have been bad.

Madame de Genlis says that her training was too indulgent—Madame de Staël herself thought it too severe; but Madame Necker may triumphantly justify herself by pointing to the noble and unblemished career of her illustrious daughter. Some mistakes every human educator must make, and Madame Necker committed her share; but on the whole, judging by results, her system had been no bad one.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A TERRIBLE phase of the Revolution was about to present itself: the admission of spectators into the assembly, whose plaudits intoxicated speakers unused to acclamations, created a vicious emulation in the deputies, which reacted on the people. The people cheered, and the deputies, in order to earn fresh admiration, exaggerated the statements which had once pleased their audience. Speech in the assembly was translated into action out of doors; each party excited the other, and the end was, a general break-

ing up of the groundwork of society, universal war, hatred, and dismay. Not only the feudal system was abolished; justice and right, peace and religion, were also solemnly put an end to; as if France in the eighteenth century, and on the threshold of emancipation and freedom, had aught to gain by turning from her noble task to mock the experience of all past ages, and to ridicule the most sacred traditions of history.

The month of August, 1792, saw the downfall of the French throne. The populace had now a morbid hatred to royalty, aristocracy, superiority of any kind.* Even nature was not sufficiently impartial to please them; a speaker in the assembly was rebuked for using the phrase, "the most distinguished deputies;" he was bidden to observe that all deputies were equal. The distinctions of genius, which are a positive gift of Providence, and neither to be counterfeited nor abrogated, irritated them; it was only by condescending to lead the fearful movement, that genius earned for itself toleration.

This temptation was too much—genius yielded; had she resisted, she might, perhaps, have stayed the current of innocent blood; but there is something so intoxicating to human nature in the homage paid to superior abilities, that we can scarcely wonder at the infatuation of the leaders of the earlier part of the Revolution. They did not see that they were paving the way for the wildest excesses of licence. Soon, the people were not contented with oratory; they longed for blood, for some tangible proof of the triumph of their *principles*. It makes one's heart

* Appendix, Note F.

ache so to prostitute a noble word; indeed the study of this page of history is altogether so humiliating, so agonising, that only the strongest faith in human nature can bear us through it, and leave us friendly to our race, and hopeful of its tendencies.

It has been the fashion to consider this Reign of Terror a most unnatural thing, which cannot be accounted for, or analysed, or reduced to any of the rules by which we judge ordinary events. But since miracles ceased, no event is extraordinary, and the deeper we dig below the surface of things, the nearer we come to this conviction. Let any one read the accounts of the executions under the kings preceding Louis XVI.; the barbarous execution of Madame de Brinvilliers, for instance, to quote a very familiar example; the crowd that assembled to see *that* could not be expected to have any very delicate regard for human life.

This respect for life is the fruit of a high degree of religious and moral cultivation, which the French, until 1792, had never possessed. The private memoirs of the times of Louis XIII. and XIV. are full of poisonings, and suspicions of poisonings: any sudden death was laid to poison.* It was conveyed in gloves, bouquets, handkerchiefs; might be breathed at a fête, and do its work so secretly that the author of the death remained unsuspected. This argues a certain degree of cultivation and refinement, for the savage is not acquainted with these subtle properties of natural substances; but on the other hand it shows a very low state of moral civilisation. These poisonings were, beyond a doubt, very frequent in the higher

* See Saint Simon's Memoirs and De Sévigné's Letters.

ranks of society, and one does not generally look to the vulgar for superior delicacy in such matters. There are not many educated persons, we suppose, who would even go to *see* an execution in these days, unless such a criminal as Earl Ferrers or Doctor Dodd drew on himself the extreme sentence of the law.*

If, then, the indifference to the sacredness of life was so great in the higher classes, what must we expect to find it in those ranks most accustomed, from the nature of their daily occupations, or otherwise, to the sight of violent and painful death?

And when this indifference is aided by an extreme hatred to one class of the community, what is there to stay the hand of the executioner?

Give this hatred to a class the name of patriotism, and men will feel ashamed to own they experience any compunction at the death of their victims. Human nature did at last vindicate herself by the execution of Robespierre; but the softer impulses of the heart were afraid to show themselves, when mercy was looked on as treason to one's country.

Before midnight on the 9th of August, 1792, the forty-eight tocsins of the sections of Paris began to sound; this dull monotonous noise continued during the whole of the night, and might well strike terror into the souls of all but the extreme revolutionists. These tocsins were the rallying-cry of violence and rebellion.

The constitutional party sent news to their friends as occasion served: frequently, during the night, the voluntary patrol of that body brought information to

* And yet there are those who tell us the race degenerates. The worst one can wish these worshippers of the past is, that they had lived in the times they adore.

Madame de Staël, who feared the worst from the aspect of public affairs.

She sat at her window with several persons of her acquaintance, anxiously awaiting yet dreading the morning, when she judged a real conflict would be inevitable. Thus she watched the streets during that night.

Early in the morning she was told that the suburbs had risen, and were marching on the city. The people were headed by Santerre, a brewer (afterwards the executioner of his king), and Westermann, a military officer, who subsequently distinguished himself in the war against La Vendée.

Such news, the state of the public mind considered, was indeed alarming.

Madame de Staël says, "None could tell what the morrow would bring forth; none reckoned on more than a day's life; and yet, in that fearful night, we had some moments of hope. I know not why; perhaps, because we had exhausted fear.

"Suddenly, at seven in the morning, the cannon of the suburbs fired, and in the first attack the Swiss guards were victorious. The people rushed about the streets as full of fear as they had just before been full of fury.

"It must be said, the king ought then to have put himself at the head of his troops and fought his enemies. The queen was of this opinion, and counselled him to this effect, for which act posterity ought to honour her."

Madame de Staël was subsequently told that all her friends who were guarding the outside of the

Tuileries had been massacred by the people. Now we should remember that this woman was not naturally a person of strong animal courage; that is not generally an accompaniment of high imaginative genius, which hears a voice in every breeze, and a footfall in every sound of nature. Persons of this temperament are commonly known, for want of a better word, as *nervous;* that is the reverse of nervous. Everything to them is fraught with a deeper meaning than reaches the common ear, and they are generally prone to anticipation. Madame de Staël was a pure type of this class; at one moment her future lay spread before her, a map bright with all the tintings of hope, the next saw her vainly trying to pierce the mysteries of the sable veil which suddenly fell over her prospects.

Indifference to danger is with some persons a natural instinct; with others, courage is a moral and intellectual triumph. So it was in Madame de Staël's case. Yet unused to sorrow, she was terror-stricken when, in 1788, she heard her father read his sentence of *exile;* the word seemed so terrible. But she had made progress since that period. As soon as she heard that her friends were killed, she ordered her carriage, and went out to ascertain whether this dreadful tale were true. As wife of a foreign ambassador, she might have some little influence which she resolved to use for the sake of her friends. Her dearer claim to notice, as Necker's daughter, was one which would have won her nothing but obloquy. She wisely waived it, though to the honour of the filial relation be it said, she never shrunk from proudly acknowledging her descent, when the acknowledg-

ment cost only herself inconvenience. But just now, her object was to serve her friends.

The coachman who drove her was stopped on the bridge which she wished to cross, by men who silently gave him to understand that, across the river, people were being killed in numbers. After two hours spent in vainly endeavouring to pass, she accidentally learned that those who interested her were yet safe, and she returned home to await a more promising opportunity for seeing them. They were threatened with proscriptions, and lay hidden wherever they could find a nook of shelter; still, they lived, and that seemed to afford yet a chance of safety.

In the evening she set out on foot, not being disposed to turn back a second time for want of carriage room. On the door-steps of the houses lay men helplessly intoxicated, who, when she passed, half awoke to utter some profane oath. Many of the common women were in a similar condition, and their vociferations seemed yet more terrible than those of the men. As soon as the patrols appointed to keep order were perceived, respectable citizens fled before them, for "order" meant an open field for the assassins, and the removal of every obstacle out of their path.

And yet, though living in the midst of these terrible scenes, Madame de Staël is by no means an intolerant witness of the Revolution. She owns that this terrible 10th of August had yet some national significance, because it aimed at the prevention of foreign interference in the private affairs of France. To secure this end, the people rose, and snatched matters out of the king's hands.

Excited with victory, the people became as sanguinary a tyrant as any king; the arrests daily increased in numbers, the prisons were full. The populace clamoured for the punishment of traitors, and this title included whole classes of men. Talents and fortune, an embroidered coat, a constitutional opinion; these, anything, nothing, might serve as an excuse for confiscation, banishment, or death.

Such a state of things paralysed the energies of the intelligence of France; Madame de Staël tells us she should have hated herself, if, during the dreadful period of Robespierre's ascendancy, she had been able to concentrate her mind so as to undertake any literary labour. How to preserve life for one's friends and oneself was the first, almost the only consideration, which those times admitted. Are there many women, delicately nurtured and delicately constituted, as was Madame de Staël, who would have ventured out on foot to seek after her friends, on that dreadful 10th of August?

CHAPTER XXV.

Her anxieties for her friends did not end with inquiries; she offered them an asylum in her house, which they at first declined to accept, lest it might attract hostile attention to herself. Several persons whom she respected were personally threatened, and were hidden about the city in the abodes of obscure citizens; obliged to change their place of refuge every

day, and often finding it difficult to get the shelter of a roof. Such was the tyranny of liberty.

At last none would receive the poor fugitives; it was rumoured that if the foreign troops crossed the frontier, all the respectable citizens of Paris would be murdered; all who harboured traitors would be sure of punishment; at this juncture Madame de Staël insisted on the acceptance of her offer. Two persons came and took protection with her: she shut them up in her private apartments, and admitted to her confidence only one servant, on whose fidelity she could depend.

Monsieur de Staël was absent, but she thought, notwithstanding that circumstance, that the name on her door, "Swedish Embassy," might yet command some little respect. Such times are the touchstone of friendship. Hers never appears at a disadvantage.

Monsieur de Narbonne, ex-minister of war, the companion and friend of Talleyrand, was one of the persons sheltered by Madame de Staël. She watched the streets anxiously during one night when the police were searching for him. His fate, if he were seized, would be instant death, and she knew that the search of her house must discover him.

In this critical circumstance the police came to the Embassy to make their dreaded domiciliary visit; one would think that only nerves of iron could maintain a calm appearance at such a moment. But she sublimely assures us that in that moment of terror, she discovered that we can always master our emotion, however violent it may be, when we feel that its indulgence would expose the life of another. Was there ever a nobler sentence penned?

Her eloquence, formerly the delight of a circle of philosophers such as the world has seldom seen, was now to be more religiously consecrated to the service of man. She harangued the police and the persons with them, with a flow of mingled entreaty, irony, and authority, that overcame them. She represented in the strongest terms, that a foreign ambassador's house was not to be insulted with impunity; finally, she induced them to depart without the search.

Nor did her cares end here. Dr. Bollman, a generous Hanoverian, who was about to leave France, heard of Madame de Staël's perplexity on De Narbonne's account, and offered her for him the passport of one of his friends. Dr. Bollman, in undertaking thus to protect a proscribed person, placed his own life in danger; but those times abound in traits of courage and generosity. Doctor Bollman courageously executed what he had undertaken; he had no motive for his action but simple goodness, yet he took care of De Narbonne, and four days after his departure from Paris, the fortunate fugitive was in London.

At this time she was in possession of passports which would have enabled her to join her father in Switzerland; but as she nobly says, there was something too sad in making sure of personal safety, while she left so many of her friends in danger; she therefore protracted her stay in Paris from day to day, in the hope of being useful to some person in distress.

Her benevolent designs were not long unaccomplished; on the 31st of August, she heard that Monsieur de Jaucourt, and Monsieur de Lally Tol-

lendal, had been arrested and taken to the prison called the Abbey: it was well known then, that only those destined to death were consigned to those dungeons. The talents of Monsieur de Lally saved his life; he undertook the defence of one of his fellow-prisoners, and procured his release. The circumstance excited interest in Lally's favour, and this, added to the fact that Lord Sutherland, the English ambassador, was his friend, ensured his safety.

Monsieur de Jaucourt was not so favoured; but he had one generous friend. Madame de Staël procured a list of the members of the commune of Paris, the real governors of the city. She knew them only by their terrible reputation, and chance would have decided her choice, had she not suddenly recognised the name of Manuel as that of a man who made some pretence to literature. He had brought out a little volume of Mirabeau's letters, to which he had written a preface, "bad enough, but showing an ambition to be accounted witty."

Reasoning from these premises, she came to the conclusion that a man who loved applause would not be indifferent to solicitation; and she wrote to Manuel to ask him for an audience.

This equivocal favour was granted. The democratic Manuel had fixed on seven in the morning, as the hour when he would accord the desired interview; and Madame de Staël, careless on her own account, even to the point of going to court with a torn flounce, was punctiliously exact, now she had in charge the interests of another.

How soon do men acquire the tone of office!

Madame de Staël waited an hour for her member of the commune, who, when she arrived, had not yet risen. Every little accessory of his chamber was scanned over by that keen eye, and each furnished her with some little key to the character of her man. His portrait hung just above his bureau; his vanity then might be touched. At last he came; and Madame de Staël gives him credit for the fact that she changed his mind by good principles alone. She represented to him the vicissitudes of popularity (what woman could do this so well as Necker's daughter?) of which vicissitudes every day afforded some fresh example. "In six months," so spoke this true heroine—"in six months you yourself may have no more power; save my friends, and reserve for yourself one sweet remembrance for the period when you, in your turn, may be proscribed."

Manuel, who was not a radically bad man, really perished on the scaffold six months after this remarkable interview. The offence which proved fatal to him was a speech made in defence of the king.

Moved by the passionate entreaties of Madame de Staël, who was then a young woman of only six and twenty years, he agreed to exert himself for Lally and De Jaucourt. How many women at six and twenty would so care to expose themselves? Heroic actions are often reserved to an age which, having chilled the springs of life, makes sacrifice easy.

Her kindness was rewarded; on the 1st of September she received a note from Manuel, informing her that Monsieur de Condorcet had procured the release of Lally; and that he himself had set De

Jaucourt at liberty, in consequence of the intercession of Madame de Staël.

She now thought herself at liberty to depart; but full of generous pity, took yet one more life under her protection. She promised the Abbé de Montesquiou, a proscribed person, that she would conduct him beyond the barrier and into Switzerland. The penalty of such an offence was death, and the denunciation of that penalty was not in those days a mere legal fiction.

In order to ensure safety, she gave the abbé a passport belonging to one of her own people, and they agreed on the place where he should meet her carriage, and be taken up by her. To fail in such an appointment, would probably draw on the abbé the notice of the patrols who watched all the great roads, and who would be sure to suspect any loiterer.

On that awful 2nd of September, however, the day appointed for her to leave France, she heard again the dreadful sound of the tocsin, which since the 10th of August had been firmly graven on her memory. Her friends, seeing the state of Paris, would have dissuaded her from leaving, but she was unwilling to compromise the safety of the abbé. She determined, therefore, to set out as she had purposed, in all the state of an ambassadress, hoping that her assumption of a right to go where and how she pleased, as the wife of a foreign envoy, might induce the people to let her pass without hindrance.

The regularity of her passports gave her also a reason for confidence.

With her servants in dress livery, and in a carriage drawn by six horses, she prepared, as she fondly hoped,

to leave Paris; but scarcely had she accomplished four paces, when the noise of the postilions' whips brought a crowd of wretched women about her equipage. These harpies forcibly detained her horses: exclaiming that she was carrying off the gold of the nation, that she was about to join the enemies of France, and offering her many other insults, which she heard as calmly as possible.

A crowd was instantly collected; and Madame de Staël was struck by the ferocious physiognomy of the common people who were flocking about her. The mob overpowered her servants, and ordered them to drive her to the assembly of the quarter where she resided. When she reached the *Quartier St. Germain*, she descended from her carriage, and, remembering the poor Abbé de Montesquiou, whispered to one of his servants who was with her, to go and inform his master of what had happened. Having fulfilled this pious care, she entered the assembly, which she describes as wearing the air of a "permanent insurrection."

The president told her she had been denounced as plotting to aid the escape of proscribed persons; and warned her that her people would be examined. Before proceeding to take this step, he found that her passport contained one name which she had no servant to represent. In consequence of this error she was ordered to the Hôtel de Ville. Thither she proceeded under the conduct of a *gendarme*.

How different had been her visit to the Hôtel de Ville three years before, when her father and mother stood with her at one of its windows, and the air

resounded with shouts of "Long live Necker!" With great force might this woman speak of the vicissitudes of popularity.

The order which sent her to the Hôtel de Ville, involved the traversing of half the city; a task not very easy or delightful for a person in a carriage and six, attended by servants in livery. However, she reached her destination; after three hours of anxiety, during which her horses had been led at a foot pace, through crowds that assailed her with cries of death. These cries she acknowledges were not insults directly personal to her; the people scarcely knew her; but an elegant carriage and embroidered liveries seemed to point out to the populace, a person worthy of death.

"Not being aware," she says touchingly, "how inhuman man becomes under the influence of a revolution, I addressed myself frequently to the *gendarmes* who passed near my carriage, imploring their assistance. They answered me with gestures of menace and disdain. I was pregnant, but that did not disarm them; on the contrary, I irritated them on this account, because they felt themselves all the more guilty towards me." The *gendarme* who was in her carriage, and who saw thus the liveliest expressions of her terror, was affected by her situation; and promised to defend her even with his life. It was only her own safety that was now in question, and she displayed the most unequivocal alarm. Her husband absent, her father hated, herself having the reputation of assisting proscribed persons, one can readily imagine that she stood in a situation not very favourable to hope.

The most dangerous point of her journey was its end: on the staircase of the Hôtel de Ville several persons had been massacred on the 10th of August, and even before she reached the staircase, she had to pass through a crowd of armed men, whose ferocious eyes seemed eager for the blood of aristocrats. Their vile appearance excited her aversion, and this feeling lent her a little strength.

She alighted from her carriage in the midst of this terrible throng, and walked under an arch of pikes. Having reached the staircase, flanked by regular ranks of lances, she proceeded to ascend. One man directed his lance against her; the *gendarme* who had been in her carriage parried the blow with his sabre. "Had I fallen at that moment," she says, "my life would have been over; for it is in the nature of the people to respect whoever stands erect, but for a fallen foe they have no pity."

At last, she reached the commune, at which Robespierre was presiding; and having escaped from the violence of the mob, she began to breathe again.

She had formerly once met Robespierre at her father's house, before he had had any chance of acquiring his terrible notoriety; when, in fact, he was nothing but a poor advocate. That interview had not prepossessed her in his favour: his livid complexion, and the greenish hue of his veins, were not at all calculated to make an agreeable impression, and the positive dogmatical tyranny with which he asserted the wildest opinions had completed the disgust which his appearance had begun. To the mercies of this wretch she was now delivered.

His secretary, Billaud-Varennes, sat at his desk, with a beard of fifteen days' growth on his chin; this slovenly precaution was adopted to put him beyond the suspicion of belonging to the aristocratic party.

The room occupied by Robespierre was full of men, women, and children; all shouting "Vive la Nation!" their definition of "nation" would not, perhaps, have been very satisfactory.

We have said that a common or base nature must show itself common and base at the period we describe: one may venture to assert generally, that periods of great misfortune and misery call out elements of character whose existence might never be suspected in times of prosperity. Here is just one illustration.

At the time when Madame de Staël was placed at the bureau of Robespierre, another victim, also seated there, and being no less a person than the mayor of Virien, rose to state that, although placed there together, he and the lady by his side had committed no crime in common, and that whatever might be her offence, it would not be fair to implicate him in it. Yet probably this man was gallant enough in ordinary circumstances—would rise to open a door for a woman, and bow her out of a room with grace. His chivalry went no further than comported with his convenience. How true may this be of many of our virtues, and how far we are from knowing it, until some unexpected crisis tear off the flimsy mask of excellence, and expose the real imperfections of our character!

Excited by the want of generosity in her fellow-prisoner, Madame de Staël was stimulated to use her

own exertions to save herself. She rose, and asserted her right to depart, as ambassadress of Sweden, appealing to her passports in confirmation of this right. Just then Manuel arrived, and it seems his interest in her had been permanently excited by the bold attempt she had made to save her friends. In spite of all the efforts of men to degrade themselves, they cannot but be touched by a trait of true heroism.

Manuel was very much surprised to see her in such a sad position; but asserting that he would answer for her detention until the commune had decided on her sentence, he took her and her waiting-woman to his own cabinet, where they remained for six hours, faint from hunger, thirst, and fear.

The window of Manuel's apartment looked on to the Place de la Grève, and Madame de Staël could see the assassins coming back from the prisons, their arms naked and red with blood, while they rent the air with their dreadful cries.

Her carriage, still laden with her baggage, stood in the midst of the square, and the people were about to strip it, when she saw a tall man in the uniform of the National Guard ascend the box, and protect her property from the mob. This man resolutely defended the equipage and its contents during two hours. Madame de Staël was at a loss to conceive how a man could devote himself to such a trifle as the preservation of property, while such awful scenes were passing around him.

In the evening this man with Manuel entered the room where Madame de Staël was shut up; she discovered him to be Santerre the brewer, whom we

have before mentioned. She inquired the reason why he had exerted himself in her behalf, and must have been profoundly affected by his answer.

He had lived, he said, in the Faubourg St. Antoine, and had often witnessed the distribution of grain, procured by Monsieur Necker during the famine. Of these distributions he had preserved a grateful remembrance, and this was his mode of acknowledging his sense of Necker's generosity. This Santerre, Louis XVI.'s executioner, was thus no monster, but a man with human sympathies, only he lived at a period when all his baser passions were excited beyond the common pitch; and he shared the vulgar sentiments so popular in his day. Men were the criminals of the revolution; human passions made it terrible, human irreligion branded it with a curse in its very cradle.

As commandant of the National Guard, Santerre ought to have aided in the protection of prisoners, but he had a hatred for aristocrats except in cases where the aristocrats had done something to deserve his regard; so he left the prisoners to their fate, and mounted Madame de Staël's coach-box.

He attempted to boast of his conduct, but Madame de Staël stopped him, and told him that he ought to have succoured the persons who were in the hands of the crowd.

Manuel, as soon as he saw her, exclaimed with emotion, that he was very glad he had set her two friends at liberty. Madame de Staël says that he was bitterly afflicted by the assassinations that were now constantly committed, and yet he had not power to

oppose them. "A gulf," she says, "gaped behind every man who acquired authority, and if he stepped back he fell into the abyss."

Having waited for night in order to avoid the loss of his popularity, Manuel conducted Madame de Staël to her home in her carriage. The lamps were not lighted in the streets, but many figures bearing torches were passing to and fro. These torches made the darkness appear yet more terrible; often a torch was thrust before the carriage window, and Manuel was rudely asked who he was? When he answered that he was the *procureur* of the *commune*, he was allowed to proceed without molestation.

It seems that while such respect for authority existed, even for authority in a guise so mean and brutal as the revolutionary government were, all was not lost; and France might have retrieved herself had she found a man to guide her.

When Manuel had seen her safely at home, he assured her that he would exert himself to procure her a new passport, but warned her that she must be accompanied by her waiting-maid only, and that a *gendarme* would escort her to the frontier.

This *gendarme* was Tallien, who, twenty months after, assisted in procuring the ruin of Robespierre; and who was thus instrumental in sending to the scaffold the wretch who had supplied it with so many victims.

Grateful must Madame de Staël have felt in once more treading the threshold of home; she had passed a day in such peril as falls to the lot of few, and had conducted herself throughout with admirable good

sense. After her fit of terror, while the crowd surrounded her carriage, she seems to have gathered up her forces to protect herself and her unborn child.

Though she had escaped from such imminent danger, she was not indifferent to the fate of others. Every hour brought her news of fresh massacres; and years afterwards, describing these days, she says her only desire was death.

Tallien came in due time, and found at her house several persons suspected by the government. She begged him not to mention their names, to which he agreed; and she adds, that he kept his promise.

With this guard she entered her carriage, and after some trifling difficulties, succeeded in getting away from that terrible capital which had formerly been so dear to her. As she left it behind, the storm of the revolution became fainter and fainter; and when she reached the mountains of Jura there was nothing to remind her of the frightful agitation which was reigning at Paris.

Turning from the vile passions of men to the beautiful quiet of those paths of solitary grandeur, how warm must have been the feeling of gratitude to Providence who had spared her life, and led her once more to wander peacefully amid the scenes she loved.

So she rejoined her anxious and affectionate parents, who had felt all her dangers more keenly than if they had been their own. Strange indeed is the history of this family of Coppet; prosperity and adversity, in the extremes of sweetness and bitterness, are by turns pressed into their hands; they refused neither cup; of prosperity the father drank mode-

rately, the daughter enthusiastically; both resigned it at the call of duty, and heroically accepted the reverses which cowardice may embitter, but cannot escape.

CHAPTER XXVI.

In October, 1792, just after his daughter had so wondrously escaped from the hands of the Parisian murderers, Monsieur Necker learned, that in direct contravention of the revolutionary constitution, which asserted the inviolability of the royal person, his master was to be arraigned before the infamous bar of the Convention. At this crisis of the king's life, when the public disposition was such that his fate was scarcely a matter of doubt, Necker offered to come to Paris and be his advocate. The offer was declined; the failure of the royal cause—or what was thought to be so—had been once or twice associated with Necker's course; and, perhaps, the few remaining friends of the king would have thought Necker's presence an ill omen for their master.

Not permitted to lift his voice in defence of Louis, he published a pamphlet, having in view the end he desired, in which he exhausted, so far as his talent served, all the arguments which might lead to a favourable conclusion. From the day when this defence was published, Necker's property in France was confiscated. His daughter remarks that he never brought out a political work without some evil consequence to himself or his fortune. He pointed out the errors of the French corn-law, and he was straightway ac-

cused of causing the famine. He experienced that the feudal *régime* was a dead thing; and in endeavouring cautiously to supply new elements to the constitution, he was called the father of the Revolution. Now he wishes to defend his sovereign, and the confiscation of his fortune is his reward.

Early in 1793, the French king was beheaded; and as England had espoused the Bourbon cause, war between the two countries was an inevitable result. The Swedish ambassador at Paris was suspended by the Regent, Duke of Sudermania, King Gustavus Adolphus being then in his minority. Monsieur de Staël, uncertain as to the course of events, and anxious to be near the scene of his embassy, stayed in Holland to see whether time would permit his government to renew its connexions with France.

Meantime Madame de Staël, with what precise object it is difficult to say, visited England. Perhaps she hoped, through influence more readily commanded here than on the continent, to rescue her father's fortune from the hands of the revolutionary government. Perhaps she came simply with a desire to become acquainted more nearly with a country she had always loved. It may have been a pure longing to breathe the air of liberty; but we cannot with any degree of certainty decide the doubt. In January, 1793, she established herself at a house called Juniper Hall, at Mickleham, near Richmond in Surrey.* It is a small white Gothic building, still to be seen, and lying westward from the bridge.

* In the garden belonging to Juniper Hall are said to exist some of the finest cedars in England.

Monsieur de Talleyrand was already in England, and rented a house in Woodstock-street: the pressure of the times drove many illustrious French people to our shores, and several of them were the friends and companions of Madame de Staël at Richmond. Among her guests were De Narbonne (whose life she had saved the year before); Madame de la Châtre; another lady, daughter of the unhappy minister, Montmorin; and Monsieur d'Arblay, of whom we shall have more to say. Thus Madame de Staël became, in some sort, the head of the French colony at Richmond.

Their funds were not in the most flourishing condition; and the prospect of war did not favour the continuance of such remittances as they might otherwise hope to get; yet their national gaiety seems to have borne them through their difficulties with considerable credit to themselves.

We are told that this little party could afford to purchase only one small carriage, which took two persons, and that De Narbonne and Talleyrand alternately assumed the post of footman, as they rode about to see the country; removing the glass from the back of the coach in order to join the conversation of those within.

The neighbourhood they had chosen for their residence is one naturally beautiful, and so characteristically English as to seem racy and fresh to the eye of a foreigner; grateful to those storm-tossed spirits must have been the scenes of rural peace which there spread about them; and still more grateful, the kindly English hospitality which there awaited them.

It was indeed a new element infused into the half

city, half rural life of the then courtly suburb; almost every day some fresh comer brought new tidings of trouble and desolation, and narrow escapes. At one time it was De Narbonne who came with the Hanoverian doctor's passport in his hand, and the tale of Madame de Staël's heroism on his lips; then it was Madame de Staël herself, who made the quiet English gentry, in some sort, partisans of her father, while she told with eager tongue and fiery glance, of his goodness, of his popularity, of his failure and retirement; of his prophecies, so lamentably true: and of the spark of hope he and she yet had in the storm-threatening future.

Now it was the Duchess de Broglie, with her little son, escaped from perils of the sea, after hours passed in an open boat on a starless night. Now it was Montmorin's daughter weeping at the recollection of the scaffold whereon her father had fallen.

The enthusiasm of this somewhat melancholy little colony early infected Miss Fanny Burney, daughter to Dr. Burney, the musician, and at that time, or shortly before it, one of Queen Charlotte's waiting-women. Another daughter of Dr. Burney was married to Mr. Phillips, whose seat, Norbury Park, was in the immediate neighbourhood of Juniper Hall, the residence of Madame de Staël and her fellow exiles.

Mrs. Phillips, a woman of education, fine sense and manners, felt a keen interest in the remarkable persons whom the chances of life had thrown into her vicinity; she and her husband seem to have received them, and visited them in the true spirit of the apostolic injunction, which bids us show hospitality and be courteous to strangers.

Miss Burney, whose health had suffered from the restraint necessary on her engagement at court, was just then spending some time with her sister at Norbury Park; and as she was a woman of no mean discrimination, her account of her impressions of Madame de Staël will perhaps be not unwelcome. We must, however, beg our readers to recollect the essential difference between the French and English manners, which was then more strongly marked in the higher classes of the two countries, than in the present day, when more frequent communication and the perpetual interchange of good offices have created something like a community of society and conduct throughout educated Europe.

The kindly and clever Miss Burney, under date February 29th, 1793, gives the following particulars of her acquaintance with Madame de Staël:—

"Madame de Staël is now the head of the little French colony in this neighbourhood. Monsieur de Staël is at present suspended in his embassy, but not recalled: it is yet uncertain whether the Regent, Duke of Sudermania, will send him to Paris during the present horrible convention, or order him home. He is now in Holland, waiting for commands. Madame de Staël, however, was unsafe in Paris, though an ambassadress, from the resentment owed her by the *Commune*. She is a woman of the first abilities I think I have ever seen; she is more in the style of Mrs. Thrale than of any other celebrated character, but she has infinitely more depth, and seems even a profound politician and metaphysician. She has suffered us to hear some of her works in MS. which are

truly wonderful, for powers both of thinking and of expression. She adores her father, but is alarmed at having had no news from him since he has heard of the death of the martyred Louis. Ever since her arrival she has been pressing me to spend some time with her before I return to town. She exactly resembles Mrs. Thrale in the ardour and warmth of her partialities. I find her impossible to resist. She is only a short walk from here — at Juniper Hall. There can be nothing imagined more charming, more fascinating than this little colony; between their sufferings and their *agrémens* they occupy us almost wholly. Monsieur de Narbonne bears the highest character for goodness, parts, sweetness of temper, and ready wit. He has been much affected by the king's death, but relieved by hearing through Monsieur de Malesherbes that his master retained a regard for him to the last. Monsieur de Talleyrand insists on conveying this letter to you. He has been on a visit here, and returns again on Wednesday."

Frequent communication was kept up between Norbury Park and the accomplished refugees. Madame de Staël, enthusiastic and affectionate, always hungering after friendship, imagined she had found a kindred spirit in the lively and pleasant sister of Mrs. Phillips. Added to which she respected her as one of the band of English authors, whose works Madame de Staël had studied with more success than is common among foreigners.

In Miss Burney's careless agreeable letters we have some remarkably welcome details of the proceedings of Madame de Staël and her guests.

The French party seem to look forward to the daily meeting as the event of the day; a headache prevents Miss Burney calling on Madame de Staël, and the bad weather keeps Madame de Staël at home; so Monsieur d'Arblay is despatched in the evening, with apologies and a book for "Mademoiselle Burnet." We then have an amusing little scene. Poor Monsieur d'Arblay has walked through the rain, and is astonished to hear from Mrs. Phillips's footman, that the ladies have retired. From the sequel of the story we may surmise that he already has some little interest in the interview beyond that inspired by a conscientious desire to execute his commission.

"Impossible!" he exclaims, "it is only just past nine. They cannot yet have retired." Jerry, thinking his English had not been quite understood, proudly displays his recent acquirements by saying over and over again, "*Allée couchée,*" until the disappointed Frenchman is fain to leave the book, and retire dispirited; with the certainty that Miss Burney is suffering from a headache, and that he shall not see her to-night. "It rained furiously," says Miss Burney, "and we were quite grieved that there was no help."

It must have been a welcome change to the inhabitants of Norbury-park to have such society within an easy distance. Sometimes the meetings are at the one house, sometimes at the other. Madame de Stael drew tears from every eye by her declamation of the tragedy of Tancrède, or by reading the commencement of her work "On the Passions." With reference to the latter, Talleyrand asserts that he has met with nothing better thought or more ably expressed.

On another occasion, the ex-bishop freely censures Madame de Staël's style of reading. "You read prose very badly—you have a sing-song manner, a cadence, and a monotony not at all agreeable; in listening to you, one fancies it is all in verse, and that has a very bad effect."

Another evening is diversified by a reading from Monsieur de Lally, who favours his fellow-refugees and the people from Norbury Park with certain passages from his "Death of Strafford;" at which performance Miss Burney tells us she was affected "as folks do not expect to be affected by a tragedy." This was owing partly to the ludicrous contrast of deeply sentimental poetry with the full fat person of the reader, and partly to the extravagant tones and gestures with which he lent life to his elocution.

Her account of this tragedy does not seem to allow it such excellence as we might have expected from Monsieur de Lally, when we remember how Madame de Staël had extolled his talent, and how he had procured by his eloquence the release of one of his fellow-prisoners from the greedy dungeons of the Abbey.

We have already seen the false position in which the extreme Jacobins and the extreme Absolutists left the constitutional party in France. We have seen how Lafayette was sacrificed for his loyalty and patriotism, and yet how the king refused to trust him; we have seen how the daughter of Necker (Necker, whose name among the Absolutists meant revolution and ruin,) was obliged to fly from Paris to avoid paying the dreadful penalty of aristocracy. Liberty and licence were confounded, the old seamarks were gone;

and men drifted fearfully over the stormy and starless ocean of politics. England, ever careful to treasure up the garnered dower of ages, ever too wise to fling away a tolerable present for a hypothetical future, was somewhat alarmed lest the surging of lawlessness and misrule should invade her shores, and undermine institutions, imperfect indeed, yet containing the seeds of promise and the power of growth. It was a dark hour for the friends of liberty; the eloquence of Burke thundered against them, and adorned absolutism with all the graces of rhetoric, as a lover binds his mistress's brow with flowers. Every one who breathed the name of liberty was accused of uttering the Shibboleth of treason. The divinest words were symbols of the most execrable things: generous thoughts and utterances, aspirations after progress—however reasonable, however modest—were ostracised; and the man who originated them was shunned.*

Considering the aspect of the times, this was not altogether a misfortune: for perhaps only determined conservatism on the part of England's rulers could save her laws from some such savage and ruthless annihilation as France had dealt to a system incomparably inferior. At any rate, idle concession and heedless change, at such a crisis, were worse than dogged resistance to any change at all. It is not in the raging of the fever that the physician counsels his patient as to air, exercise, and diet; his immediate object is to quench the fire, to restore the balance of the pulses; and then, he offers his advice.

England's time for progress came, and, thank

* See Appendix, Note G.

Heaven! is yet growing into noonday. Much as we prize it, however, let us not underrate the value of the policy pursued by England at the era of the French Revolution.

It is far easier to act afterwards than at the time; in reconsidering a conversation, we can always invent brilliant repartees which we might have made, and recollect witty anecdotes which we *might* have told with effect: somehow these inspirations come always a little too late for actual use.

It strikes us, that in considering the policy and actions of our immediate forefathers, we are liable to pursue a similar fanciful course. Stirring necessities obliged them to determine promptly on a line of action; whether it was the best possible, only Providence knows. If it were the best which their minds suggested, they did their duty to their country, and have a right to our gratitude. At any rate, their system, on the whole, has borne very fair fruit. If they eschewed progress themselves, because they were descending a hill where any additional motive impetus would have been a source of danger, they put no drag on the state wheels which modern perseverance and intelligence are not able readily to remove.

Of the kindly reception which England accorded to the emigrants, it were ignoble to speak with praise. We trust she will ever have the power and the will to offer sanctuary to innocent exiles of all nations: it costs her nothing; indeed, she has reaped considerable benefit from the influx of foreign artisans, as Spitalfields, and other seats of labour can readily illustrate.

The liberality which collected alms on Protestant altars for the relief of homeless Catholic priests, may be, perhaps, less unexceptionably the subject of panegyric. At least, the two sects have been so long ruthlessly opposed, that simple Christian charity from the one to the other is too much to expect; and this mere almsgiving assumes an appearance of liberality almost divine.

Why should it be so? Why, though we see falsehood and folly in the infallible Romish church, can we not own that her children are our brethren, and have claims on our love, which all the absurdities of transubstantiation and the blasphemies of indulgences cannot annihilate?

Why has the dust of the schools been permitted to raise such thick clouds to obscure a brotherhood, which is older than Catholic and Protestant, Rome and Geneva?

To return, however, to our little colony at Richmond. The bad odour in which the constitutional party was held, soon influenced English opinion regarding them. When Talleyrand was introduced at court, Queen Charlotte is said to have turned her back on him, not for any reason connected with politics (so it was explained), but on account of his wretched morals. But surely Talleyrand was not the first libertine who was presented to the wife of George III. Her life must have been a series of virtuous rebuffs, if her sensibilities of right always manifested themselves in this way.

But Talleyrand was not the only one of the party who felt the frown of society. His morals, indeed,

amply justified the queen's repugnance, if they failed to excuse her manner of showing it. He was a living argument for the necessity of the Revolution, and he deserves little pity.

The disgrace, however, affected one who was innocent, and flung a shadow over this part of the English experience of Madame de Staël.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE French refugees of the aristocratic party were in high favour at the English court; and as this party had many reasons for hating Necker, (had he not circumscribed or cut off their pensions?) they began to spread reports to the prejudice of Necker's daughter.

The effect of these malevolent reports we may see in a letter from Dr. Burney to his daughter, dated February the 19th, 1793.

"I am not at all surprised at your account of the captivating powers of Madame de Staël. It corresponds with all I had heard about her, and with the opinion I formed of her intellectual and literary powers in reading her charming little '*Apologie de Rousseau.*' But as nothing human is allowed to be perfect, she has not escaped censure. Her house was the centre of the revolutionists previous to the 10th of August, and she has been accused of partiality to Monsieur de Narbonne. But perhaps all may be Jacobinical malignity. However, unfavourable stories

have been brought hither, and the Burkes and Mrs. Ord have repeated them to me. But you know that Monsieur Necker's administration and the conduct of the nobles who first joined in the violent measures that subverted the ancient establishments, by the abolition of nobility and the ruin of the Church during the first* national assembly, are held in greater horror by the aristocrats than even the members of the present convention. If you are not absolutely in the house of Madame de Staël, perhaps it may be possible for you to waive the visit to her."

Let us note Miss Burney's reply, four days later:—

"I am both hurt and astonished at the acrimony of malice; indeed, I believe all this party (of the *emigrés*) to merit nothing but honour, compassion, and praise. Madame de Staël, the daughter of Monsieur Necker, the idolising daughter, of course, and from the best motives, those of filial reverence, entered into the opening of the Revolution just as her father entered into it; but as to her house having become the centre of the revolutionists before the 10th of August, it was only so for the constitutionalists, who at that period were not only members of the then established government, but friends of the king. The aristocrats were then already banished, or wanderers from fear, or silent from cowardice; and the Jacobins, I need not, after what I have already related, tell you how utterly abhorrent to her must be that fiend-like set. The aristocrats, however, as you well observe, and as she has herself told me, hold the constitutionalists in greater horror than the convention itself.

* In August, 1789.

The malignant assertions which persecute her, all of which she has lamented to us, she imputes equally to the bad and virulent of both parties. The intimation concerning Monsieur de N. was, however, wholly new to us, and I do firmly believe it a gross calumny. Monsieur de N. was of her society, which contained ten or twelve of the first people, and occasionally almost all Paris; she loves him even tenderly, but so openly, so unaffectedly, so simply, and with such utter freedom from coquetry, that were they two men or two women, the affection could not I think be more obviously undesigning. She is very plain, he is very handsome, her intellectual endowments must be with him her chief attraction. Monsieur de Talleyrand was another of her society, and she seems equally attached to him. In short, her whole *côterie* live together as brothers. Madame la Marquise de la Châtre, and a daughter of the unhappy Montmorin, are also with Madame de Staël. Indeed, I think you could not pass a day with them, and not see that their commerce is that of pure, but exalted and most elegant friendship. Nevertheless, I would give the world to avoid being even a guest under their roof now I have heard the shadow of such a rumour."

It must be remembered that these are the opinions of no recluse unused to society. Miss Burney was then a mature woman who knew the world, and had mixed with it under various auspices; with Dr. Johnson's circle she had mingled, and had been considered by that eminent scholar no mean judge of character. Subsequently, she had known such varieties of opportunity for observation as few per-

sons have possessed; and her deliberate judgment is that Madame de Staël was foully slandered.

Nevertheless she does not behave so chivalrously as one would expect a true woman to act; if she believed Madame de Staël to be an innocent person, it was her duty to show it by frequenting her society, and by affording her the assistance and countenance so grateful to a woman and an exile. But at the first breath of suspicion, though she believes the report to originate in the "acrimony of malice," she shuns the victim of scandal, as if she were really guilty rather than injured. So much deference to the advice of friends is very well in a young girl on the threshold of society; but if all Madame de Staël's acquaintances had acted as Miss Burney did, she would have been companionless, because "the Burkes and Mrs. Ord" had repeated some unfounded reports to her disadvantage.

These reports no doubt originated with the aristocratic refugees, who were maddened beyond description by the events and progress of the Revolution; they must have sprung from some base mind, unable to comprehend that she should have exerted herself to save De Narbonne's life, unless she had some selfish motive in desiring its prolongation. They forgot, or it did not suit their purpose to recollect it, that she had saved many others. The only poor consolation one can find in all this, is, that a certain homage is paid to the virtue of woman when men select such an accusation as the most deadly weapon of spite.

At the same time, we are quite free to acknow-

ledge that Madame de Staël had naturally an incautious disposition; her deepest feelings lay a good deal on the surface; she talked too much to be a hypocrite, and probably her very expressions of friendship and interest would sound like "confirmation strong as Holy Writ" to some who watched her commune with De Narbonne, *after* hearing what slander had had to say about it. But it would be absurd to judge an impulsive Frenchwoman by the calm English rule: Madame de Staël was, we believe, as innocent as Queen Charlotte herself, but she would be probably much more demonstrative, in both love and friendship. Had the affection really existed, Madame de Staël possessed not the art to conceal it; her impulses were too eager, too electric for that; women of her stamp, if they be bad, evince it undeniably; and the transparency and honesty of her character in other respects, ought to lead us to form an unprejudiced judgment here.

Her enemies, no doubt, were well assured that they had chosen a poisoned arrow when they picked this one; they were perhaps aware of the blank her married life presented, when they thus cast at her the stone of accusation. But Monsieur de Staël, though a man of expensive and thriftless habits, was a person of extreme moral probity, and he was at this very time anxious to return to Paris with his wife as his companion; a fact that triumphantly refutes the reports against her; reports, however, which nipped in the bud her friendship with Miss Burney, and perhaps deprived them both of much pleasure and benefit.

She was undoubtedly hurt by the quick march of retreat wherewith Miss Burney answered her advances, and not all Mrs. Phillips's good-natured endeavours to show her kindness could make up for the slight thus put upon her offers of friendly society. In a letter written in March, 1793, she thus anticipates and answers the reports which her new acquaintance may have heard.

"They will tell you that I am a democrat; and they will forget that I and my friends have just escaped from the sword of the Jacobins—they will tell you I passionately love politics, and I remain here while Monsieur de Staël is anxious that I should go to Paris and take a share with him in the most important matters: in fine, they will even seek to embitter the security of friendship, and will not allow that I can, while faithful to my duties, have had any need to share for two months the misfortunes of a man whose life I had saved."

In spite of these troubles, the little party at Richmond had many tolerably happy hours; they had engaged a person to teach them English; and the study of the beautiful literature of their land of refuge filled many a season which must otherwise have been dark and cloudy indeed. Excursions into the lovely neighbourhood surrounding them, formed no mean item in their daily life, and although the bitterness of such an exile as theirs can never be neutralised, it was doubtless alleviated in no slight measure by cheerful occupation, and by their national gaiety, which our English gravity holds in somewhat too contemptuous estimation. There are situations where

cheerfulness is a virtue: let us not always conclude that it is inferior sensibility or heartless frivolity which lights up a French face with a smile, under circumstances in which a British countenance hangs out a flag of distress.

"Madame de Staël is," says Mrs. Phillips, "with all her wildness and blemishes, a very delightful companion; and Monsieur de Narbonne rises upon me in esteem and affection every time I see him. Their minds in some points ought to be exchanged, for he is as delicate as a really feminine woman, and evidently suffers when he sees her setting *les bienséances* aside as it too often befalls her to do."

No doubt, it would have been better for Madame de Staël had she possessed more of her mother's carefulness about trifles; but she was too sincere to affect anything she did not feel, she acted out whatever her nature prompted; and thus, while she really committed no great error, she often shocked people who were accustomed to a stereotyped course of thought, speech, and action, and who thought originality a kind of crime, especially in woman; who, according to such, was intended to be merely a gentle reflector of whatever is weak and pretty in the other sex.

A creature so full of vitality as Madame de Staël, is sure to be called by the world of commonplace people, a very "odd" woman; they rarely feel deeply, and cannot understand an enthusiastic temperament which flings unnecessary life and energy into every action of existence; which anticipates every grief, and decks every pleasure with colours of unearthly brightness. These passionate natures, dowered with force

in both love and hatred, are too often harshly judged by a world that little comprehends them.

No doubt they would live more peacefully if their life flowed in a stiller current; but it is a necessity of their nature that gives it somewhat of the cataract's rush and fall; they pay the penalty, however, which is exacted of all who are below or above the common standard; they are admired, feared, hated, as the humour of society goes, but seldom loved beyond the precincts of the sweet home circle, whose joy like, that of Christ, the world cannot give or take away.

Madame de Staël, however, must, by this time, have been fully convinced of the wisdom of her mother's idea—that little things are of importance, and that great ones often hang upon them; had she better learned this lesson she might have been spared some bitter hours. But the world places *les bienséances* above the virtues, and in showing her contempt for this shallow judgment, perhaps Madame de Staël went farther than she needed, and missed some friends she might have made.

Her stay in England, however, drew to a close; her husband was anxious for her return to her family, and in the summer of 1793 she rejoined her father in Switzerland.

Monsieur d'Arblay, who had been in the French army, and was on guard at the Tuileries on the night of the 21st of June, 1791, when the royal family made the escape which was followed by arrest and imprisonment, was more fortunate than most of his fellow-refugees. He was employed in transcribing Madame de Staël's work "On the Passions," and in the intervals of his labour read English and French

with Miss Burney. Their courtship was somewhat after the pattern of Othello's and Desdemona's; she loved him for the dangers he had passed, and he loved her that she did pity them.

The friendship resulted in marriage, at which ceremony De Narbonne acted as the bridegroom's friend: and Talleyrand, in a graceful note of congratulation, tells his "dear D'Arblay," that henceforth he shall not repeat the sentence hitherto so frequently on his lips: "No man has gained aught by the Revolution;" D'Arblay's marriage being a decided proof to the contrary.

The little French colony was soon widely scattered: Talleyrand was ordered out of England and went to America; De Narbonne returned to the continent; D'Arblay remained in England, perhaps the happiest, certainly the most tranquil, of all the gifted party whom political events had gathered beneath the roof of Juniper Hall.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It has been already seen that Madame de Staël was no great favourite of Marie Antoinette: Necker's first recall to the ministry had been a measure rather frowned upon by the queen, who received his daughter, when she paid her court on that occasion, very coldly. But Madame de Staël forgave everything to a person in misfortune, and in August, 1793, published a defence of the queen, which for simple reasoning and touching pathos may be safely compared with any composition of equal length. Every argument which

the situation of the unhappy queen presented, is briefly and forcibly discussed, and such an appeal made to the honour, courage, and self-respect of the French people, as must have procured the cession of Marie Antoinette to her family, had not brutality, with a firm clutch, taken possession of the reins of empire.

Coppet,* during the remaining portion of the Reign of Terror, was a kind of sanctuary for political refugees; emigration was no longer, however, a political measure, but the only means of preserving one's life: all sorts of excuses were used to supply the guillotine with its daily food, and the delicate Parisians with the excitement which seems to have formed a part of their amusement: had not history gravely recorded the fact, we could scarcely believe that when the victims were few, the public discontent was audibly expressed. "Saint Bartholomew seemed to be acted piecemeal," every morning brought fresh horrors, every evening fresh regrets. To hit the line of safety was exceedingly difficult; crime against the state was a term so loose in its meaning, so wide in its application, that men of every shade of opinion fell in turn. Nero is said to have punished those who did not mourn for his mother, because the emperor's mother ought to be respected; and those who did, because they ought to have known that she was a goddess and needed not their lamentations. The same kind of tyranny was for some time in full possession of Paris.†

Madame de Staël, on her return to Coppet, in 1793,

* Appendix, Note H. † Appendix, Note I.

exerted herself actively to assist those who appealed to her for help: her pity was inexhaustible, her energy tireless, when the fate of a human being hung on the success of her efforts. And not a few were saved by her intercession. Nor was she the only one who took compassion on these unhappy people. Monsieur de Staël invented Swedish names for them, and claimed the right of protecting them as subjects of the country whose ambassador he was.

Among the emigrants of those days was a nephew of Monsieur de Jaucourt, a young man, the only son of his parents; Monsieur Achille du Chayla. Whether this youth had any more forcible reason for wishing to leave Paris than the vague terror which made every new-drawn breath a miracle, we cannot tell. Belonging, as he did, to an aristocratic family, there was ample reason for him to consider Paris anything but an agreeable sojourn.

Madame de Staël sent the young man a Swiss passport, and under the name therein indicated he travelled safely until he arrived at a town lying at the foot of Mount Jura; at which place, either from the keener discrimination of the authorities, or relaxed caution on the part of Du Chayla, he was suspected to be another person than the one he assumed to represent. Accordingly, he was arrested, and was to be detained in prison until the proper authority should attest that he was a veritable Swiss citizen.

Here was a difficulty, indeed, for which Madame de Staël could be little prepared, and which might have repressed the efforts of a heart less open to good emotion than was hers; but she never abandoned an

enterprise in which mercy was the end, and her exertions the means of obtaining it; the delay only excited her to redouble the efforts of her ingenuity.

Monsieur de Jaucourt, who had also owed his life to her mediation, was then at Coppet, and his despair on hearing of his nephew's arrest was well calculated to move the sympathy of his kind hosts: Du Chayla was son to one of the chiefs of Condé's army, and this circumstance, added to the fact of his carrying a false passport, would compass his instant execution, if only his real name were suspected.

There was but one chance of saving him, and that was to obtain the attestation of Monsieur de Reverdil (the *lieutenant baillival* of Nyon,) that the suspected person was in reality a native of the canton of Vaud.

It required a spirit as courageous, as her disposition was kindly, to determine Madame de Staël on the step she took. Monsieur de Reverdil was an old friend of her parents, and one of the most enlightened and respected persons in French Switzerland; and he at first refused to grant her request, urging very reasonable pleas which forbade such a course.

He objected to falsehood in any cause whatever, and as a magistrate feared to compromise his country by being accessory to an act of deception. He argued further, that if the artifice were discovered, he would no longer have the right of protecting his own compatriots.

Madame de Staël remained with him two hours, pleading the cause of young Du Chayla. She told Reverdil that here was a young man, an only son, whose continued life, or instant and violent death,

hung on his simple word. She argued that such a falsehood was rather a virtue than a crime, and that as a magistrate, it was his duty to snatch an innocent victim from the hands of wretches who were but too ready to dip their hands in his blood.

She triumphed; De Reverdil made the necessary attestation, and surely the recording angel, as he wrote down this falsehood must have blotted it out, as he did the oath of Sterne's hero, with a tear of pity. The Reign of Terror gave her other tasks. About this time she was charged to convey to Monsieur Matthieu de Montmorency, a true and venerable friend of her family, the sad intelligence that his young brother the Abbé de Montmorency, together with their mother and the Abbé's mother-in-law, were condemned to death. A few days after, they were sent to the scaffold; their only crime being the illustrious name they bore.

Madame de Staël, in speaking of this strange and dreadful period of the French history, has the following pertinent and philosophical remarks:—

"The priests whose teaching, example, and riches, are able, we are told, to do so much good, had presided over the training of the generation that rose against them.

"The revolutionary class in 1789 must have been accustomed to those privileges of the feudal nobility, which, we are told, were so agreeable to those upon whom they weighed.

"How comes it then that so many vices germinated under the ancient institutions? It cannot be pretended that other nations would have shown them-

selves as barbarous under a similar revolution. The French influence excited revolutions in Holland and Switzerland, but such scenes as the Reign of Terror were never seen there. Nor in England, during the fourteen years that so much resemble in other respects the revolutionary period in France. What conclusion must we draw from this? That no people had suffered as the French, for a hundred years, had done. If the negroes of Saint Domingo have committed still greater atrocities, it is because they were still more oppressed."

To the bitter agonies of that time of mourning, the peaceful scenes surrounding the beautiful lake of Geneva offered a strange and touching contrast. Why should man foolishly wish nature always to reflect his sorrows? Ought not her calm and peace, in the midst of his wrongs, to tell him that above and beyond the power of his oppressors is the power of a watchful and passionless, but sympathising Judge, who is waiting for the culmination of the star of tyranny ere He extinguish it in eternal night?

Sadly wandered the family at Coppet, amid scenes whose beauty, perhaps, is scarcely exceeded by any of earth's lovely landscapes. But a day of relief and renewed hope came; Robespierre fell, and France began to breathe again.*

While we sigh over the fleeting nature of earth's happiness, we are apt to forget that her sorrows too, are evanescent.

* The pistol with which this wretch attempted to commit suicide, bore, oddly enough, the legend *Au Grand Monarque;* the sign of the armourer, no doubt.

CHAPTER XXIX.

At the death of Robespierre and his brutal accomplices, men began to recall what is the object of government, *i.e.* the security of the subject—a simple principle which had been more completely lost to view during the Reign of Terror than in any government the world ever saw. The promoters of the Revolution had threatened to pass the scythe over France (*moissoner la France*), and they had but too well fulfilled their dreadful promise. There was scarcely a family unbroken by the incursion of violent and shameful death; and the luckless efforts which had been made to resist this most cruel of despotisms, had only brought fresh miseries on the unhappy persons who had attempted the overthrow of tyranny.

Nevertheless France, with all her horrid and then recent memories of blood, dreaded a counter-revolution, and was careful, while endeavouring to build up something like a government, to avoid the recall of the Bourbons. Only a few obstinate legitimists clung to the fortunes of the exiled princes; the great bulk of the nation was as anxious as ever for liberty, and very fearful of letting slip the advantages which, in spite of all the drawbacks attending them, the Revolution had really given France.* Madame de

* Appendix, Note J.

Staël, who had had her full share of the horrors of the Reign of Terror, was anxious that the sudden calm, afforded by the death of Robespierre and his accomplices, might be turned to the advantage of France. Ever watchful to seize a favourable moment for the promulgation of principles which, since her day, have become generally popular, she sent forth, at a time when she thought the nation was tired of war and discord, two political tracts; one addressed to Mr. Pitt and to the French nation, aiming at the restoration of peace between France and England; the other containing reflections on the necessity of internal peace for France, if she would hope to consecrate her present opportunities to the real amelioration of her woes, and the development of her vast resources.

The first of these tracts, if it had little other influence, gained the good opinion of Fox, who quoted it in parliament with flattering notice, a circumstance which could not but be gratifying to Madame de Staël.

In 1795 another new constitution, being the third prepared within six years, was promulgated; the republican form of government was to be still maintained, and the executive vested in a directory consisting of five members.

The Swedish authorities acknowledging this attempt to re-establish a regular government in France, Monsieur de Staël was permitted to resume his functions as ambassador at Paris. Austria and England refused to recognise the republic, and the French army continued to fight with unabated vigour.

The directory, although composed of men who had

had no small share in the late disturbances, is yet worthy of some credit for the improvements it effected in the condition of France. The palace of the Luxembourg was assigned for the accommodation of the new-blown dignities, and they found it just a palace—nothing more. It had been sacked so effectually that there remained not even a table to write upon. This destitution within doors was only typical of the public affairs; yet in six months the directory restored cash payments, assured the safety of the country and of the roads, and enabled the old landed proprietors to enjoy in peace all that the Revolution had left them—too often only barren fields and a childless table.

"France would now have been free," says Madame de Staël, "had the nobles and the priests been at liberty."

In reference to this curious period she has also the following remarks:—

"One cannot but regret that, at that epoch, the powers still at war with France (namely, England and Austria), refused to make terms of peace. Perhaps, had the wars ceased before the conquests of General Bonaparte in Italy, the spirit of invasion, so fatal to the continent and to France, would never have been developed. There was still time to turn the attention of France to her political and commercial interests.

"From 1793, to the commencement of 1795, England and her allies would have been dishonoured by treating with France. What could have been said of the august ambassadors of a free nation returning to London after having held familiar intercourse with

Marat or with Robespierre? But when once the intention to form a regular government was manifested, nothing should have been neglected which might interrupt the military education of the French. England, in 1797, eighteen months after the installation of the directory, sent agents of peace to Lille, but the victories of the French army in Italy had inspired the republican chiefs with pride. The directory was already accustomed to power, and considered itself secure. New governments always desire peace, and neighbouring powers ought to know how to use this circumstance. There are in politics, as in war, 'lucky moments which should not be let slip.' "

The aspect of Parisian society, in 1795, was very different from that which had been afforded by the elegant court circles with which Madame de Staël had formerly associated. The aristocracy now consisted of the directory and the members of the convention. These men were courted by all who had favours to ask; and as nearly every one had some relative or friend among the proscribed, the public functionaries had plenty of suitors.*

Madame de Staël procured several recalls, and was, in consequence, denounced at the bar of the convention; but Barras, a member of the directory, interfered in her favour.

There was at this time great jealousy of the influence of good company, and it was easy to incense some public men by inviting their colleagues to *soirées* whence themselves were excluded. The persons thus newly admitted to the commerce of polite

*Appendix, Note K.

society, were exceedingly punctilious in all that related to etiquette and fashion, and resented familiarity quite as indignantly—perhaps more so, than any follower of the old *régime*. This is a general rule: we are eager to get society to acknowledge those talents and claims to notice, which we are not quite certain of possessing. Lord Byron was indifferent whether the world called him a genius, but he had a great desire to be thought a wonderful swimmer.

Sundays had been expunged from the Parisian calendar,* but the "tenth days" (*jours de décade*) served as times of meeting for the diverse elements of French society. The drawing-rooms exhibited on those days a strange mixture of the unreconciled old and new *régimes*. Women of the highest rank might be seen imploring the pardon and recall of some beloved relative from the plebeians, whom political convulsions had cast from the depths of society to its topmost surface.

The Jacobins were dazzled by the elegant and winning manners of these high-born daughters of France; such society was a new element to them. Ignorant of it, they had proscribed and guillotined its members; admitted to it they were fascinated by them, and these social meetings paved a way for the re-establishment of a court in France.

Monsieur Necker was on the list of proscribed persons, and the directory threatened an invasion of Switzerland. In spite of the dangers in which he was thus placed, towards the end of the year 1796, the ex-minister published a history of the Revolution,

* Appendix, Note L.

in which he enunciated the boldest truths, and pointed out the defects of the last new constitution. In this book he foretold the clash which must ensue between the directory and the representative powers. He argued that the prerogative of the former was too little constitutional ever to work well with the latter, and the sequel proved the correctness of his theory. But the directory had not asked him to amend their defective system.

Meantime the kind of society to which we have referred, was pregnant in influences which affected the future of France. Tallien, the gendarme who accompanied Madame de Staël to the frontier when she left Paris in 1792, succeeded in obtaining the hand of Madame Fontenai, a beautiful and educated royalist, the friend of the widow of General Beauharnais.

There was yet no splendour of dress or equipage; aristocratic and accomplished ladies still disguised themselves in the mean costume which prudence had compelled them to wear during the Reign of Terror; but grace, wit, and beauty, asserted their dominion, and led captive some of the stormiest revolutionists.

Madame de Staël's other interests had begun to be mingled with one ever sacred to her—the education of her son, now seven years old. During his early years she took the sole superintendence of his studies, as if jealous to give his mind the first bent. This child, afterwards the kind and brave partaker of her exile, seemed completely under her influence. And yet she assumed no dogmatical authority. Her own childish experiences had led her to avoid that course. Her friends, indeed, often smiled to hear her consult her child, and talk to him as a com

panion rather than an inferior being. She recognised in him from the first the existence of an independent judgment, over which she affected no supremacy. She sometimes showed him why a course was good, but in indifferent matters allowed him to decide whether he should pursue her way. This plan convinced Auguste that his mother never exerted authority for the mere sake of commanding him; and as she allowed him on some occasions to judge of the wisdom which directed her conduct, the child learned to trust her when she did not choose to explain herself. This system of moral training is, perhaps, the best preparative for the temptations of life: it is better to teach a child to judge for himself, than to control him eternally by "thou shalt do this," "thou shalt not do that." Boys educated on the coercive system, generally break all bounds when the rein is slackened, and there must be an end to the issuing of the educator's commands. But he may create himself an *influence* which shall last as long as life itself; and this Madame de Staël succeeded in doing.

The intellectual education of the child was not carried on under the most favourable circumstances. The constant changes of residence, and the multiplicity of the mother's anxieties (which Auguste too soon began to share) must have presented sad hindrances in the way of a regular plan of study. We are told that the lesson hours were broken in upon by the writing of letters, and the giving of orders. Madame de Staël's rank and situation created many claims on her time, which ill assort with the constant attention a little child requires.

But this boy learnt one good habit from an unlikely source. When listening to his mother's explanations, if some accident interrupted her, he was expected to give her the thread of her thoughts when the interruption ceased; and this obliged him to learn how to fix his attention. It would, nevertheless, be very unadvisable for every lady thus to attempt the education of a boy. It was only not a failure in Madame de Staël's case, because the child had a moral sensibility very early and freely developed. Few persons can thus afford to do two important things at one time; and for one child with whom such a plan succeeded, there would be ninety-nine failures.

In the year 1796, her work, "On the Passions," was published. It abounds with delicate analysis, and beautiful illustrations, but is tinged by excessive melancholy, the natural effect of the circumstances amid which it was written.

It contains some passages which provoke objection; but, on a general consideration of the work, we think every sensitive reader echoes the opinion of Talleyrand—"Nothing was ever better conceived, or more happily expressed."

Written chiefly in exile, it cannot excite our surprise to find a sombre tint prevail throughout; but there are passages which rise into eloquence, and their effect, like the brilliance of the diamond, is heightened by a sober setting. As a critic of every feeling and emotion which can quicken human pulses, perhaps she has been seldom equalled.

CHAPTER XXX.

In the affairs of this life, Madame de Staël really had the childishness and ignorance which are often affected. She tells us that her father's penetration had led her to think that any attempt at concealment must be useless; and, consequently, she often injured herself by acts of candour and generosity, which a more cunning mind would have avoided.

To impose upon her was exceedingly easy, because she was so candid herself, that she did not suspect deceit in others. Indeed, as she truly says, all her errors in political matters resulted from her firm belief that men must obey the truth, if only it were forcibly presented to them.

Her generous heart led her to make exertions in favour of persons of all shades of opinion; to be miserable, was to have a claim upon her; and, certainly, the woman who created an interest in so many selfish men, and incited them to kindly actions, must have been no ordinary creature.

Monsieur de Talleyrand, who was destined to play no unimportant part in the future of France, was, in 1796, still an exile, and in America. Madame de Staël, who probably knew of his wish to return, influenced Chénier to make an oration in his favour before the convention. Chénier stated that the

"citizen Talleyrand" had always encouraged the Revolution, had resigned the estates which, as Bishop of Autun, he held, and, in fact, had so conducted himself throughout the entire struggle, as to merit the privilege of a permission to return. This permission was given, and in September, 1796, Talleyrand returned to France.

We must say that, in the sequel, Monsieur de Talleyrand, the ex-bishop of Autun, proved himself as thorough a man of the world, as if he had never worn the sacerdotal robes. We have heard of a certain prince-bishop of Osnaburgh, whose habit it was on returning from church, and before he went to the chase, to fling off his priestly disguise, crying, "There goes the bishop!" This man was certainly the antetype of Talleyrand, who, in resigning the alb and the crucifix, entered keenly into the chase after secular distinction, and (to continue the metaphor) succeeded in bagging his somewhat questionable game.

He never missed a favour for want of asking for it; and having expressed to Madame de Staël his willingness to take office under the directory, she procured him an introduction to Barras, then a member of the government. Madame de Staël tells us, that this recommendation was the sole link between herself and the political career of Talleyrand, who, though he might require assistance in attaining power, knew very well how to keep his place without extraneous aid. Her chief reason for thus introducing him was, the hope that his superior talents might effect a fusion between the reasonable members of both parties, and thus prevent the clash between the directory and the

representatives, which Monsieur Necker had asserted must take place.

The overthrow of Robespierre and his party, among many other effects, had deprived of his appointment a certain young soldier, who had fought in the army of the convention, and had taken part, though without any special mention, in the recapture of Toulon, which revolted against the convention, in 1793. Having no fortune but his sword, he came to Paris in 1795, and petitioned to be sent to Constantinople, to teach the Turks the art of war. But Barras discerned the budding talent of the young Bonaparte, and procured him an appointment in the army of the new convention. In its service he distinguished himself on the 14th of October, 1795, by a victory over the sections of Paris, who had taken up arms in order to rid themselves of the conventionalists.

During the earlier period of his career, Bonaparte affected a love for literature and the sciences, and seldom went into society. He read considerably, and his excellent memory retained the matter wherewith he stored it. Plutarch, we are told, was his favourite author. His acquaintance with the Abbé Raynal (our old friend in the little round wig, Necker's visitor), led to some introductions which were useful to the young soldier. The Abbé did not live to see Bonaparte's more ambitious career, for he died in 1796. Bonaparte thus came to meet Barras, Tallien, and other noted revolutionists. Madame Tallien was, we have said, the friend of Josephine, widow of General Beauharnais, a woman whose fate was afterwards so curiously linked with that of Bonaparte.

Historical scandal says, that Barras negotiated a marriage between the youthful general and Madame Beauharnais, and would have us believe that Barras had taken more than a friendly interest in the beautiful widow. But Bonaparte's own letters to his wife breathe the warmest affection, and are couched in terms little likely to be inspired by a marriage so made up. The following is much more likely to be true :—

Among the attendants at General Bonaparte's levée, he found one morning a fine lad of eleven or twelve years old, who petitioned for the privilege of wearing his father's sword. This led to inquiries, and more intimate acquaintance with, if not a first introduction to Madame Beauharnais, the mother of the boy.* Her beauty and elegant manners were well calculated to charm, and in March 1796, she was married to Bonaparte. Whatever ambitious designs he may at that time have entertained, would certainly be aided rather than frustrated by such a connexion, for Madame Beauharnais and her beautiful friend, Madame Tallien, were persons held in the highest consideration at the pseudo-court of the Luxembourg.

Perhaps at the instigation of Madame Tallien, who had some authority over him, perhaps because he felt his own incapacity to retain the post, Barras, who had been first in command of the army, yielded up the reins to his second in authority, General Bonaparte; who, a few days after his marriage, left France to take the direction of the army in Italy.

* This boy was Monsieur Eugène Beauharnais, who long afterwards introduced to the senate the motion proposing the divorce of his mother from her illustrious husband.

In the month of April, 1796, he won a decisive victory over the Austrians at Montenotte. This was the first link in a long chain of military achievements, which rival, if they do not excel, those of the greatest conquerors of antiquity. In the annals of history Bonaparte appears a Titan among the lesser celebrities of his time, and indeed, possesses so many elements of the hero of classic story, that one has little difficulty in realising how the successful soldier was promoted in heathen times to all the honours of deity. Inflexible in resolve, stern in purpose, keen in discrimination; though not naturally of a sanguinary disposition, and certainly under the influence of the domestic affections, which, however, were ever made subordinate to his ambitious ends, he seems to have surmounted every obstacle that lay in his path, and to have gained at a few strides the highest pinnacle of earthly power and prosperity. To attain his objects he spared neither men nor money, and for a series of years his arms were attended by almost unbroken success. But that his wonderful triumphs have exerted a beneficial influence on any one portion of the human race it would be difficult to conclude.

It is certain that Madame de Staël's imagination was fired by the successes of the French arms in Italy, and that she had every disposition to honour the youthful general who had won so early the wreath that seldom crowns an unsilvered head. We are told that at a dinner-party she refused to take precedence of an officer who had been Napoleon's *aide-de-camp*, and that she said to him, as she playfully stepped aside in order to let him pass her, "I cannot consent to precede an *aide-de-camp* of General Bonaparte."

In 1797 Bonaparte arrived in Paris with the treaty of Campo Formio, which he had just concluded with Austria. A public reception was given him, at which Madame de Staël was present. Talleyrand made an oration in his praise, and the directory, attired in the Roman costume, listened to the account of his past victories, and recommended to him several projects for the future, one of which designs was the conquest of England, "a rather difficult mission," sarcastically remarks Madame de Staël.

One cannot but smile at the folly which led French citizens to ransack the wardrobe of the past, and to disguise themselves as men of another age and nation. But this period abounds in absurdities, and just now the classical mania was rife in France; men even travestied their names to suit the fashion; after the manner of the notorious apostle of fraternity, Anacharsis Clootz.

At this time Bonaparte was as much noticed for his character and talents as for his successful generalship; and Madame de Staël acknowledges that the French were already attached to him. He was, indeed, acting in a manner to secure their regard. The French people, frivolous as they undoubtedly are,—and even the Reign of Terror had its jokes, its Sainte Mère Guillotine, its Ball of Victims, &c.—are yet well able to appreciate and respect the character of a man who has, or affects to have, habits above their own. Yet, Bonaparte probably affected nothing in preferring a quiet and studious life to the pompous absurdities acted by the directory in their Roman costumes. His mind, even at this period, was no doubt seriously

bent on the accomplishment of a great destiny, and the aspect of society must have afforded, to his discriminating eye a certainty that his opportunity for a decisive blow need not long be wanting.

His proclamations to the Cisalpine and Ligurian republics were generally quoted, and some sentences in these productions led people to hope the best from the influence which the retired young soldier was quickly acquiring over the destinies of France. "The only victories," so spoke the youthful general—"the only victories that occasion no regret are those which are gained over ignorance."

"There prevailed in his style," says Madame de Staël, "a tone of moderation and nobleness which well contrasted with the revolutionary harshness of the civil chiefs of France. The warrior spoke as a magistrate: while the magistrates explained themselves with military violence. General Bonaparte had refrained from executing the laws against emigrants. It was said that he was much attached to his wife, whose character was full of sweetness. In short, people loved to believe him the possessor of all the generous qualities which throw extraordinary faculties into fine relief."

The new Bayard did not long preserve the good opinion of Madame de Staël. Undoubtedly, when she came to know him she was disappointed. She loved to study character, of which the world never saw a quicker observer, but General Bonaparte baffled her; she soon felt that he exhibited to her observation just the points of his development which he chose she should see; the rest was hidden behind an impene-

trable veil of reserve and reticence. This coldness and secrecy were essentially disagreeable to a person at once enthusiastic and communicative. It is highly probable, too, that before there was any active dislike between them, Bonaparte felt jealous of the attention her conversation commanded, particularly as the liberty made attractive by her eloquence, was not at all congruous with his own ideas on political subjects. Had she been a man, and able to ascend the tribune, perhaps she might have met Bonaparte's gradual assumption of authority with suitable weapons; and furthermore, had she succeeded in consolidating the reasonable republicans and the constitutional monarchists, a liberal party too strong to be over-ridden, might have checked the progress of his ambitious designs; and have secured for France such a government, as even yet she does not possess.

Let us recur to her own statement, that it was with sentiments of admiration she first met the man who was to become her persecutor. He told her, soon after he returned from Italy, in 1797, that he had sought an interview with her father at Coppet, and regretted that accident had prevented their meeting. This speech, we well know, was calculated to gratify her; but she tells us that when she had a little recovered from the first effects of her admiration, the hero of Montenotte inspired her with a strange sentiment of fear. Bonaparte had at that time certainly no preponderating influence; in fact, he was rather out of favour with some members of the directory, so that it could not be any dread of his power which thus affected her; she calls it "a prophetic sensation,"

and avers that other persons who had communication with General Bonaparte experienced a similar antipathy.

This feeling, far from decreasing as her acquaintance with him progressed, became more and more decided. She loved a good listener—he was speedily tired of her brilliant conversation. Each liked to absorb the attention of the surrounding company, but there was this remarkable difference in their vanity: she was well pleased to praise others, and eager to have the justice of her panegyrics acknowledged: he hated anything or any one who divided with him the public attention. Between two natures so pitched there must be antipathy, and it too soon showed itself.

"Whom do you consider the greatest woman, living or dead?" inquired Madame de Staël, of General Bonaparte, at a party given by Monsieur de Talleyrand. "Her, madam, who has borne the most children," curtly replied the soldier. "It is said," she resumed, a little discomfited, "that you are not very friendly to the sex." "I am passionately fond of my wife," he answered, turning abruptly away to converse with some one else.

He forgot that Madame de Staël, in any combat of wit, was likely eventually to be the winner, and by his rebuffs he made himself an enemy, who, woman though she was, and the victim of his arbitrary power, kept him at bay with her pen for many years. "Why do you take any notice of her?" said some one to Napoleon, long subsequently; "surely you need not mind a woman." "Madame de Staël," replied the

emperor, "has shafts which would hit a man were he seated on a rainbow."

In considering her opposition to Napoleon, we must remember that she held it a sacred duty to preserve intact the political creed she had received from her father, and to which her own convictions and experience added overwhelming weight. If, under the Bourbons, she thought arbitrary power a bad thing, and conscientiously desired some change in the government which might give liberty to the subject, without depriving the king of those prerogatives which every first magistrate—call him what we will—must possess to be respected, it is not very likely that she would be favourable to a military despotism; that crushing monstrosity which oppresses and degrades any people over whom it is exercised.

We may indeed settle the question by saying that as a woman she ought to have left politics entirely alone, but a very little consideration of the times will show us that such a course was impracticable. Who was she that could in those days leave them alone? certainly not the wife of an ambassador, who was expected to preside at public receptions, and to entertain her guests—all of them political people. Certainly not the daughter of a minister whose character and policy were variously handled, and often so unfairly considered that filial love must have been cold indeed had he lacked *one* adherent in Paris, where he had formerly counted so many. Certainly not a woman who had been in peril of losing her life in a political convulsion; and who had subsequently been urged by her own noble nature to confront the tyrants who decimated her country, and demand mercy for

one unhappy political miscreant after another, until she again put in hazard her own safety.*

Heaven forbid that women should interfere or have a voice in the little questions of the day, that often provoke disagreement and contention without involving any high interest. The profoundest wisdom has hedged round the sanctuary of domestic life, and protected it from the storms of party discussion, and the violence of political hate. But in any great crisis of public affairs, surely every noble man would have his women act as the wife and daughters of a patriot should. If the real liberties of a country, the fundamental principles of government be at stake, that woman is little worthy of the name who, having great influence, stands inertly aside, and says, "I am a woman, it is no concern of mine." Are women, then, incapable of public feeling? Let history decide. History, which tells in one page how women cut off their hair to string the bows of their defenders, and in another how the wife and mother of Coriolanus went forth, unheeding the Volscian cohorts, and besought him to spare his country and theirs. One can better sympathise with the poor Spartan mother who shed no tear when her son, who had fallen in defence of his fatherland, was brought dead to her

* It may also be added that a French hostess is expected to lead the conversation of her visitors, and is anxious if it flag for an instant. Madame de Staël, during her subsequent visit to England, notes that our ladies are almost ignorant of this source of anxiety, and that the English talk or remain silent, as it may happen, nobody much caring to speak. An English lady, perplexed by the want of sufficient supper to offer her guests, would hardly conceive it possible to make up by the brilliance of her conversation for the emptiness of her table: unlike the Frenchwoman who said to her footman, "Remind me to be witty, we have no roast meat to-night."

on his own shield, than with women who only smile insipidly when some stirring history is read, and feel that *as* women they are absolved from the obligation of caring whether Stuart or Hanover hold the throne, whether they breathe the air of slavery or of freedom. This kind of indifference is often put forth as a most feminine and agreeable quality, when it is in reality an idle excuse to save the trouble of earnest thought, or an evasion to cover ignorance of the question at issue. Alice Lisle and Rachel Russell, at any rate, were not women shaped in this mould. We believe that the men of a country are never so brave and good as when they know something of the woman's virtues, endurance and resignation; nor the women so fully capable of playing their own part in the drama of life as when they have caught somewhat of the hero's spirit.

The following words, in which is sketched out the character of Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland, seem to us so singularly appropriate to Necker and his illustrious daughter, that no apology for their quotation is necessary:—

"He had formerly, with the most laudable zeal for the interest of the subject, stood foremost in all attacks on the high prerogative of the crown; but he wished to reform, not to destroy the constitution; and with the same noble ardour with which he had resisted the first tyrannical exertions of the monarch, he now supported Charles in those limited powers which yet remained to him; he pursued the straight and onward path, equally remote from either extreme—a beautiful model of the most exalted and virtuous patriotism."

CHAPTER XXXI.

ALTHOUGH the indiscriminate massacres which distinguished the Reign of Terror were ended with the death of Robespierre and his accomplices, the priests and the emigrants were still the subjects of fierce persecution; and an attempt made to overset the republican government in September, 1797, gave some colour of reason to the rigour of the convention.

Madame de Staël, it must be owned, had no particular reason to love either of the proscribed classes, for she was a Protestant and a constitutionalist; but the sight of human suffering was at all times enough to secure her good offices, and she began again to employ her influence for the benefit of the unhappy persons whose lives were in danger.

When she wished to obtain Talleyrand's recall, she had enlisted in her service the talents of Chénier, and she made use of the same influence in procuring the pardon of Monsieur Dupont de Nemours, "the most chivalrous champion of liberty in France, but yet a man who could not recognise liberty in the dispersion of the representatives by means of armed force." Chénier succeeded in saving him by representing him to be eighty years old—a course which Monsieur Dupont's danger could not reconcile to his vanity; for the *protégé* was a man of sixty, and resented the ground of pardon.

A man of some authority having asserted that Madame de Staël pitied the conspirators, she thought it prudent to retire to the country for some little time. She sought refuge in the house of a friend, and met beneath his roof another fugitive, Monsieur de la Tremouille, one of the most illustrious royalists of La Vendée. He had come to France in the hope that a counter-revolution and the return of the Bourbons were at hand; but the summary punishment of the conspirators, and the decided attitude of the directory, had induced him to relinquish his ideas, and to seek safety in concealment.

Madame de Staël generously offered to cede the place of refuge to a person who stood in greater need of it than herself; but the Prince de la Tremouille declined to take advantage of this opportunity, and left France as soon as he could reach the frontier; all prospect of the restoration of the old dynasty being over, for a time at least.

As soon as she thought the danger a little blown past, Madame de Staël returned to Paris, where the general persecution of royalists and priests awakened her dread lest a second period of bloodshed might be in store for her unhappy country.

The highest influence was often unavailing to save a person in disgrace. The Marquis d'Ambert, formerly General Bernadotte's colonel, but now retired from the army, was sentenced to death by a military commission. Bernadotte felt great compassion for his old superior, and pleaded with the directory in his favour. But to spare a royalist was a dangerous precedent; and though Bernadotte asked the life of the

old man as the reward of his own brilliant services to the Republic, his request was refused, and D'Ambert underwent his sentence.

Two days after this, early in the morning, Madame de Staël had a visit from Monsieur Norvins de Montbreton, who, with great emotion, acquainted her that his brother had been arrested, and would no doubt be sentenced to death by the military commission at that very moment engaged in trying him. Madame de Staël had known these brothers in Switzerland, during the emigration; but even had she been less acquainted with them, she would not have hesitated in assisting to save a human life. Monsieur de Norvins wildly asked her if she knew any means of saving his brother. She was doubtful, remembering the failure of Bernadotte's interference a few days before. But the idea that a person whom she knew was in danger of being shot within a few hours, urged her to make an attempt in his favour; and recollecting that she had met at the house of Barras, a certain General Lemoine, who had talked with her very pleasantly, she determined to accompany Monsieur de Norvins to his house, and plead on behalf of the person in danger. The reason for her determination was, that General Lemoine was in command of the division of Paris, and had, *ex officio*, the right to suspend the execution of the decisions of the military commission at present sitting in judicature in that city. She says, simply and touchingly, "I thanked God for this idea, and instantly set out with the brother of the unhappy Norvins."

General Lemoine was one of those model men, who

are never excited, never carried beyond themselves. He was surprised to be visited by Madame de Staël at the early hour of ten in the forenoon, and apologised for the negligence of his toilette, as if the destinies of man hung on the tie of a cravat. It was in vain that Madame de Staël implored him to be at ease on such matters, and assured him that a moment's delay might cost a life. The General, perpetually polite, recurred to excuses for the untidiness of his apartment, and the defects in his attire, while she was dying to get him to discuss the business in hand.

At first, he absolutely, but politely, refused her request. She persevered, he hesitated: twice he took the pen, twice laid it down, fearful of committing himself.

All this time the anxious face of Monsieur de Norvins acted as a retaining fee, and the advocate glanced from the clock to the General, and from the General to the clock, eager to know which of the conflicting powers—time or the soldier's inflexibility—would first give way.

She was gratified at last by receiving a paper signed by General Lemoine, authorising a suspension of the sentence; Monsieur de Norvins, rushing with it to the tribunal, broke up the sitting; and the delay thus gained led to his brother's total acquittal.

The conquest of England, which Bonaparte had been requested to undertake, did not, on a nearer view, appear very feasible. He cruised about the coast, and landed a few men in Wales, who were warmly received by the militia, and the General

returned to Paris, putting off the accomplishment of this design until some more convenient season. He knew how much the French people are ruled by splendid names, and he had projects more dazzling to the fancy, and involving less difficulty than the subjugation of England. It is most probable that he did not intend a serious landing in 1797, but only such an approach to it as would satisfy the directory that he was attentive to their orders.

He must have seen that the government then subsisting in France could not long hang together, and while things were coming to a crisis it was quite as well that he should be at a distance. An expedition into Egypt, while it removed him from the immediate scene of action, would give him a chance of increasing his influence by a succession of military exploits. Beside the ultimate prospect of ruining the British trade with India, there was a present excitement, a charm for the French fancy in the conquest of a country so interesting and venerable. To this project he therefore devoted himself.

But his proceedings were delayed by the want of money, and understanding that a considerable treasure had been accumulating for upwards of two centuries at Berne, a tangible proof of the frugality and prosperity of the Bernese—he determined on the invasion of Switzerland, and the seizure of the money in question. The value of the Pays de Vaud, as a military post, was insisted on as an additional reason for the invasion, if any necessity existed to demand such an argument.

This invasion of a free country so long a refuge

from every political storm, seemed to Madame de Staël so unjustifiable, that she sought an interview with General Bonaparte, and laid her view of the subject before him. The *tête-à-tête* lasted nearly an hour, and the soldier listened patiently to all the lady said. At its close, probably she was more surprised than we are, to find Bonaparte's plans unmodified by all her eloquence. "Demosthenes and Cicero united," she says, "would not induce him to sacrifice one iota of his personal interest."

Bonaparte was cunning enough to attack her on her own ground. "The condition of the Pays de Vaud," he alleged, "was a sufficient reason for its invasion. The Vaudois were in subjection to the aristocrats of Berne, and men at that time had no notion of living without political rights."

Madame de Staël attempted to calm this republican zeal, and assured him that in all civil regards the Vaudois were quite free; that while such was the case, it was not worth while to subject the country to that greatest of all possible misfortunes, a foreign invasion, in order to give liberty, which really existed, a formal recognition from the government.

Bonaparte continued—"Self-love and imagination hold positively by the advantage of participating in the government of one's country; and it is an injustice to debar any class of citizens from enjoying this right."

Madame de Staël owned that in theory nothing could be truer, but argued the equal truth of the proposition that every people must obtain liberty by its own efforts, and not by calling in the assistance of

a power necessarily dominant. Then she tried to interest him in the country; spoke of its beauty, peace and freedom.

"You are very right, madam," said the General, "but men must have political rights—yes, political rights." The question thus settled, Bonaparte spoke of his taste for retirement, for the country, for the fine arts, and, in short, endeavoured to make himself agreeable to his fair antagonist. The change of subject was, however, as much a dismissal as if he had ordered a lackey to show her to the door, and she retired very much dissatisfied.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE Swiss invasion became a confirmed intention, and in January, 1798, Madame de Staël left Paris to join her father at Coppet. Multiplied as her cares and interests had become, her filial love was still fresh and pure as ever.

Necker's name was yet on the list of emigrants, and a positive law condemned to death any emigrant who remained in a country occupied by French troops. His daughter earnestly besought him to seek some other abode during the struggle, but he calmly replied, "At my age it does not befit a man to wander about the earth." Madame de Staël thinks that a sort of tender superstition about leaving Madame Necker's grave also influenced him in remaining.

This admirable wife had now been dead four years, and we shall say somewhat about her closing life when we come to consider the last days of Monsieur Necker. The bereaved husband had buried his wife in the grounds belonging to Coppet, and daily walked around the spot where she laid, no doubt anticipating the period when they should be reunited. To abandon Coppet seemed like abandoning her. Monsieur Necker, his daughter, and her infant children, therefore, awaited the arrival of the French troops. Madame de Staël and her father placed themselves on a balcony that commanded the high-road in order to catch a first glimpse of the invaders. The servants, eager to have a view of the soldiers, all deserted the château, and went to the end of the avenue to watch the procession of the troops.

Although the season was winter, the weather was lovely; the Alps were reflected in the lake, and the calm and quiet, so characteristic of that region in fine weather, were only disturbed by the distant sound of the drum.

This monotonous noise struck Madame de Staël with terror on her father's account; for although the directory had invariably spoken of him with respect, the revolutionary laws had recorded against him a sentence of death, and she knew that on many occasions such laws had been cruelly enforced. She was much agonised, therefore, to see one officer separate himself from his company and enter the path to the château. But as we are frequently surprised by misfortunes, of whose proximity we were unaware, so sometimes our anticipations of evil prove fallacious.

The soldier whose approach had given her such pain, proved to be a deputy from the directory, charged to offer Monsieur Necker a safeguard during the occupation of the territory. Madame de Staël adds that the officers who visited Coppet on this occasion, behaved with the most perfect respect to her father.

On the occasion of this invasion of Switzerland, she tells us, she first suffered the anguish of blaming her own country sufficiently to long for the victory of those who fought against France.

It must not be supposed that the Swiss had made no preparations to defend themselves; the lesser cantons sent their usual military contingent to Berne; arrived there, these patriots knelt on the open space before the church, while one of them pronounced these words:—"We are not afraid of the French armies; we are four hundred men, and if we be not enough, four hundred more are ready to march to the assistance of their country."

In the silence of evening, on the day when the French and Swiss came to an engagement, the recluses at Coppet distinctly heard the cannon-shots which were being fired at Berne, thirty leagues off. In regard to this statement, the quiet of the time and the numberless echoes that prolong every sound in the Alpine districts, must be taken into consideration. Madame de Staël says this fatal sound had such an influence over her, that she scarcely dared breathe for fear of losing one stroke of it. For although her father's safety was guaranteed, her grief at the invasion of his country was intense; and her anticipations of Bonaparte's growing ascendancy began to be the source of great torment to her.

As was to be expected, the Swiss were beaten, but they performed prodigies of valour; when the men fell, the women and children took up the arms thus abandoned at the call of death; and the inhabitants generally, defended themselves in their mountain passes with vigour and obstinacy.

The Swiss did not seem to have a great liking for the liberty benevolently offered them by France, and some of the little cantons never accepted "the Republic, one and indivisible," which was so earnestly pressed upon them by the cannon, that "last reason of kings;" and therefore, a weapon peculiarly fitted for republican France.

The reckless and general warfare authorised by the directory, formed the precedent for Napoleon's system of universal subjugation; like the Ishmaelites of old, "every man's hand was against him, and his hand against every man."

One result of the invasion of Switzerland was the union of Geneva with France; Monsieur Necker was now, therefore, literally a French subject, and as it was not lawful for a proscribed person to remain on any portion of the French territory, he took occasion to present a memorial to the directory, praying that his name might be erased from the fatal list. This memorial was committed to the hands of Madame de Staël, who had the satisfaction, on presenting it, to receive a unanimous consent from the directory. She then asked the repayment of the two millions of francs her father had left deposited in the treasury; the directory admitted the justice of the claim, and offered payment out of the confiscated ecclesiastical

property. This Monsieur Necker declined; not because he believed the sale of that property to be unjust, but rather on account of his conviction to the contrary. He could not bear to have it said that, on any occasion, his interest and his opinions were synonymous.

The same January which chronicled the French conquest of Switzerland, proclaimed the Republic in Rome. But this republican zeal was mostly a farce; people did not generally much believe in it, and had not the dreadful ordeal of a counter-revolution been a necessary preliminary to the re-establishment of the old royal race, no doubt the great bulk of the French people would have hailed with delight the re-erection of a throne, and the foundation of a limited monarchy. But the Bourbons had been too much exasperated to return quietly; and the restoration of all the property confiscated since the Revolution, and now largely distributed into other hands, would have ripped up the worst wounds of the country, and have unsettled all that was just acquiring stability.

At the same time, people began to be heartily tired of the airs of the directory: and Bonaparte was, no doubt, very wise to remove from the scene of action, and allow things to take their natural course. Some historians would have us believe the command of the Egyptian expedition to have been equivalent to an honourable exile on the part of the directory: however that may be, there seems no reason to doubt that Bonaparte readily concurred in the arrangement. He knew that the French would soon be thoroughly disgusted with their present rulers; and when things

were ripe for change, what was easier than for him to return, surrounded by the *prestige* of military fame, and seize the occasion to take a decisive lead in political matters?

At present, he pretended to have no liking for royal titles. Nevertheless, it was reported that he wished to be King of Lombardy. Madame de Staël questioned General Augereau regarding the rumour. "It is undoubtedly false, madam," he replied. "General Bonaparte is a young man too well educated to entertain such an idea."

She also records a curious conversation between Bonaparte and some member of the directory, about this time.

"I might have been King of Lombardy," said Bonaparte; "but I have no ambition for such pre-eminence, in any country."

"If you have," replied the director, "I would advise you to let that country be any but France. If there appeared the least likelihood of such a design on your part here, we should at once throw you over; and if you were sent to the Temple to-morrow, not four persons in the country would appeal against the sentence."

Madame de Staël says that this truly republican reply threw the habitually cautious Bonaparte somewhat off his guard; he was unable, for a moment, to conceal his anger, and strode away from the too candid magistrate in a fit of evident ill-temper.

On May 19th, 1798, he sailed with the Egyptian expedition; just six years later, the Pope crowned him Emperor.

He was attended into Africa by a large army, and a staff of scientific men; for, as we have said, Bonaparte at this period affected a great regard for science. He headed his proclamations, "Bonaparte, General-in-Chief, and Member of the Institute."

Meantime, his plan for the establishment of a French colony on the shores of the Mediterranean, attracted and dazzled the public attention. The Revolution began to be less spoken about; General Bonaparte and Egypt were the uppermost topics. A strange interest attached to the exploration of an ancient country, of which so little was known. The soldier, the artist, the man of science, the student of history, had each a reason for viewing with intelligent curiosity the present attempt to unravel some of the mysteries which enwrapped—as the mummy clothes enwrap her dead—the venerable land of Isis and Osiris; of the Nile, the Desert, and the Sphynx. If anything else were wanting to incite the French to enthusiasm, an admirable resort was found in the ultimate interference with the interests of the Indo British commerce.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

In 1799 a change took place in the directory; some members of which retired, according to the law, and their places were filled up by persons freshly appointed. The new directory were men of such vulgarity, that France—even after what one would call a long apprenticeship to the toleration of vulgarity in high places—France was disgusted. She began to see that republic and virtue are not interchangeable words; she began to see that the intrigues she hated in the hands of polished ladies and gentlemen, was a thing to be equally detested in the management of harsh and vulgar men; she now understood that a courtier is not invariably clad in an embroidered coat, but may even be enfolded in the rigid simplicity of the Roman toga; and when she made this discovery, the Republic was a doomed thing. The agonies of death might be longer or shorter, but die it must. The reaction is always equal to the action. France had believed salvation was in the Republic; losing that illusion, she would conclude it worthless. She had taken to it in her need; and like a life-boat in a storm, if it failed at all it must fail utterly, and be worse than useless.

Bonaparte's brothers, Lucien and Joseph, both men of talent and useful to the General, had seats in one

of the two councils of state, and no doubt gave the soldier ample information of all that passed at home. He was thus kept up to the level of society in Paris, while he was making fresh talk for that society. And he knew the character of the French people when he said "A ruler who would please them, must give them something fresh to talk about every three months." The public respect for the directory had been long ebbing, and the army had sustained several defeats in Italy from the Austrians and Russians, when Bonaparte determined to reappear on the scene. He accordingly left his army in Egypt, and hurried to Paris, where he was received with the most enthusiastic delight. Salutes were fired, the bells rung, and instead of holding him accountable to the directory for the desertion of his troops, the public seemed to look on his arrival as a relief from their trouble and disorder. He took advantage of this state of public feeling, and in treating with the directory used rather the air of command than that of subordination. "I left you peace," he said, "I find war. What is become of so many soldiers?" This ended in the dissolution of the directory on the 9th of November, 1799; under pretence of honouring Barras, he was escorted to his country-seat at Grosbois by a detachment of soldiers. An attention capable of a double interpretation.

On that same 9th of November, Madame de Staël came to Paris, from Coppet, and while she changed horses at some miles' distance from the city, the news of the dissolution was told her.

On the evening of her arrival in Paris, she learned

that General Bonaparte had been in that city five weeks, and that since his return from Egypt he had prepared every mind for a revolution which was about to take place. She heard also that every party had made overtures to him, and that he had given hopes to all.

Madame de Staël indignantly records that he at this time censured the directory for seizing the papers of a woman—he who afterwards, drove so many women into exile; and that he spoke favourably of peace—he who introduced eternal war into the world. "There was," she tells us, "in the hypocritical sweetness of his manners, something that made an odious contrast with the violence of his actions."

Meantime, the wonderful man thus gradually assuming the rule of the French destiny, would not seem to be courting power; when wanted, he was often found conversing with Volney at the Institute, discussing calmly the discoveries his staff had made in Egypt during his recent absence in that country.

He knew from his classical studies, how much Cincinnatus gained by being *taken* from the plough, and he had the quick genius which applies every fact gained to the elucidation of a present experience. Volney, the Institute, and his books, made Napoleon's plough.

On the 9th of November, Bonaparte emptied the second council of state, the Council of Five Hundred, much as Cromwell emptied the Commons. He called in his soldiers, and, alas for the day! the alarmed senators, in all the honours of the Roman toga, fled ignominiously before the troops, and dropping from

the windows into the gardens outside—took to their heels with hearty will. The next day some of those pusillanimous patriots were called on to debate the articles of a new constitution. But Bonaparte had now assured himself that he held a purchase over them, while he possessed the direction of the army, and could command its assistance.

Napoleon had few obstacles to surmount in obtaining the power he wanted; the fear of Jacobinism was greatly in his favour, and he took care to make it appear that law and order could only be secured by following his directions.

A commission, formed of fifty members of the two councils of state, was appointed to discuss with General Bonaparte the terms of the new constitution. A plan of government, which Sièyes had sketched out ten years before, was submitted to Bonaparte, and from it he selected such elements as suited him.

Madame de Staël says, that Bonaparte allowed his advisers perfect liberty of speech; but that when the discussion assumed a practical turn, he soon decided matters according to his inclination, by threatening to leave them to manage their own affairs, and to deal with the Jacobins how they could. The poor counsellors, remembering their terror when they fled before his troops, agreed to all; and finally Bonaparte was appointed chief consul of the Republic, and charged to choose two colleagues.

Every evening Madame de Staël's visitors related to her the particulars of Bonaparte's sittings with his commission; and the recitals would have afforded her

considerable amusement had she not been profoundly saddened by the prospects of France.

Just as in England the rigour of the Puritan rule was succeeded by a period of the wildest licence, so in France the days of the *sans culottes* were followed by a period of the most servile courtiership. Already the more prophetic began eagerly to worship the rising sun; and an eye practised as was Madame de Staël's, clearly foresaw whither this train of matters would lead.

With the impression that France was about to fall under a more complete despotism than she had ever yet experienced, and grieving that the struggles of the Revolution should be all in vain, she said to a man, who had been a revolutionist and a republican, "I am alarmed for liberty. What is becoming of the principles gained at the Revolution?" The reply is characteristic: "Madame, our business now is not to preserve the Revolution, but the lives of the men who made it."

Madame de Staël, as we have frequently taken occasion to notice, was a woman devoted to society; society in Paris was to her one of the most agreeable things in life, if not an absolute essential to her happiness. The Swiss society, where the men are devoted to science rather than literature, and the women less sparkling and witty, did not please her nearly so well. We have seen that from her girlhood she was used to associate with all that was profound or brilliant in the intellectual life of what is, in some respects, the first city in the world.

No doubt, Bonaparte's appointment as chief consul

offered many advantages to such a woman, and to the society among which she moved. A certain stability of public affairs is necessary before the wealthy and cultivated classes can make much use of their privileges and immunities; and the days of the directory, though an improvement on the Reign of Terror, were not very favourable to a life of ease and elegance, to what was jealously called the influence of the "*salons dorés.*"

We may search long and vainly for any other clue to her opposition to Bonaparte than that afforded by her being every way pledged to the conscientious advocacy of her father's moderate and liberal opinions. Every interest lay in the other scale; what she called duty, in this. We may dispute the decision that led her to trouble herself at all about public affairs; but, if we conclude her mistaken here, we cannot but admire the bravery and self-denial with which she sacrificed so much at the shrine of conscience.

At the same time she did not put on the air of a grand heroine; nor did she perform these noble actions, simply and gravely as an Englishwoman might. Her courage in action contrasted, perhaps somewhat oddly, with the sparks of wit wherewith she provoked her enemy. We expect to see a grave, if not a melancholy air about a person who is involved in great trouble, and who suffers for important interests. Certainly it is natural for an English nature to wear such an aspect. But Madame de Staël, though she loved England, had nothing of our national temperament; lively, sparkling, passionate, there was scarcely a circumstance of her life unbroken by a

smile, even when we expect her tears to flow the most readily.

Yet she was by no means unfeeling; her sympathies were quick, her sensibilities keen; she was subject to paroxysms of grief such as a colder nature can scarcely credit when it hears them described; but the next moment after such an ebullition, when we look for only despair and death, she had resumed her relish for life, and marked it by a stroke of wit, or thoughts breathing eloquently the true atmosphere of the soul's higher, hopeful life.

Admitting that in her extreme appreciation of Paris, her dislike for solitude, her love of good company, there is something of frivolity upon which English people are wisely apt to smile; the admission, if it qualify our admiration of her in one regard, heightens it in another; for, what a foundation of solid good principle must have lain beneath these little weaknesses; seeing that her love for fine conversation and elegant society never tempted her to sign the treaty of allegiance to the tyrant in whose hand these desirable things were grasped.

Shortly after the revolution of the 9th November, Joseph Bonaparte, for whom Madame de Staël felt a regard, told her that his brother had expressed to him surprise that Madame de Staël kept aloof from his party. "What does she want? Her father's two millions? She shall have them. Leave to stay in Paris? She shall remain. What *does* she want? Why does she not join us?" Thus, said Joseph, his brother had spoken. Madame de Staël calmly replied, "The difficulty is not, sir, what I *want*, but what I *think*."

There were very few persons so scrupulously consistent. Most of Madame de Staël's acquaintances fell into the train of the First Consul, and his praises were vehemently chanted. So many wise and good people thought her factious, that sometimes she scarcely dared believe herself right in hazarding much that made life agreeable, for the sake of opposing a man who had as yet really done no great wrong. But as some animals, by the fineness of their physical senses, discern the presence of elements in the atmosphere which escape our grosser organs, so she seems to have had a prophetic dread of the ungenerous despotism which was to crush all that was beautiful or expansive in the life of France. Her friend Benjamin Constant shared the same political faith; and he consulted her about a speech which he meant to deliver to give warning of the approaching danger; and to promote the effort, ere it grew too late, to check the assumption of arbitrary power on the part of any individual.

Her drawing-room was filled with pleasant company. Delighting and delighted, she moved among her guests, enjoying to the full the eloquent and brilliant conversation in which she could so well sustain a part. She heard a low voice near her; it was that of Monsieur Constant. "Shall I speak?" he said. "Look around you; these are your friends; your house is to-night as you love to see it. If I do speak, your drawing-room to-morrow will be deserted."

"I know it," was the noble reply; "but you must follow your own convictions."

This was uttered, she says, in one of those moments of exaltation when we are carried beyond ourselves, and speak, as it were, without our own complete consent.* Had she foreseen all the calumnies, the insults, the persecutions, which her course would entail, she might have reasonably accepted Monsieur Constant's deference to her interests as his acquaintance.

He spoke in the senate, to the effect he intended; and although he individualised nobody, every one divined that the person whom he represented as aspiring after arbitrary authority was intended for the First Consul.

So thought Madame de Staël's friends. She was to entertain several persons on the evening following Monsieur Constant's speech. Five o'clock came, and with it a note of excuse; the disappointing *billets* continued to flow in, and she spent her evening alone. No doubt it requires a considerable degree of philosophy to bear such things calmly. Whatever men profess, we cannot believe in such a thing as perfect indifference to opinion; Madame de Staël never pretended to attain to it. She keenly felt every neglect of society.

Nor was she relieved, probably, when waited on by Fouché, the minister of police, one of the Jacobins who had lately "been regenerated by the baptism of Napoleon's favour." Fouché told her it was suspected she prompted Monsieur Constant's speech. She laughed at this compliment, and assured him that Monsieur Constant was a man whose talents placed him above the obligation of borrowing ideas from a woman.

* Perhaps at such moments our individuality is specially exhibited.

He agreed: but told her the First Consul was offended by the speech, and that she was considered an implicated party.

She remonstrated that the First Consul had no authority to consider the speech personal; that Monsieur Constant had made only such statements as affected the welfare of the Republic; that he had mentioned no names, and that he had only advanced such principles as the First Consul, the head of a free republic, ought to approve.

Fouché could not deny all this; but recommended her to retire to the country for a few days, and prophesied that in that space all would be forgotten.

This flattering prospect was not realised; she returned to find herself more unpopular than ever.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TOWARDS the end of the year 1799, Madame de Staël saw the First Consul take possession of the palace of the Tuileries; a place mournfully associated with the memory of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette. In his choice of this place for a residence, she thought she discerned a desire to surround himself with the appurtenances of royalty; this was the palace last inhabited by Louis.

Had Napoleon at this time really entertained no idea beyond the consulship, there would have been no excuse for his dislike to Madame de Staël; but the assumption of power is generally a gradual thing, and no intriguer likes to have his plans forestalled.

Lucien and Joseph Bonaparte were both acquainted with Madame de Staël. And, indeed, as we have said, most of her acquaintances were adherents of the new government. No doubt, therefore, her prophecies of the future rule of the First Consul were reported, more or less accurately, to that remarkable personage, and he must have felt that she was a dangerous woman to be allowed a residence in Paris.

One evening at a party at General Berthier's, the First Consul, as he stood behind Madame Bonaparte's chair, balanced himself first on one foot, then on the other. This was an awkward trick to which the princes of the old Bourbon race had been much addicted; and Madame de Staël, calling her neighbour's attention to the fact, asked if this were not a proof that General Bonaparte had a decided talent for government?

Such a pleasantry in England might excite a passing smile; but in France, society is much more under the fear of ridicule, and such stories, repeated to the First Consul, were well calculated to provoke his ire. But the sting of all these things lay in the truth which was hidden under them.

Madame de Staël, meantime, had to submit to the charge of Jacobinism, which was an insult flung indiscriminately at all who opposed the ascendancy of Bonaparte; and when the signal was given by the ruler, she had also to endure the desertion of three-fourths of her friends. Bonaparte publicly reproached his brother Joseph for frequenting her house, and Joseph felt compelled to withdraw, for some time at least, from her society. The coolness of the consul's

family was the magic influence which thus drove away her acquaintances. It cost her a pang, but she persevered in denying him her homage.

Early in the year 1800, she published her "Discourse on Literature," and the genius of this work suddenly turned the tide in her favour.

Not a single reference to Bonaparte compromised her independence, and liberal opinions are freely announced throughout; but the press was still under little restraint, and she had no difficulty in bringing out her book. She was very pleased to be again the favourite of society, and to see her drawing-room full of good company.

In the spring of this same year, Bonaparte set out for the campaign in Italy, and Madame de Staël left Paris, its gaieties, and disappointments, to spend some months with her father at Coppet. This, though she was not made for retirement, was always a happy occasion to her. An accomplished lady, her relative, says, that few things could be more touching than these meetings of the father and daughter. So tender was her interest in him—so eager her looks to note whether the time of their separation had made any change in his health—so vivid the terms in which she described all the scenes of her Parisian experience for his amusement—that it seemed in this case, as if the usual order of nature were reversed, and that she felt in her father the keen interest most people feel only in their children.

Pleased, he listened to the beloved voice, and when she spoke earnestly (and she seldom spoke otherwise), watched her lovingly and anxiously, as knowing to

what stormy troubles these passionate souls are exposed. Their separation, indeed, was scarcely separation, so frequent and vivid was the correspondence between Coppet and Paris, when they were apart; but when the happy time of meeting came, every little event could be retraced without weariness, because a familiar thing uttered by a voice dear to us, is soothing rather than tiresome. Forgetting for a time all the troubles that threatened her, or only recalling them to provoke his sympathy, which yielded her exquisite pleasure, she devoted herself to the delight of consoling his failing years. But she would not own them to be failing years; people could not more offend her than by telling her he looked older, or grew feeble. Such unreasonable devotion is so rare, that we need not stay to remark upon its folly. It was the heathens who built temples to Filial Piety. This is an age of Christianity.

On his way to Italy, Bonaparte passed through Geneva, and as he expressed a wish to see Monsieur Necker, the affectionate father, hoping to influence the First Consul in his daughter's favour, went to that city, and had an interview with the arbiter of her fate. Bonaparte received him very well, and spoke to him, apparently, with confidence. Monsieur Necker was not struck with him as his daughter had been, and found nothing remarkable in his conversation. During this interview, Necker said, that, as the First Consul was desirous to surround himself with illustrious names, he ought also to aim at adorning his society with great talents. To this Bonaparte politely assented, and assured Monsieur Necker that Madame de Staël might remain in Paris, at least some time longer.

Napoleon's account of this interview is rather different: he says that Necker seemed to expect that the French finances would be put under his direction, and adds that they parted dissatisfied with, if not disliking each other.*

Yet it appears probable that if Necker had felt any such dislike, his daughter, who hated Bonaparte as much as she loved her father, would have been pleased to fortify her own opinions by the mention of that father's example. It was convenient for Bonaparte, some time after, to account for a troublesome book published by Necker, by tracing its origin to personal pique.

The union of Geneva with France had turned a neutral, independent country, into a convenient passage for the French troops, and Madame de Staël arrived in Switzerland sufficiently early to see the army on its way towards the Alps. There was something mournful in seeing these peaceful districts thus rudely invaded by armed men; and as she walked by the quiet lake, in the still summer evenings, she says she felt almost ashamed to be so powerfully influenced by exterior circumstances. She tried to share the serenity of the sky, of the earth, but in vain; a painful agitation, which was henceforth to be too much with her, seemed to have taken possession of her. We can fancy what that cruel fluttering of the heart must be; that desolate unrest which the persecuted feel. In this state, she longed to hear that Bonaparte had sustained a defeat; she felt that only that could

* Napoleon's faith being proverbially after the Punic pattern, we see no reason why Necker should not be believed, in preference.

arrest the course of his tyranny; but how breathe a wish which must appear so traitorous to the interests of France?

The prefect of the Leman, Monsieur d'Eymar, formerly a member of the assembly, was a man with whom she had held frequent conversations on political subjects. This eager politician, little suspecting the pain he caused her, sent or brought to Coppet almost hourly news of the successes of the French in Italy. She felt the impossibility of convincing him that the future liberty of France required that Bonaparte should be beaten, and she therefore received his news in silence, or with only such replies as might veil her real feelings on the subject. But this silence was hateful to a thoroughly honest woman, and she did not long maintain it.

The army in Italy was not at all under the influence of her wishes: in two months Napoleon returned with the laurels of Marengo, and the terms of an armistice in which the advantage was on the side of France; the sacrifice, involving the cession of all the fortified towns in the north of Italy, on the part of Austria.

Madame de Staël returned to Paris in November of the same year; just the time when the victories of General Moreau rendered the enemies of Bonaparte very desirous to have peace. It seemed as if success waited on the First Consul, as if every adverse power must bend before him. Yet even at this period very few persons had foresight enough to grasp at the probability of Bonaparte's ambitious excesses; what lay on the surface of his administration was the re-

establishment of order, and the improvement of the finances. Victories abroad, and public works at home, the charges of the latter being mostly defrayed by the wealth of foreign countries, which the successful generals poured into the French coffers, presented a certain appearance of prosperity alike dazzling and deceptive. Amid the brilliance of his public actions, the encroachments of tyranny were almost overlooked.

An attempt on the life of the First Consul, which was made by means of what is called an infernal machine, redoubled the interest of France in her ruler. This cruel and cowardly deed originated with the partisans of the Bourbons. Nevertheless, Bonaparte made it an excuse for transporting vast numbers of Jacobins, who had had nothing to do with it. It is true that these transports were mostly vile characters, but, as Madame de Staël justly remarks, the baseness of the victim is no excuse for an act of injustice.

Every fresh action of the First Consul caused Madame de Staël some inquietude; she carefully avoided giving unnecessary offence, spent her winter in the quietest manner, and hoped for some time still to escape the fatal notice of the man who hated her. She attended none of his receptions; and her former acquaintance, Monsieur de Talleyrand, had so completely fallen in with the new ruler, that he seldom troubled himself to see her. She trusted to be forgotten.

If, however, she associated little with French society, her house was the resort of many illustrious foreigners, and with most of the European ambassa-

dors she was on terms of intimacy; and these connexions might reasonably appear to be favourable to her liberty.

The relations of the diplomatic body to Bonaparte's government were at first somewhat confusing. A Prussian minister, newly appointed, was anxious to gain the First Consul's favour by giving him philosophic hints on republican government, which the obliging German had picked up from Frederic II. He was soon advised to take a different course, and to recommend himself to notice by the scrupulous observance of courtly etiquette. The minister was a prudent man, and quickly took the hint.

Joseph Bonaparte was by no means an ungenerous man, and when he thought sufficient time had been allowed for his brother's resentment to cool, he resumed his acquaintance with Madame de Staël, who accepted his invitation to pay a visit to Morfontaine, his country house, which he had surrounded with gardens, in whose cultivation he took great delight. He was indefatigable in pursuing his horticultural occupations, and would sometimes remain walking or on foot, for eight hours at a stretch. The Austrian ambassador was also at Morfontaine during Madame de Staël's visit, and probably the contemplation of this remarkable individual afforded her some little amusement. He possessed in perfection what she calls "*l'esprit du courtisan,*" a failing which an original English writer has felicitously christened "flunkeyism." He had formerly held the appointment of ambassador at the Russian court, and while in St. Petersburgh had received many insults

at the hands of Paul I., whom he consequently heartily disliked. When the news of this weak prince's assassination arrived, the minister and Madame de Staël were playing at tric-trac in Joseph Bonaparte's drawing-room. "Ah," ejaculated the old courtier, "I may have been very much ill-used by Paul, but I shall always respect his excellent qualities, and regret his loss!"

To this worthy gentleman, Joseph Bonaparte, brother to the First Consul, appeared in the light of a prince of the blood; and accordingly the ambassador was eager to pay him every deferential attention. He even went so far as to follow him about the gardens, though the German's corpulence ill-fitted him to bear such continuous exercise as Joseph was accustomed to take. The obsequious admirer of gold-lace, when almost exhausted, would mildly observe that of all rural pursuits, he thought angling the most delightful. This was no doubt because it gives one a chance of sitting down; whether Joseph took the hint we are not informed.

The minister of whom we write, was one of the first among the Austrian nobility; yet one of Bonaparte's aides-de-camp was offended by the familiarity of the ambassador, who unceremoniously grasped his hand. Honours on a parvenu, like an embroidered coat on a ploughboy, never sit easily. Etiquette was more rigorously observed, perhaps, at the court of the First Consul than at the oldest centres of royalty.

CHAPTER XXXV.

WHATEVER ambition may have been native to the First Consul, was certain not to die for want of nourishment. The sovereigns he defeated yielded to him so readily, that they seemed almost to forestal his conquests. He received nearly universal deference; thousands of applications were made to him for the offices at his disposal; and among his suppliants he counted the representatives of some of the old historic names, as well as those who had figured in the worst scenes of the Revolution. From these parties he indifferently selected his followers and servants; but the moderate men, the remnant of the constitutional party, were by no means high in favour. Madame de Staël says, somewhat bitterly, that he hated them because they were the only men in France who had an opinion.

About this time (1801), he sent the husband of one of his sisters to Saint Domingo, on a mission, and in the documents relative to the errand and the messenger, styled General Leclerc "our" brother-in-law. The royal "our," which thus associated France with the prosperity of the Bonaparte family, was profoundly distasteful to Madame de Staël.

Notwithstanding the overpowering weight which Bonaparte had taken care to secure to himself in the

scale of government, there were about twenty men in the lower council of state, who were on the alert to mark and designate every fresh assumption of the First Consul. Of such opposition he strove to rid himself, by an operation which he termed the "*elimination*" of the tribunate: which means, that twenty members of that body were to retire annually, being named by the senate: who would, of course, choose those who were troublesome to the First Consul, lest their own appointment should be jeopardised.

The resistance of these few men, unimportant in point of numbers, was intensely disagreeable to Bonaparte. It is, perhaps, natural to a soldier to look on disobedience to orders as a crime, and on liberty of speech as a breach of discipline. So the withdrawal of any discordant element was amply provided for.

To such a phantom had the liberty gained by the Revolution dwindled! Were not the hope of improvement immortal, surely France had let that crisis develope her last effort to save herself from tyranny.

During the winter of 1801, Madame de Staël, in spite of her disgrace, contrived to obtain the recall of several emigrants of her acquaintance; and the pleasure of being useful to her friends mingled a little comfort with the growing disquietudes of her life.

Troubled by the darkness of the future, she left Paris to pay her yearly visit to her father, whom she found quite as indignant as herself. The old politician, who detested alike anarchy and tyranny, determined to write a book, which should clearly point out the course affairs were about to take. He hoped thus, in

his retirement, still to be useful to a country for which he had made almost unexampled sacrifices of fortune and activity.

Madame de Staël encouraged her father in this purpose, though she well knew that anything from his pen, adverse to Bonaparte, must have the effect of hastening the consummation of her fate. He began to write; whether he should publish, was left for the next year to decide.

It was during this visit to her father that the news of the treaty of peace, signed at Amiens, reached her. The preliminaries of the treaty she had already learned, before leaving Paris, for she was dining with the English minister when his instructions on the subject arrived. Europe, tired of war, weighed down by the miseries of taxation and bloodshed, implored peace at any price. Even England at last deigned to own the fact, and prepared to give up her recent conquests in order to secure what must have appeared an almost impossible blessing. Madame de Staël says she was troubled more than ever, when she found England recognising the power of Bonaparte, and doubted afresh whether she could be right in resisting his arbitrary rule. Meantime, France agreed to evacuate Egypt, and a treaty of peace was signed at Amiens, in March, 1802.

Madame de Staël was in no mood to join in the fêtes which amused Paris on that occasion; she hated to see her country so eager in celebrating the supremacy of Bonaparte, and by this time had learned to connect every circumstance which increased or displayed his power, with a diminishing chance of happiness and liberty for herself.

In England, the news of peace excited great enthusiasm, especially among the commercial and lower classes; bonfires were kindled, barrels of ale drunk on every village green, and Bonaparte began to have admirers here, as a man who had healed the wounds of civil discord and restored law and order to the great country whose government he directed.

This peace of Amiens lasted only one year, but during that time there was in England considerable homage paid to Bonaparte; and poor Madame de Staël felt this very bitterly. The country she had ever cited as a model, had joined the rest in chanting a pæan to the honour and glory of her tyrant. The friendship between England and France grew so strong that the king had a portrait of himself prepared set with jewels, which was designed as a gift to the First Consul. So Madame d'Arblay wastold on the authority of a person who affirmed she had seen the picture, and who described its ornaments so particularly as to leave no doubt regarding the truth of her statement.

Monsieur Necker's book, which he called "Last Views of Politics and Finance," occasioned great vexation to Bonaparte; yet the old statesman had praised his talents and applauded him as the restorer of order. But Necker only regarded him as a temporary ruler, and seemed to expect the establishment of a representative system and a limited monarchy. He looked upon Bonaparte as the pioneer of a new order of things—a kind of necessary servant, who waters the stage between the acts, and arranges things for the *entrée* of the real performers. But though Bonaparte was not yet made consul for life, most people knew

what was his desire, and began to guess at his plans. It was therefore a kind of tacit treason to discuss the merit of the various theories of government, as if France had still to choose from among them that which she considered best suited to her condition and circumstances. Monsieur Necker went farther: he hinted at the probability of Napoleon's desire to obtain the supreme rule, or rather to secure by constitutional warrant the power he had already mastered, and to make that authority patent to his family. Judging from the past behaviour of the First Consul, and from the complexion of the times under which he had been thrust to the helm, Necker decided that he was little likely to favour the representative system. Necker demonstrates, in fact, that no lever was available to raise Bonaparte's authority, but the power which is called military force. He shows that there was under the consular government no real republic, and then goes on to say:—"There is one method of establishing an hereditary government, but this method is alike contrary to republican ideas and foreign to the principles of limited monarchy. It is that force by means of which the supremacy of the great families of Rome was maintained, but which, revolting from its allegiance, degraded and overthrew the creatures of its power. This method is military force; the Prætorian guard, the armies of the East and of the West. From such a destiny may God protect France."

On the appearance of this remarkable book, the Consul Lebrun, under Bonaparte's dictation, wrote Monsieur Necker a letter, in which, according to Madame de Staël, he united old prejudices with the

harshness of the new despotism. Lebrun accused Necker of having been the author of the Revolution, and flung at him the doubling of the third estate as his act and deed, and the real seed of the dismal horrors that followed. He counselled the ex-minister to interfere no more in politics, but to leave such things to the First Consul, the only man who was capable of governing France; and he finished by threatening that Madame de Staël should be banished from Paris solely on account of her father's book.

Thus, says Madame de Staël, Bonaparte attempted to embitter Necker's private life, by insinuating that if his daughter were exiled, only her father could be blamed for it. "But," she adds, boldly, "I hope that I have myself merited the exile I had to suffer." Nevertheless, we know Monsieur Necker's extreme conscientiousness, his readiness to torment himself with a scruple, and his fondness for his daughter, and cannot but own that Bonaparte knew the vulnerable spot when he dealt this blow.

Letters from Paris, for she was still in Switzerland, warned her that the First Consul said she should return no more to that city, because she had given her father such false accounts of the state of affairs there; she also learned that her relations of society with General Bernadotte had given offence: and that the court rumour asserted that people always came out of her house worse affected to the ruler than when they entered it.

Before she left Paris in 1801, General Bernadotte had made an effort to excite some kind of remonstrance from the senate to Bonaparte, with a view to the

retrenchment of the consular power—a power which was literally that of the strong fist, unadorned by prescriptive right and old associations, the illusions of arbitrary monarchy, on the one hand; and by spontaneity of action and the rigid simplicity of justice, which our early readings, rather than the facts of administration, lead us to attach to the idea of a republic, on the other. From the wise mingling of the best and worthiest elements of both systems—the true constitutional monarchy allied to the representative system—Bonaparte was still more remote. General Bernadotte, therefore, had endeavoured to raise a legal opposition to the encroachments of a system, which he thought must be attended with incalculable inconveniences, if with no worse result. But he could not prevail on any of the members of the senate to join in his undertaking; they were afraid. If this plan had been discovered, Madame de Staël's exile would have begun a few months earlier than it did actually; for during the whole of the proceedings, she saw General Bernadotte and his friends, and we need not doubt, lost no opportunity of advising, conversing, and joking on the forbidden subject of liberty.

Under these various circumstances of depression and dislike, perhaps Madame de Staël would not have attempted a visit to Paris in the spring of 1802, had not the increasing illness of Monsieur de Staël afforded a motive which admitted no delay. We have no reason to believe that she was ever attached to him, and she had now for some time been separated from him, in order that his expensive habits might not interfere with the fortunes of her children—a precautionary measure which the laws of her country

rendered possible; and one which England might do well also to permit.

His confirmed ill-health caused the kindly wife to forget everything but his need of attention and her ability to afford it; and leaving Coppet, she went to Paris, intending to bring Monsieur de Staël into Switzerland by easy stages, as his health served. All her cares were of no avail; he died at Poligny, on the road to Coppet, 2nd May, 1802.

Her short visit to Paris happened just at the time when Bonaparte inaugurated his *concordat* with the pope, an agreement which restored the institutions of religion and the celebration of the weekly holyday, the first and inalienable rights of man. Those who look on the world, beautiful as it is, in its brightest colours, and from its most favourable standing points, find sufficient reason to hope and trust in a great undeveloped future of life, love, and light; but the unhappy, they who have no title in this world to aught but toil and sorrow; the crushed, down-trodden, and depressed, are indeed wretched if robbed of that which makes sorrow endurable, and the hardest life a loving discipline, which will assuredly issue in more glorious realities than the brightest imagination can picture.

What Bonaparte cared about the thing would be difficult to trace; for, not long before, he had been behaving in Egypt as if he were more than half a Mohammedan. Doubtless this was but a stratagem to secure an end; and the re-establishment of religious worship in France had probably the same motive—the hope of procuring an influence unattainable without the aid of religion. Yet Bonaparte was no infidel;

we must remember that he had been trained in an atheistic age, an age in which the confession of a Master in heaven was supposed to be somehow associated with servility and degradation on earth; but however the confession may be stifled and repressed by a convention or by the voice of ridicule, (that voice so powerful in France,) the truth of the Master's existence is a living thing, deeply rooted in the heart of man.* Without this, earth's contradictions are irreconcileable, her woes without a remedy. The human race need be perfectly happy before it begins to parley with doubt on this subject. That it has done more than parley with it, we are not yet convinced; even he who calls himself an atheist has something divine within which would be ashamed thoroughly to work out his base system. The boldest infidel has moments of religious sentiment; the church at Ferney once bore upon its front this legend, "*Deo erexit Voltaire.*"†

The atheistic intolerance of the Revolution was rather a revenge for the past domination of the priesthood, than any true exposition of the ideas of the multitude; but infidelity in religion had unhappily so long co-existed with republican government, that a certain school opposed the advent of Bonaparte to more complete power on the ground of the *concordat* alone. They denied that liberty could exist in a country where the pope is allowed a spiritual supremacy, and certainly one cannot claim any great

* The convention might have decreed that two and two should not henceforward make four; but the fact would have remained intact.

† Some pious revolutionists, with more zeal than judgment, have erased this inscription; to us it seems full of suggestion and religious interest.

exception to this rule; but as the majority of the French people belonged to the Roman church, it was only just that the catholic worship should be carried on.

The protestants, however, were quite as favourably situated as their Romish brethren; religious equality was one great blessing which had sprung out of what seemed to promise only anarchy and desolation. The reign of priestcraft in France was probably over for ever; it disappeared with the tithes and the property of ecclesiastical corporate bodies. Though France had advanced very slowly, and often amid bloodshed and ruin, the Revolution—or to speak more properly, the mental movement which had unhappily so issued—had won many things worth preserving. These, nevertheless, might have been earned almost as soon, and certainly without such fearful counterbalancing evils, if the moderate course of Monsieur Necker had been steadily persevered in. The Anglo-Saxon race is more patient than the Gallic, but our liberties have not suffered on this account; very slowly has our constitution grown to its present state, just as the form of the infant developes into manhood: it has seen great political crises, which have been the means of its purification, as the disorders of infancy thrust from the system those noxious elements which, if permitted to increase and strengthen, would endanger the whole being. Slowly and firmly has the beautiful edifice proceeded, nor do we yet conclude it perfect; room is left for each generation to work out its needs and evince its aptitudes. But who that observes the onward progress of the ages, the gradual evolvement of good from confusing and conflicting elements, can doubt that the Deity takes as earnest interest in the welfare of His

creatures, as when, in the virgin light of a young creation, "the morning stars sang together for joy"?

The Gallic race had wanted our rougher education. Existence in these northern lands must involve constant toil, especially in the early development of a nation. The Briton, maintaining a constant warfare against the comparative barrenness of his island, subduing his churlish acres by hard combat, was really a more favoured being than a child of the south, gathering laughing harvests which cost him little, and finding half the business of life in the enjoyment of the sunny skies and kindly climate, so delicious to his keen senses.

The French people were insensible to their wrongs longer than the English would have been, but once awakened, they redressed them with little judgment, and such precipitancy as England is little likely to show.

It was in the month of April, 1802, that the *concordat* was inaugurated. Bonaparte, on this occasion, ordered a grand ceremony at Notre-Dame, to celebrate the auspicious return of France to the bosom of the church. Yet the Consul went not hither as a repentant son of that church, but rather as a conqueror, scattering largess as he proceeded, in the shape of Sundays restored and the consolations of religion legalised. He was the hero of the day: he proceeded to Notre-Dame in the king's state-carriage, with the same complement of coachmen, footmen, the same running footmen to guard the doors, as had formerly attended on royalty. The crown diamonds sparkled on the hilt of his sword; and he appointed as the preacher on the occasion to which we allude, the

Archbishop of Aix, the identical prelate who had preached at Rheims on the day when Louis XVI. took the crown of his fathers. Court etiquette was followed even to its minutest detail; yet France still claimed to be a republic.*

Madame de Staël shut herself up at home, because she would not see a sight so odious to her; yet she could not avoid hearing the cannon shots "which announced the servitude of France."

"Did not all seem restored just as in former times?" inquired Napoleon of his generals who surrounded him in the evening of the day of ceremony.

"Yes," frankly replied one of these soldiers, "excepting two millions of Frenchmen who have fallen for liberty's sake; these, nothing can restore."

Madame de Staël's old acquaintance, Monsieur de Talleyrand, who avoided her to-day, but who, if he had wanted her assistance on the morrow, would have asked it with the best grace in the world, of course figured in the important ceremony. He reminds one of a kaleidoscope, whose varied patterns and shapes are all produced with the same few bits of coloured glass. The Bishop of Autun, the Bonapartist, the monarchist, are all but one Talleyrand. The state alters its position, but Talleyrand retains his. He is the Vicar of Bray in a higher circle. Both were men of a similar stamp, who, to use a vulgar but most expressive proverb, possessed no mean talent in discerning the buttered side of the bread.

In May, 1802, Bonaparte was made consul for life.

* The French Romish clergy all through the changes from republic to empire, and from empire to monarchy, present a rather despicable figure. Their highest principle is expediency.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BONAPARTE'S popularity continued to increase.

General d'Arblay, who had gone to Paris to seek some employment under the government, was joined by his wife in May, 1802; and she gives a touching account of the joy manifested by the poor at the re-establishment of the Sundays and the restoration of public worship. They praised Bonaparte, saying that he had given them back their hope in a world to come.

Madame d'Arblay's arrival gave pleasure to Madame de Staël, who, hearing that one of her acquaintances from the neighbourhood of Richmond had arrived in Paris, sent forthwith a kind little note, begging to know when she might hope to find Madame d'Arblay sufficiently recovered from the fatigues of her journey to receive visitors without inconvenience. And this, although the "common civility of a card for her card," was yet owing to her from Madame d'Arblay. Perhaps the generous, warm-hearted Frenchwoman did not recollect the circumstance, or understand the hint intended to be conveyed by the omission.

We quote the following circumstances, not wishing to ascribe to Madame d'Arblay any unfriendly or unfeeling dispositions, but to show what was the tone

of society towards Madame de Staël at this time. Madame d'Arblay naturally took her initiative from those who surrounded her, and as her husband was trying to obtain an appointment under the consular government, it is probable that her society was mostly composed of the vehement admirers of Bonaparte; it is not likely that from this source she would learn quite the fair truth regarding Madame de Staël. As to the return of the courtesy, Madame d'Arblay consulted a lady whom she knew, telling her the character which "the Burkes and Mrs. Ord" had given Madame de Staël at the time of her visit to England in 1793. The fair authority in question, who moved in fashionable society, assured Madame d'Arblay that the character of the Baroness de Staël stood no higher in France than it had stood in England. How should it, while she opposed Bonaparte? What enemy of his ever possessed courage or honesty? According to his flatterers, his triumphs were obtained over such contemptible beings that one wonders how the conquests added to his glory.

So the kindly Madame d'Arblay, led astray by the voice of the world, returned Madame de Staël's note by a communication assuring her that Madame d'Arblay *could not but be* extremely flattered by the politeness of Madame de Staël, and promising to call on her very shortly.

We believe the ladies did not meet in 1802. The sting of Madame d'Arblay's note lies in the "cannot but be." But it is most likely that in wishing to see her English acquaintance, Madame de Staël only sought to return the kindness she had received while

an exile in England, from the family at Norbury Park. Why should she court the acquaintance of Madame d'Arblay, a person decidedly her inferior in rank, and possessing no sort of influence? If we attempt to solve her conduct by worldly tests, we shall assuredly never succeed: a generous enthusiasm inspired her; she recompensed threefold any kindness shown her, and possessed an ardour of gratitude which is no native part of a mean soul.

This little incident just shows us that Madame de Staël was decidedly in disgrace at court; all the old rumours, and, no doubt, some new ones, were revived or invented by envy, and repeated by malice. Yet we have not the slightest reason to believe one of these stories.

Nevertheless, these things embittered her life; the loss of consideration was a painful thing to her; and the daily-increasing neglect of society, an evil so easily despised in fancy, so very difficult bravely to encounter in reality, was a trial which imagination dressed in colours yet gloomier than it really wore. Bonaparte was an adroit persecutor; he always discerned the point of honour, and wounded there: the woman in her chastity, the soldier in his bravery, the honest man in his integrity.

Madame de Staël fled from Paris and its vexations, to Coppet, as the dove returned to the friendly ark; only our poor fugitive carried no olive-leaf.

But her soul rusted in retirement; and during the winter of 1802-1803, she read in the papers (which no doubt largely occupied her time at Coppet) that many illustrious Englishmen were in Paris, adding

new attractions to its ever graceful and lively society. Of course she longed to assist in such meetings as Paris now afforded; she who was so interested in the progress of the human intellect, and who viewed with such pleasure every influence of England in France. Besides these motives which prompted her return to Paris, was another: she objected to keep her children all the year in the country; she thought that the fine arts and intellectual society exert an influence in cities which one seeks in vain in rural retreats. This influence she wished her sons to feel. She was a conscientiously good mother, and ever felt her mournful condition more keenly when it overshadowed the life of her little family; and she regretted that she scarcely dared return to Paris.

The peace between England and France, we have said, lasted only one year. Madame de Staël was staying at Geneva when she heard of the declaration of war, and perhaps felt a little consoled that the peace had not proved more durable. An invasion of England seemed now seriously determined on, and the First Consul was busily occupied in preparing for such an event. Flat-bottomed boats were constructed throughout France—in the forests, by the highways, anywhere, if the place afforded wood and workmen. On the roads, sign-posts were erected, bearing the inscription, "To England;" and one path was spanned by a triumphal arch, having for its legend, "A good wind, and thirty hours."

Paris and Bonaparte seemed quite absorbed in this important business, and Madame de Staël hoped she might be forgotten. Under the shadow of this mighty

event, she ventured to return to France, but not to Paris, lest her residence in the city might provoke the First Consul.

She hired a little country place, ten leagues from Paris, where she hoped, in company with her children, to spend her winters in quiet, until the reign of tyranny ended. Her occasional visit to the theatres and the museum, and the society of such of her friends as chose to visit a person in disgrace, bounded all her hopes of life in the capital while the present system lasted.

In this voluntary exile she had been quietly residing for the space of a month, when some person reported to the First Consul that the roads were crowded with people who went to visit her. This was little likely to be true: she had been deserted by many of her friends, and of those who continued to esteem her, only the very bravest and truest would continue to seek her society under her present circumstances. But Bonaparte was glad of an excuse to banish her; and she was informed that, in a few days, a gendarme would wait on her to announce the order of departure. "I am," she says, touchingly, "easily frightened; my imagination is more ready to figure trouble than hope; and although I have often proved that new circumstances arise and dispel grief, yet it seems to me, when first a shock comes, that nothing can deliver me from my sorrow."

Thus easily alarmed, she left her house to take refuge with a lady, a stranger to her, to whom she was recommended by a person who was then connected with the government, though he little sympa-

thised with its tyrannical proceedings. To the asylum thus afforded she hastily fled. Madame de la Tour, her hostess, was scarcely known to her, and the society visiting the house were all strangers: she was, therefore, obliged to appear tolerably free and disengaged during the day, though terror was gnawing at her heart. It was, of course, best that she should not appear anxious and melancholy, and she struggled to maintain such an attitude and behaviour as might conciliate those who surrounded her, without acquainting them with her circumstances. At night, however, when released from the claims of her entertainers, she fixed herself at the window, to listen whether the approach of a mounted guard might not be heard in the distance: the rustling of a tree, the changing of a shadow, would be enough to startle a vivid fancy like hers; and so the restless nights passed on. She had one humble friend who had been years in her service, and who shared her anxieties and watches. With the day came fresh disquietudes, and the necessity of appearing cheerful in order to conceal her real situation.

Feeling bitterly that every year rendered Paris more important to her children, and that, were she banished, it would be for a long period, if not for ever, she made a desperate attempt to interest her friends to exert themselves for her. Sho wrote to Joseph Bonaparte, explaining in forcible terms the real troubles of her situation. A residence ten leagues from Paris was now the one object of her desire; to obtain this for her, both Joseph and Lucien pleaded without effect; nor were they the only persons to advocate her cause.

After a few days spent with Madame de la Tour, during which period Madame de Staël received no fresh alarm, she determined to go to her beautiful friend, Madame de Récamier, who had a residence two leagues out of Paris. This lady, whose wit and beauty made her one of the most enchanting persons of her day, was attached to Madame de Staël, and willingly received her. Here she mingled in the best of such society as she loved; and although the voice of friendship and the play of wit could no longer entirely occupy her, they relieved her soul in its heaviness; and these few bright days, like the lovely transatlantic season known as the Indian summer, coming after she had said adieu to summer friends and fortunes, must have seemed doubly dear. And yet they make the after-season look all the darker.

After a few days with her friend, Madame de Staël, hearing no news from the First Consul, trusted he had only intended to frighten her by a threat of exile, and half hoping, half afraid, she returned to her country place and her children.

A thought which had some comfort in it took transient possession of her; this was, that Bonaparte would scarcely excite the attention of Europe by banishing an innocent woman, whose connexions and talents were so well known. But this soon disappeared: to Bonaparte public opinion was a thing to be nursed when in his favour; strangled, when opposed to him; and the idea that many sympathies followed her in her exile would rather increase his pleasure in sending her away. To this mood of hope succeeded one of sad melancholy. France, she says, became hushed around

her; voices of friends were few and feeble; not a soul seemed to cherish or defend the glorious ideas of liberty and right in which she had been educated, and which by assimilation and reflection had become almost elements of her soul. A contemptible frivolity masked the exercise of tyranny; to be banished, was to be sent into the country for change of air. There is no circumstance so great, or so grave, that the Frenchman can forego his joke upon it. He is never magnificently penetrated and absorbed by a patriotic and religious emotion, as the Teutonic races often are. This whole-heartedness of sentiment, which wraps the entire being in one thought and purpose, admitting no doubt of its goodness, and excluding for the time every other interest, is what has made the history of the races of the German stock more glorious and heart-stirring, as well as more advantageous to the peoples of it, than any other.

But the life of such nations is a graver and more painful thing than the life of the French, who forget with greater readiness the experience gained by suffering, and deprived of one object of desire, set out gaily in search of another. This disposition has its value, too; but a more heroic and less accommodating spirit pervades the existence of the free countries.

The French have more passion; they are infinitely more cruel when provoked, but the injustice must touch them nearly ere they interfere with it. We have a keener sense of justice, and more principle, which leads us to revolt against even a theory favourable to tyranny and inhumanity. They would say, we often

fight for shadows, but we know that a shadow supposes a substance.

Before the recall of the English ambassador, Bonaparte was excessively annoyed by the freedom with which the British newspaper press commented on his policy and divined his plans. There were several remonstrances on the subject made on the part of the First Consul to Lord Whitworth, who assured the republican ruler, that the constitution of England did not permit the king to stifle this voice, and that the British sovereign himself was not exempt from the scrutiny and comments of the press. Such a constitution was abhorrent to Bonaparte, and perhaps also contemptible; and he did not conceal his vexation at the satirical voices which the tide daily wafted across the channel. So earnest was he to revenge himself, that at last the British government commenced a prosecution against an emigrant named Peltier, on a charge of libel. The accused person had the singular good fortune to be defended by Sir James, then Mr. Mackintosh, whose speech on this occasion led to his own advancement and promotion; for he was soon afterwards made Recorder of Bombay. A more immediate influence of that wonderful piece of eloquence was the solace and comfort it afforded Madame de Staël in her lonely sadness: All, she says, was ominously silent about her, when the accents of Mackintosh's eloquence broke upon her ear. In her impassioned way she exclaims, "This voice of liberty seemed a voice from heaven!"

The accents of a very different voice were preparing for her. At the end of September, 1803, she

was sitting at dinner at four o'clock in the afternoon, when a man on horseback in a gray coat alighted at her gate and rung the bell. How every minutest circumstance of such a moment becomes graven on the memory in an instant, as if with a pen of iron!

Before hearing his errand, her instinct told her that her fate was fixed. She went to him in the garden, and the perfume of the flowers, the freshness of the autumn breeze, the beauty of the September afternoon, came on her weary senses like a kind of intoxication. She was almost overcome by the contrast between the peace and loveliness of the world without, and the wretched confusion and tremour of her own heart. Indissolubly were linked in her mind, the terror of her alarm, and the sensation created by the harmony of Nature's works.

Endeavouring to assume some calmness—in which attempt she failed, without a doubt, for concealment of her feelings was never much in her power—she approached the man in authority and inquired his business.

He announced himself as the commandant of the *gendarmerie* at Versailles, but added that he came out of uniform lest he should alarm her. He showed her an order of exile, signed by Bonaparte, which empowered the police to secure her departure within four-and-twenty hours, to a distance of not less than forty leagues from the capital. But this agent of despotism treated her with all the consideration her name and position demanded.

To the time of departure she demurred: four-and-twenty hours, she said, might be sufficient notice for

conscripts, but could scarcely be enough for a woman with children. Some preparations were needful before she could depart on such a journey; three days at least she must have in Paris. To this no objection was made, and she and her children, accompanied by this officer, set out immediately for the city to which she had so often turned with hope and joy. In passing the house of Madame de Récamier, she stopped for a few minutes, and finding General Junot there, procured from him a promise to speak in her behalf. Then she sadly resumed her drive.

She had, some time previously, hired a house in Paris, but had never yet inhabited it. It was situated in the quarter of the city she liked best, and had not been selected without care. Here she had hoped to receive her friends, to instruct her children, to read, to write, and to study. But now there was less than ever a prospect of any chance to make this place her home. She wandered sadly from room to room, and looked from the windows on prospects she might never again behold. A feeling of unsatisfied restlessness and nervous activity quickened her pulses; she made every effort to save herself which might be made without compromising her conscience or her independence—there she stopped. A word of conciliation, of admiration, of homage to the mighty ruler who was feared and truckled to by half Europe, would have saved her. She refused to utter it. How Monsieur de Talleyrand must have laughed in his sleeve at this folly on the part of his old acquaintance!

But the verdict of humanity, the unbought homage of the soul, cannot refuse her its voice; so long as her

language endures and her books are read so long shall her courage and honesty touch the divine spring which sets the holiest emotions flowing, and secure her the approbation of those who, though they might want the bravery to imitate, have not the power of refusing to admire her. There is an affinity between the human soul and any greatness or goodness, let bad men say what they will. Why do heroism and purity so touch us but because some shadow of them rests on ourselves?

Her *gendarme* had been chosen, perhaps, as the most literary of his set, for he complimented her on her writings, and ventured to praise her talent. Pride prompted her to strive at gaiety; and she said to him in reply, "But see whither all this leads, this genius which you admire. Oh, sir, if any person of your family should be so unlucky as to possess it, pray counsel her to keep it to herself, or it will assuredly bring her into trouble."

Every morning this man pressed her to leave, and every morning she begged another day; her few friends called on her, or dined with her, "and sometimes," she says, "we were even gay." No doubt Bonaparte grew tired of this delay; and it was, most probably, on this occasion* that Monsieur de Talleyrand announced to her the determination of the First Consul that she should leave Paris, and that speedily. He was a man who could fling away a friend with the most exquisite grace.

"Madame," said the minister, "I wish you a pleasant journey."

* Or before her previous visit to Coppet.

"A pleasant journey?"

"Yes—a pleasant journey to Switzerland. I hear you set out in three days."

"Oh, but you have been misinformed, I have no such idea."

"Nevertheless, I have heard it *from the best authority. Encore, bon voyage. Adieu.*"

Joseph Bonaparte made another attempt to save her, and invited her to spend the last few days of her time with his wife at Morfontaine. To this lovely place, accompanied by her elder son, she went for three days. Then she left her friends, and addressed her sorrowful face towards the path of exile.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THERE were several reasons why a visit to Switzerland would just now have been exceedingly painful to Madame de Staël. One was that she had frequently complained of its dulness as a residence, and that a forced return at a time of the year when she usually went to Paris for the winter, would have been humiliating. Another was that she hated to go thither with her wounds yet unhealed and bleeding; it revolted her pride to go to Coppet a disgraced person, exhausted by anxiety and trouble. A third reason existed in the fact that another country offered her, if she chose to visit it, a kind and honourable reception, which might go far to reconcile her to her fate, and assist her to forget the harsh treatment she had received in her own land. She was no maudlin

demander of pity and sympathy, exhibiting her troubles to excite compassion.

She had not decided exactly on her course, when she found her departure imperative. She begged Joseph Bonaparte to inquire if the First Consul would allow her to visit Prussia, should she feel disposed to do so, and obtained the permission she required. Joseph also very nobly gave her excellent letters of introduction for Berlin, and exerted himself to soften the hardness of her unjust sufferings. When he set out for St. Cloud to perform her errand, her time was already exhausted, and she stayed at a little inn two leagues distant from Paris, to await the reply of the First Consul, not daring to come into the city. A day of anxiety passed without any tidings from Joseph, and afraid of attracting notice by remaining longer where she was, she had her horses put to, and drove round the walls of Paris in search of another place of refuge. This melancholy wandering so near her friends and the house she had meant to make her home, was inexpressibly painful. She found another inn, where she awaited her messenger, whose arrival with the news she wanted, gave her the sad relief of setting out on her mournful journey.

Monsieur Benjamin Constant had chivalrously offered to attend her to her destination—wherever that might be. Her grief at first was ungovernable, her whole being in an angry tumult, nor did she at all regain her composure until she had completed the cruel forty leagues. At Chalons she stopped, and could not but sigh when the postboys boasted of their expeditious travelling. On the following day

she continued her road to Metz, at which place she waited for news from her father.

As may be imagined, Monsieur Necker was grieved beyond measure by the news of his daughter's exile, for he ascribed it to the fact of his having published a book which proved disagreeable to the First Consul. The thought that he had effected the disgrace and affliction of his daughter was an agonising idea to the affectionate father. He proposed at one time going to Paris to intercede personally in her behalf, but this his failing health prevented.

His letters advised her to spend the winter in Germany, as pleasantly as she could, and to return to him in the spring, at the usual time of her visit, to Coppet. A new hope began to irradiate her. In the spring, when she should have gathered a host of new ideas and sensations to report to her father, she would rejoin him. Until then, she would devote herself to the study of a country and language completely new to her. With this project she resumed her journey, but was arrested at Frankfort by the sudden and dangerous illness of her little daughter. Her desolate condition, thus aggravated, was indeed very lamentable. She had not one friend in Frankfort; the language was unknown to her; the physician to whose care Albertine was submitted scarcely understood a word of French. Thus agonised, the poor mother cries, "Oh, if there existed no such thing as prayer, in what would a mother distressed as I am find a refuge?" She wrote constantly to her father, who consulted physicians at Geneva, writing down their opinions and transmitting them to his beloved daughter. This was

the same Frankfort whence, years ago, the king's letter had recalled Monsieur Necker to take part in the affairs of France. Madame de Staël had then shared and appreciated her father's popularity; now, he was despised, and she flying from a tyrant who persecuted her on his account. Her daughter's illness—that bitterest sorrow—was not permitted to culminate; the child grew better, and the family proceeded to Weimar, where they remained three months.

Goethe and Wieland, both of whom spoke French fluently, were there, and from their conversation she began to revel in the prospect of appropriating the immense intellectual riches enwrapped by the German tongue. She learned to read the language, and being kindly entertained by the duke and duchess of Weimar, found both employment and society to please her. She began to get relief and to take courage. Everywhere she was nobly received, and treated with favour and distinction.

At Berlin, whither she next proceeded, she was very kindly welcomed by the king, and by Prince Louis Ferdinand. Here she became acquainted with Auguste Wilhelm von Schlegel, an accomplished French, German, English, and Italian scholar, an elegant critic, and a fine writer. To this gentleman she committed the education of her son, and regarding him herself with great respect and friendship, held frequent conversations with him on many subjects connected with art and literature. It has, indeed, been hinted by some of her critics that Schlegel largely assisted her in the composition of her later and

best works. But his own testimony flatly contradicts the assertion. Madame de Staël was far from invariable in her adoption of his opinions, very frequently maintaining her own ground, and sometimes convincing him she was right. So far from assisting her to write, he says he first learned from her how to use his pen so as to interest the European public. It was a friendship mutually beneficial, without doubt, in which there was something given and received on each side.

Meantime, the influence of Bonaparte was extending itself wider and wider over the continent of Europe; the extraordinary facilities for tyranny which chance had put into his hands, had probably never before been under the command of an individual will. He had an army which had begun during the times of the Revolution, in an association of citizens, leagued to resist the foreign troops whose assistance was hired by the king. Stern necessities had trained his men, and they were as familiar with the difficulties of life as with the martial exercise. Such troops, collected in a moment of danger from shop, field, and desk, are sure to include many vigorous and energetic spirits. Thus were Cromwell's Ironsides raised. They are as superior to the recruits who join an army under ordinary circumstances, as Bunyan and Whitfield were more energetic and powerful than any idle gentleman who is quietly trained to hold a family living. The brilliant successes of Bonaparte had won the hearts of his soldiers, and this army was devotedly attached to him. Besides that, he had framed the constitution he administered, and could at any moment modify it as

he thought fit. And the excuse with which he climbed into power—the necessity of keeping down the Jacobins—formed also a very good reason for any harshness to those who professed too liberal opinions. Again, as the return of the Bourbons would involve a counter-revolution, and perhaps the loss of many lives, the capitalists, and all those who had acquired property by the Revolution, were bound by interest to uphold him. He understood the full force of this tie, and never attached a party to him by any other means. If he had, his lot might have been far nobler.

Nevertheless, the Bourbons were naturally not inclined to relinquish all hope of the throne of their fathers. Some persons devoted to them, as we have seen, unsuccessfully attempted the life of the First Consul; and there is no doubt that various plots and plans were formed to restore the old race. Among other persons suspected of a part in one of these conspiracies, was Louis, Duke d'Enghien, grandson to the great Condé, and son of the Duke de Bourbon.

This gallant youth was seized on the neutral territory of Baden, which Bonaparte, contrary to every law of nations, invaded, for the purpose of taking him prisoner. He was hurried to Paris, and thence to Vincennes, where he was put in confinement. His arrival had been preceded by orders to prepare a room for a prisoner who would shortly appear, and to dig a pit in the courtyard. This last order was difficult to follow, the yard being paved, and the pit was dug close to the moat.

The unsuspecting victim arrived late in the evening, and after some refreshment, being worn out with cold and hunger, the prince retired. Before he had time to sleep, he was requested to appear before his judges; and, after his examination, returned to his bed, where he almost directly fell into a heavy slumber; from which he was very soon awakened to hear his sentence read; and being hurried, while scarcely awake, into the courtyard of the château, was immediately executed.

The circumstances of this barbarous murder occurred in March, 1804.

The fact of a near descendant of one of the greatest heroes of France being thus cut off in cold blood, with scarcely one moment to make his peace with Heaven—a cruelty rarely practised on the vilest malefactor—so made against the interests of Napoleon, that perhaps he never ceased to regret the deed. He would not own that he had ever contemplated the hasty execution of the prince; though, certainly, the order to dig the pit is an uncommonly strong evidence that he did. He flung the onus of guilt from himself to Talleyrand, who resigned it to Savary, by whom it was refuted. "It was a great crime," said some one to Fouché. "A thousand times worse than a crime," was the reply; "it was a great *mistake*."

This news came upon Madame de Staël with great force. After this, what obstacle was there between herself and the extremest limit of Bonaparte's power? Besides, she generously felt ashamed for her country, which could passively allow the grandson of one of her greatest warriors to be hurriedly and cruelly dis-

missed from the world with all the sins of his youth on his head.*

She had not recovered from the effects of this shocking event, when she received tidings of her father's illness. This was wholly unexpected, as only shortly before she had received from him a letter, in which he assured her she might remain happily in Germany, because his health had never in his life been better. He had been spending some time at Geneva, in the spring of the year 1804, with his brother, to whom he was much attached, and his niece, Madame Necker de Saussure.

Easily alarmed on account of one so fondly beloved, Madame de Staël had a sad presentiment that she had seen her father alive for the last time. She instantly set out for Coppet, with her son, and Monsieur von Schlegel. She reproached herself a thousand times for having come to Germany without going to Coppet. In a state of the greatest anxiety she arrived at Zurich, where she was met by Madame Necker de Saussure, who confirmed her worst fears. Her father was already at rest. Her grief was agonising to witness, her whole perspective of the future seemed suddenly obliterated; life and death, earth and heaven, were equally at war with her; the one compelled her to wander desolate in strange countries, the other snatched from her her father—her first, most faithful, and dearest friend: her last support seemed gone; and hopeless of relief, she resigned herself to the most afflicting despair. Her friends did not insult her by offering comfort or con-

* Appendix, Note M.

solation at such a time; they knew that only a lapse of some considerable period, and many intervening events, could remove the keenest edge of her grief.

Thus was the beautiful communion of the father and daughter interrupted. It has since been renewed in a world where there is neither death nor exile. We are promised that we shall "go no more out," and that there shall be "neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain." Who, that has lost a friend, can give up this glorious belief?

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE name of Monsieur Necker may be honourably placed in the list of those true noblemen, who, by dint of diligence, have won for themselves a high position in society, and have used that position to aid and benefit their less fortunate fellows.

We have already briefly traced his eventful course; we have seen him leave Geneva—a poor lad, whose then only possessions were ever his dearest—faith in Heaven, and a good conscience. We have seen him rise from the humble position of clerk to that of master and capitalist; we have seen him trusted to represent his own Geneva at the French court; we have seen him so skilfully manage the disputes between the French India Company and the government, that he was asked, in spite of his protestant faith and his foreign birth, to assist in the direction of the royal finances; we have seen him restore those finances (this is not the place, were we able, to discuss

the wisdom of his fiscal administration; but thus much should be said: the simple principles of political economy, which, happily, are now learned by every boy in our British schools, were then profound mysteries to politicians and even statesmen); we have seen him moderate in prosperity, in adversity resigned; once the idol of the French nation, and now its abhorrence; but in office and in exile, a Christian without bigotry, and a philosopher without intolerance.

On his first retirement from office, he had purchased the barony of Coppet, a pleasant little estate in the vicinity of Geneva, surrounded by the associations of his youth, and yet near enough to Paris to render communication easy. At his downfall in 1790, he sought this retirement in bitterness of spirit and deep gloom; and here he passed the remaining years of his life. Gibbon, who spent some few days with him just about the time of his expulsion from office, gives a sad picture of the condition of the unsuccessful statesman; all attempts to engage him in conversation or amusement were vain—he silenced every such effort by saying that he could entertain no thought but the memory of the blow which had stricken him. As there was never a minister who more gladly luxuriated in the public favour, so there has never been one who felt its loss more keenly. He was like an old man-of-war, stranded, and idly flapping her torn canvass in the breeze which once filled her sails; her huge and useless hulk unlaved by the waters which formerly bore her proudly on their bosom.

But time, the great healer of human sorrows, shed

its balm over the master of Coppet, and another interest began to absorb him. His wife, whose character we have very imperfectly sketched in a former chapter, had begun to lose her health before his removal from public duties; and her increasing maladies after that period, soon interrupted his melancholy gloom, by forcing on him active cares for her relief and comfort: and his daughter's children were often gathered about him; he shared their sports, encouraged their confidence, and made himself in every sense their friend. Here, then, were two sources of distraction—one, indeed, melancholy enough, but which could not the less interrupt the unhealthy monotony of his sad reflections. He turned resolutely to the duties that lay in his path, and in their discharge found, after a time, a great and abiding relief. His wife, a woman well calculated to preserve the affection she had once created, was the flower and ornament of his life. He was eager for affection, and she loved him so as to be almost jealous that her daughter divided with her his tenderness: to say that his wish was her law, would be an unfair way of stating the case, his wish became hers—cold and impassive in the other relations of life, a keen critic even of her child —she was to the man who had united his lot with hers, the most enthusiastic admirer and the most affectionate friend. To see two creatures thus attached descending to the grave by calm and almost imperceptible changes, is one of the most touching of earth's touching sights. The affections which in middle life are more diffusive, seem often in old age to shut out other friends, and to content themselves with the

friends of kindred, to ask no other ties than those of the family; and thus was it at Coppet.

Madame Necker was much troubled during her last days with a disposition to sleeplessness; her nights were restless and disturbed, and sometimes in the day, worn out by want of rest, she would lean her head on her husband's arm, and thus fall asleep. Whatever might be his position, standing or sitting, so he remained until she awoke and released him; sometimes hours elapsed, and found him thus fixed; but his patience and love knew no fatigue. Sadly he watched her, as one who must reach the golden shore before him, yet hopefully, as he knew he should soon rejoin her.

At last the hour of parting drew near; the musicians who generally played in her antechamber were not come; and as music wonderfully soothed the dying lady, her husband requested their daughter to play on the pianoforte: she obeyed, and executed several pieces. Then, while her father stood by, she began to sing an air from Sacchini's opera of "Œdipus," the words of which recall the tender cares of Antigone.

They run somewhat thus: "Tenderness and care she has lavished on me, her goodness has caused me to find a charm even in my sorrows." These words expressed so vividly her father's memories, that he burst into tears, and the song was interrupted. He stood, after that, for hours by the bedside of his wife, a prey to that dreadful desolation which takes possession of those who know they must lose a friend. Surely the presence of the angel of death is an awful thing to creatures who so depend on love and friendship. Who can describe the icy sensation of grief,

when the heart perceives that the soul has stretched her wings? and left with us only the material form, once instinct with life and blessing—now senseless, and akin to the clods of the valley.

She died; and her husband roused himself to fulfil her wishes respecting her burial. During her cares for the prisons and hospitals of Paris, she had seen several frightful cases of premature inhumation; and these had so powerfully affected her, that she left scrupulous directions regarding her own interment. Her mortal remains were placed in the grounds of Coppet; and the entrance of the avenue leading to the mausoleum was visible from the window of Monsieur Necker's cabinet, where he no doubt passed many hours of not unpleasing melancholy.

It is a beautiful provision of nature, that when one organ ceases to perform its functions, another will act doubly, and thus sustain the conditions of life; so, when one channel of love is cut off, the stream seems to deepen and widen those that remain. In his widowed situation, Monsieur Necker turned with increased fondness to the daughter, and to the little children who were the charm and solace of his declining life. To the yearly visit of his child he looked forward with intense delight; she, so thoroughly versed in his habits of thought and speech, required merely a hint to comprehend what he meant to say; and so gay and ardent, that when he heard her descriptions of life, he seemed to be young again. "It is enough for me," he said, "to send her into the world, she sees for both of us."

In that world she too had been disappointed; young as she was, she had suffered, and her kindly

spirit seemed formed for sympathy and love. Her father—her best friend—was her ultimate resort; she consulted him in every matter, important or trifling; the education of her children, the management of her income, the fashion of her dress. He was almost as necessary to her as the sun that warmed her, and the air she breathed.

One may safely leave his character to be vindicated by the love he inspired; he is not a bad man who kindles such lovely affections; his wife, his daughter, his grandchildren, adored him, and write and speak of him in terms of unvarying respect and tenderness.

He had an innocent superstition regarding the place of his wife's burial. He looked upon a daily visit to her resting-place as one of the duties of life; and, as we have seen, refused to leave Coppet when Switzerland was invaded, partly because he could not persuade himself to desert her grave. Such affluence of love surviving death and separation is rare, and occurs only in noble natures; but one other instance rises to us at the moment—it is that of Dr. Samuel Johnson. Thus he loved and remembered his dead Elizabeth; praying for her "conditionally, if it were lawful," and cherishing her memory with tireless ardour and devotion.

Monsieur Necker's sorrow was not of that selfish character, which makes regret for the dead an excuse for neglect of the living. He economised the wreck of his fortune and of his health for the sake of his child, and her three little ones; and endeavoured to leave on their minds such an impression as might vie with that of their holiest and purest moments.

Whether he succeeded in endearing himself to them, may be learned from the pen of his daughter, and two of his grandchildren. The Baron Auguste de Staël and the Duchess de Broglie have left on record, in terms of enthusiastic fervour, the fact of their great love for their grandfather.

Had not the affairs of business so early claimed his attention, and the cares of government taken possession of his maturer years, it is probable that he might have followed successfully the career of literature so illustriously adopted by his daughter. He had a keen sense of observation, united to some humour; and two comedies, which he wrote in his youth, are described as being more than tolerable. A tale, written to controvert a position taken by Madame de Staël, "that no work of fiction can be really interesting, which has not for a principal element, the vicissitudes of love," is considered by his partial antagonist a decisive settlement of the case in his own favour. But as we have seen it only in a wretched English translation, we forbear to remark on its merits, or otherwise. Any reader who has happened to compare an original work with even a tolerable rendering of it in another tongue, well knows how possible it is to preserve a literal correctness, while all the grace and fire of the artist escape in the process. The jessamine flowers, we are told, will yield no perceptible oil by distillation; an essence may be faithfully prepared; only one thing is wanting—perfume. To secure this, the delicate blossoms must be treated in another manner. Just parallel is the case of a book in the hands of a commonplace translator. His means and methods are too coarse for his work.

So a bungler may set himself to copy a fine picture; he may preserve its proportions by line and rule, and yet between his copy and the original may lie all the difference between a sublime creation of genius and a tasteless daub.

Monsieur Necker's political works, though they seem to have had little influence beyond the injury of his own fortune, abound with wise maxims, and with prophecies of the consequences of certain courses, almost startling by their truth. But his pen was fatal to him. From his little work "On the Corn Trade," to which some wise heads attributed the Revolution,* to his "Last Views of Politics and Finance," there is not one that brought him anything but suffering and sacrifice. The latter work, indeed, by making him the cause of his daughter's exile, was an arrow driven to his own heart.

Yet we believe he had sincerely at heart the good of the human race, and that philanthropy inspired all his efforts. He sympathised keenly with pain and sorrow, wherever they were found; he had the disposition always to take the side of the weaker party—a characteristic not calculated to favour his worldly advancement, however it may heighten our opinion of his character.

His conscientiousness was almost a perpetual burden to him; he had scruples where no one but himself could see aught but merit, and performed, as actions of justice, deeds which other men would have considered exceedingly generous. One instance we remember at the moment.

* As Tenterden steeple was once said to be the cause of the Goodwin sands.

He possessed a house in the neighbourhood of Geneva, which he had let to a family in poor circumstances at a certain rent; necessity obliged them to change their neighbourhood, and they went away. The tenant who succeeded them was not so poor, but declined to pay the same rent; Monsieur Necker therefore let the premises at a reduced rate, and transmitted to the family of his late tenant a sum equal to the difference between the old rent and the new, according to the number of years they had resided in his house.

After his downfall he held greatly by any mark of favour or regard; he felt rather the loss of affection than that of power, for he had governed to ameliorate the condition of men, rather than to tyrannise over them. His cabinet contained innumerable letters which he had received at various periods of his ministry, expressive of admiration and respect; these he cherished until the threatened invasion of Switzerland excited his alarm lest the possible sacking of his house and the discovery of the names of his admirers might lead to their punishment on his account. He therefore burnt the greater part of the papers which had afforded him such keen pleasure; and from the few he left he had erased the signatures with such care, that Madame de Staël could not decipher them. But the directory behaved towards him more liberally than he expected, and, as we have seen, decreed him a safeguard during the occupation of his country by the French troops.

Had he accepted any of the offers made him by other sovereigns at the time of his first resignation, it

is impossible to conjecture how very different might have been the success of his career. But France, which treated him so ungratefully, was the only country he cared to serve. Or had he been a man of overweening ambition, his popularity might have helped him to a Cromwell's place; yet neither for this had he any inclination.

Some men have thought he was too much a moralist to make a good minister, but it was certainly not that which wrought his expulsion. We may proudly appeal to our own country as the one which is, upon the whole, governed more according to the principles of morality than any other in Europe: and the honesty of her ministers has not yet ruined England. There were various causes why he failed, the chief of which was, that the current of the stream was too strong for his oars. He threw them aside in despair, and left them to other hands.

His last illness was of only nine days' duration; since the year of the famine in Paris, when his anxieties had brought on a troublesome bilious complaint, he had never quite recovered his former health, and when once seized, he sank very suddenly.

Before he grew very ill, he wrote a letter to Napoleon, entreating that after his death his daughter might be permitted to return to the city she loved. The idea that he had caused her suffering haunted his dying bed; in his delirium he blessed her, exclaiming that she had truly loved him, and then bitterly reproached himself as the source of her exile. Her name was the last he murmured; and thus, in April, 1804, ended the mortal career of one who, if not

among the most successful, may rank with the best and truest of men. His beloved daughter mournfully committed his remains to the tomb where her mother had been laid before him, and put upon the grave a marble carved to delineate her love and grief. A female figure already glorified is represented as inviting upwards a man, whose departure is mourned by a young woman, veiled and prostrate on the ground.

Enclosed among the trees, in whose shadow he had so often walked, the weary statesman was laid to rest by the side of the wife whom he had loved with such rare and devoted affection. And the spot was haunted by one saddened spirit, a prey to some of the keenest sorrows which can darken the path of life.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

We have formerly given, at some length, the circumstances attending and succeeding the final fall of Monsieur Necker. We described the influence which the people by their plaudits exerted on the deputies; and that which these, in their turn, exerted on an excited and passionate populace, long afflicted and oppressed, gradually awakened to a sense of their wrongs, and little knowing how to redress them. Our object in thus detailing such events was not, assuredly, merely to give the links which connect the monarchy and the empire, but to display the scenes through which Madame de Staël had to pass, and which exerted so powerful an influence on her mind and ideas. We have seen that of almost all the principal events

of the Revolution, she was a personal witness. She listened in the assembly, and when she heard the first strains of eloquence which that period evoked, she ardently hoped that the representative system, and open debate, would exert over France an influence equally good as that which she ascribed to them in England. But when she saw the king degraded by his people, she had no longer a hope that her favourite constitutional monarchy could be realised under Louis XVI. Nor was this conviction a mere disappointment regarding a theory, a something external to herself, and partaking little of her daily life.

We have seen that in her early years, introduced to the brilliant society that crowded the *salons* of her father, she was accustomed to listen with vivid interest to conversations much beyond her age. Her religious love for Monsieur Necker made profoundly important to her every event, every theme, which at all concerned him. To talk of politics, while his ministry endured, was, of course, to talk of him; and to talk of him was to enlist her attention. Listening provoked her own ideas; her ideas once set in motion, she felt a desire to explain her thoughts, and her uncommon brilliance of fancy and command of language afforded her infinite facilities in conversation. Her whole associations were political, from her cradle to the period of her father's retirement in 1781.

At the period of that retirement, though she was still little more than a child, her studies had been such as to second what society had begun. Her father had made England his model; she had studied Montesquieu, and no doubt considered him a prince

among authors, because he thought like Monsieur Necker.

The next few years, which she spent chiefly in Switzerland, were profoundly dull after the life of Paris. At that period she was no great admirer of the country; she loved the activity, the sparkle, the intensity of city life. She was like those substances which yield light only by attrition—society drew out and excited her talents. Hence began that keen appreciation of the capital which embittered some of her following years, by lending a sharper sting to her exile.

Her father was recalled: life in Paris became associated with honour paid to him, and was, we may be sure, none the less dear on that account. Her own dawning genius attracted innumerable admirers; and her situation as wife to the Swedish ambassador gave her a command of very varied and elegant society. Her eager and excitable imagination, always ready to pity the sorrowful and suffering, no less than the principles in which she had been educated, caused her to lean to the popular side. Feeling, perhaps, the violent strain which courtly habits and association might hold on her, she felt a stronger necessity to abide by the clear conclusions of her judgment and her heart, irrespectively of the claims of fashionable opinion. Most persons in her situation find so strong the temptation to take the polite side of the question, that we can scarcely be too indulgent to a fault in the opposite direction. Her democratic tendencies were, doubtless, stronger in early life, than when experience and sorrow had matured her judgment. But where is the rich and ripe maturity whose youth had no such excess?

All the great minds existing at or since that wonderful period, have, in a measure, shared her experience in this regard. Coleridge, Shelley, Wordsworth, Southey, in our own country, may illustrate the truth of this. From a fruitful tree many a blossom, never destined to ripen, falls off in the spring; but even these are part of a great and generous development. He would be an unnatural and repulsive being, who, in the ripeness of life, could say that his youthful opinions had been so calm and just, that life had brought no necessity to modify or change them.

Her life, during her father's second ministry, was calculated to consolidate and enlarge her liberal tendencies. Everywhere was the expectation of a great change near at hand; the new philosophy, though unhappy circumstances had tinged it with infidelity, was replete with the message, that a fresh civilisation, having for its heart the sentiment and progress of humanity, was ready to break upon the sight of the watching age.

Of this civilisation she believed, and France hoped, that Monsieur Necker would be the inaugurator. His praises resounded everywhere; an attentive nation hung upon his accents; his efforts to serve France were the signal for a spring-tide of popularity, which carried her as well as her father on its dancing wave. All was hope and faith. Confidence in France, confidence in her father, mingled touchingly with faith in her God. She believed the dreamers who announced the birth of a new era, and her belief was knit to her father's reputation. How this era was to be brought into the world she had, indeed, little idea.

We have seen her joy when she watched the glorious

procession of deputies on the eve of the opening of the States-General. Breathless but hopeful, she, like her father, had staked her whole on this cast of the die.

Their hopes were deceived—cruelly flung to the winds, like the leaves which the autumn makes beautiful before they fall. Her father, but just before the idol of France, was compelled to flee for his life; and she, heart-broken for a time, only did not share his flight because she was bringing into the world the tender and faithful son who was to be the companion of her misfortunes, the inheritor of her ideas.

The stormy period which followed Monsieur Necker's downfall, we have already pretty fully indicated; every change which promised good or evil was a real living experience to this ardent and kindly being. For her everything wore a practical aspect; although the most imaginative of women, political questions never presented themselves in the light of abstract arguments, but as questions involving the dignity or degradation, the social elevation or servitude of the creatures who surrounded her. This is why she threw so much passion into her political conversation and writings; she regarded herself in some sort as the guardian of her brother's liberties, and looked on her genius and eloquence as Heaven's warrant to defend the weak and injured. Oh, had there been ten *men*, just the counterparts of this woman, at the time when Necker was forced to fly, what proud hope of hers need have remained unfruitful! How many subsequent woes of her glorious but bleeding France might have been spared!

To extravagant hopes succeeded fears which we can scarcely call excessive, so pitiless and bloodthirsty was the spirit that rent France asunder, and which proved how little the people had been associated with the idea of the country, by their eagerness to blot from the page of its records every great name and historic remembrance.

We have seen how terror drove away all but the insane wretches who called themselves the guardians of the public safety; and how the guillotine became the apotheosis of the national sentiment. Her part in the dangers of these times, and her heroic exertions to save every life over which Providence seemed to give her any influence, we have also noted. Of her return to France in 1795, and of the events which put a remarkable army in the power of one of the greatest men of any age, we have briefly spoken. By his rise to power, her hopes of a constitutional government were a second time doomed to disappointment. His wonderful talents, which extended the military glory of France beyond the wildest dreams of the great Louis; and his military exploits, to which the engineering marvels of Vauban were mere child's play, never for an instant blinded her to the fact that he gave nothing to France but the somewhat dangerous excitement of constant and successful war. Let his star pale, let his arms be once or twice unfortunate, aud she knew that France would again find herself in the confusion of a land without a ruler, without a constitution.

Her hatred to his tyranny was a little sharpened by personal dislike, and by disgust that France so tamely,

nay, even eagerly, submitted to the rule of the lucky soldier. His close, reserved temper was, we have said, quite antagonistic to her own free and open character, and tacit repulsion soon broke into open warfare. All the power was on his side, and he made her bitterly sensible of it.

Those circumstances which may seem to concern the history of her times rather than of her life, we have detailed, because they form the seed-ground of all her thoughts and opinions. So earnestly did she live for, and in, her age, that we can scarcely for a moment separate her from the public events which surrounded her. Meditation and solitude little suited her philosophy; wherever life was dense, there, too, was her scene of effort; action and utterance were her daily bread. She had no pleasure in arguments held for the sake of victory, truth was her object, and influence based on truth her ambition. She pined in seclusion, and, like a southern tree transplanted into a colder region than its own, she lived on, but scarcely manifested all her glorious qualities and aptitudes.

Let us remember that it was no sentimental lover of nature, no philosopher enamoured of solitude, who endured the exile whose course we have now to chronicle; it was a woman of genius and of fashion, eagerly attached to life and to the commerce of polite society. Literature and conversation were her great needs, and these she could have, as she loved them, in one city alone of all the wide world. Upon that city she turned her back rather than forswear her political honesty. The opinions then that she entertained were profoundly valuable to her, and had struck root

to the depths of her being. What those opinions were, it is a grateful task to the pen of an Englishwoman to point out, because they are all based on principles powerfully existing in the government of her own country, and capable of illustration from its history. Not because those opinions were Madame de Staël's, but because they are rested on principles of solid truth, were they able to support her, and are they strikingly present in human society, wherever it is most freely and happily developed. The nations that profess her doctrines are in the van of human progress, earnest watchers for the noon-tide of a glorious day, of which the French Revolution, unexpected in its outset, and cruel in its growth, may perhaps turn out to have been the unrecognised and stormy morning. Not by smooth ways are great heroes trained, great liberties achieved; not by smooth experiences has France been led since that day. For the horrid crimes of her tyrants she has dearly paid; and perhaps the time is not far distant when the cry of her noblest citizens shall be answered, and her government settled on the only true basis—the will of the people, embodied in a reasonable and just executive. Monarchy or republic, that rule will be hailed with delight.

CHAPTER XL.

In the solitude of her father's cabinet, whose windows commanded the path to his grave, the poor bereaved daughter for a time immured herself. Every fond remembrance (and her faithful heart religiously cherished such), called forth afresh the bitter grief that had no hope beyond it. Wounded in her dearest sensibilities, the only sad comfort that remained to her was to brood over the memory of the departed, to recall every action of his kindness, every anxious care of his love. Each scene, each object, supplied her with new emotions: from this window, when she left Coppet, it had been his custom to wave her a last adieu; in yonder recess, so long ago only as the preceding autumn, a touching conversation had been held between them, in which she, with a sort of awful premonition, had suddenly exclaimed on the impossibility of life without him, and had expressed a wish to die before him. His tone, his accent, the fondness of his paternal gaze as he pressed her hands and assured her that God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, now rose before her with cruel exactitude. Ah, in this simple sentence, he seemed yet to direct her to a source of comfort, which she might perhaps have overlooked! She raised her streaming eyes to the refuge of sorrow-stricken humanity in all ages, and

gradually the violence of her grief, the passion of despair, yielded to a profound melancholy; which, while it lent a very sombre hue to every deed and concern of life, restored to her some possibility of thought and action.

The circumstances of her marriage had rendered her father more than ordinarily important to her. After her separation from Monsieur de Staël, Monsieur Necker had watched over the interests and fortunes of her children. She had no natural aptitude for figures; the arithmetic of life, the cares that make up so large a portion of our daily transactions, were distasteful to her, and her father's kindness had hitherto obviated the necessity of conquering her repugnance to business. Now she must be to her children, not only herself, but him; she set herself seriously to master her ignorance of affairs, and her dislike of details, and accomplished, for duty's sake, a task which inclination would have thrown aside. For the encouragement of those who may have a similar difficulty before them, we will add that her cares were successful; she left her father's fortune not only unimpaired, but improved, by her administration of it.

The education of her sons also pressed heavily upon her: how could a woman in exile look forward to any career for them in their own country, which would not compromise their independence? One of them was already fourteen years old; conscientious, grave, affectionate, and as she loved to note, strikingly in person like his grandfather. What opening was there for his capacities and talents? This, the bitterest drop in the exile's cup, she scarcely felt, until the death of her

father threw the responsibility of the family cares upon her. She had been so accustomed to depend on him, to look to him, that, as she sweetly says, the burden of her existence had seemed more his affair than hers.

The injustice which Monsieur Necker had suffered seemed now, too, to acquire a more fatal poison; and when the agony of her grief a little subsided, she took up her pen with the pious design of editing his works. At this time she also wrote a sketch of the private life of her father, as if to shame his enemies into sorrow for having tormented a man so generous and so pure. She lingers on every line of the picture, as an artist-lover may pause to touch and retouch every part of the portrait of his mistress. In this sketch, no care seems extravagant which can heighten the vividness of the resemblance, and every sentence is weighed, lest the very intention to do him justice and to make known his goodness may, through her inconsiderateness, operate to his disadvantage. This little memoir, and a complete edition of his works, she published in the autumn of 1804.

This labour over, what else could interest her? Her mind was just then profoundly penetrated with religious emotions, and no gay or trifling theme would suit her. For philosophic disquisition and inquiry she was equally unfit; and yet inaction at such a time, with an intellect like hers must end in insanity.

Not only had her mind been disturbed by these stormy passages of life, but her health had given way. Under these circumstances, she was advised to travel; and as her disorder was of a nature requiring a soft climate, she proceeded to Italy, accompanied by Mon-

sieur Schlegel, whose classical learning and modern accomplishments were equally useful in the study of a land, where the old and new civilisations are so strangely mingled.

The aspect of a country thus new and varied, was strangely interesting to her; its monuments, replete with associations of other times, she studied historically, while her fancy lent a grace to every scene, and evoked the spirit of the past to animate the whole. It always strikes us that she had something of the Roman in her, and the keen interest she felt in the remains and literature of that wonderful people will not contradict the resemblance.* Italian society, such as it was, seemed amiable to one who had been the mark of the ridicule-loving Parisians. The very want of observation, which at another time would have been accused as dulness, she now let pass for charity, which "thinketh no evil."

The scenes and sights of the south, the beautiful climate, and the poetical life of Italy, renewed her health, and somewhat of her relish for life. Madame de Staël returned to Coppet, in 1805, with a rich harvest of thought and sentiment. She had no longer, indeed, the beloved ear of her father awaiting her recital of her travels; and perhaps this very want gave all the greater force and tenderness to her pen when she sat down to write the brilliant work of her matured fancy—the eloquent, inimitable "Corinne."

From whatever point of view this may be regarded, as a work to interest and inform the intelligence, or to move and affect the heart, it seems to us equally

* Appendix, Note N.

wonderful and powerful. What a marvellous progress she had made since the publication of "Delphine," a novel which appeared about the same time as her father's last work, can only be measured by comparing the two books. "Delphine" had provoked much adverse criticism; the author and her father were then very unpopular, and a want of sympathy with the ruling powers cast a shadow on every action and deed of their lives. The horrors of the Revolution had left a powerful impression on the brain of Madame de Staël, and in the book to which we allude she had mingled some of its terrors. It was so violently assailed, that she bowed to the verdict of her critics, so far as to alter the *dénouement* of her book in a second edition—an almost unexampled deference to the sovereignty of the critical press.

Compared with "Corinne," its predecessor, and in some sort its precursor, is a rude and unfinished sketch. "Corinne" has all the heat and passion of the former book, but is so infinitely more tender, so touchingly truer to the sweetest and saddest feelings of our nature, that supposing the two works to have been produced by different authors, we should scarcely range them on the same shelf.

Knowing them to be both her productions, when we read "Delphine" in the light of the later and lovelier work, we can trace the germ and budding of much that enchants us in "Corinne;" but that during the interval between the two, her mind had made immense progress it is impossible to deny.

The melancholy of the hero—a melancholy springing from the loss of his father—was just a reflection

of the condition of her own mind when she crossed the Alps. Indeed, an attentive student of her character finds so much of her actual life in this book, that it seems a confidential revelation of her own passionate experiences, rather than a story related in the third person. The one flaw, the episode concerning Lord Nelvil's visit to France, would have been omitted with great wisdom; but taking the work as a whole, a book so interesting, and so eloquent, has seldom been written.

It took the reading public throughout Europe by storm: a person, grandson to one of the greatest of the Swiss philosophers, says, that in Edinburgh, where he was at that time staying, the professors of the university stopped each other in the streets to discuss the incidents, and to inquire how far each had read. In England it was equally successful. One little town considered itself personally insulted by Madame de Staël's satirical description of dull, country life in the north, although she had certainly no knowledge of the place in question.

After her return from Italy, she passed a year in Switzerland, sometimes at Coppet, sometimes at Geneva, where several of her few faithful friends came to visit her. During this time she was busy in the composition of Corinne, and needed little other employment. But as her work drew to a close, she felt a great wish to pay a visit to France; not only that she might superintend the publication of her book, but that she might be near her son, whom she had sent to Paris under the care of Monsieur Schlegel, to prepare himself for the Polytechnic School.

The letter which with his dying hand Monsieur Necker had written to the First Consul, imploring that when the cause of her exile no longer existed, Madame de Staël might be permitted to return to Paris, had been duly forwarded to its destination, but had produced no token of notice. Napoleon, however, who had taken the title of emperor very shortly after the death of Monsieur Necker, was now more powerful than ever; and Madame de Staël hoped that this circumstance, added to whatever effect her father's letter might have wrought, would be sufficient to ensure her safety in returning to France. The continental powers were all submissive to the glorious eagle, and the internal condition of France was so tranquil as to afford no excuse for the exercise of arbitrary interference. Hoping, therefore, by a very quiet and retired life, to disarm the resentment of the emperor, she established herself at Auxerre, in 1806; and finding herself perfectly unmolested, ventured to come within the prescribed circle by removing to Rouen, at which place she could receive daily letters from Paris. Here, too, she was allowed to reside undisturbed, and fondly hoping that perfect neutrality would satisfy the despotism of Napoleon, she came within twelve leagues of her beloved city, residing on a little estate which belonged to Monsieur de Castellane. At this place, she put the finishing strokes to "Corinne," and superintended the correction of the work as it passed through the press.

For the sake of her children, she was particularly careful to give no unnecessary offence at this time, and if anything short of homage could have contented Napoleon, her quiet life, and her silence on political

subjects, must have done it. Negative submission, however, was little to his taste; he had determined that her genius should be the ornament of his reign, or a silenced and persecuted thing. Any tribute to him she disdained; it was her creed that "we may sacrifice everything for others, excepting our conscience; which being the treasure of God enshrined within us, it were dishonest to resign." Nor could her children have approved the sacrifice, had she, for their interests, ceded this dearest possession.

Her present work being quite foreign to political subjects, might be reasonably hoped to be incapable of giving umbrage to Napoleon. But its sudden popularity, and the vivid interest it awakened for her throughout Europe, awoke his detestable spirit of jealousy, for whose assaults nothing was too noble or too helpless. On the 9th April, 1807, the very anniversary of her father's death, she received a new sentence of exile. It was now too evident that nothing but the cession of her independence would content her enemy. Counting the bitter cost, and sighing to reflect that she disposed perhaps of the future of others as well as her own, she proudly resolved to maintain her consistency; and once more, at the bidding of her tyrant, said adieu to all that remained of her once brilliant connexions in France.

It was impossible, indeed, that she could please the emperor. Her very least sentence breathed a spirit of generous enthusiasm which was distasteful to him. He is said to have remarked peevishly, "It is no matter what she writes, let it be politics, history, or romance; it comes to the same thing in the end. After reading her, people do not like me."

CHAPTER XLI.

In some sense, the works of Madame of Staël may be considered the fruits of her exile: we should certainly have wanted the greatest of her productions, if circumstances had not occurred to drive her away from Paris. Secluded from congenial society, she poured out on paper the vivid conceptions and burning thoughts which she would have preferred to enunciate with the living voice.

Again removed from any hope of return to the associations which possessed for her a fatal fascination, she turned her weary steps towards Coppet, which her father's tomb seemed to consecrate as her home. Her connexions in Switzerland, to whom perhaps her devotion for the capital had sometimes made her unjust, received her with so much affection, that her summer was more agreeable than she had expected. She was honoured at this time by a visit from Prince Augustus of Prussia, who was released from captivity by the declaration of peace; and a few other persons, proof against the displeasure of the master of Europe, yet ventured to give her their society.

But the greatest alleviation of her exile was her eloquent pen, which has left us such rich legacies. "There was, in her conversation, in her society," says

Monsieur de St. Beuve, " something consoling, something ameliorative, which may still be felt by her readers."

To perfect her work on Germany, so cruelly interrupted by her father's death in 1804, another visit to that country was necessary, and in the autumn of 1807 she went to Vienna to resume her study of the German manners and philosophy.

This city gave her a very agreeable residence; the kindly manners of the royal family and the great nobility seemed doubly attractive in contrast with the harsh rule and military precision of Napoleon. The beauty of the situation too, which her travels in Italy with Monsieur Schlegel had educated her to appreciate, gratified her taste; and her year in Vienna was decidedly not the least happy period of her life.

Her love of Paris lends, nevertheless, a little mischievous severity to her pen while she chronicles the dulness of the good society in Vienna. The Viennese conducted their social existence in a way little calculated to please a lively Frenchwoman: they performed their visiting as if it were a solemn duty, and each assembly was so much like its predecessor, that she was tempted to recommend to the high nobility the imitation of a trick she had seen on the stage, in which Harlequin skipped out of his robe and wig, leaving them to figure in his stead while he amused himself elsewhere. The elaborate toilette which consumed much time, the terrible three hours at table, the weary waiting on the stairs for one's carriage, all excited her dissatisfaction; but the regular recurrence of the same solemn assemblies and grave ceremonies

was the worst part of these affairs. The variety of pleasures in Paris precludes this clock-like method, so admirable in the business, but so wearisome in the amusements of life.

In Vienna she was certain to meet to-day at one great house, the same persons she met yesterday at another; for the rigorous etiquette of the day allowed little mingling of classes; and these assemblies, almost the only social privilege of the nobility, religiously preserved the proprieties of rank. She adds, satirically, that the people can never be excited to envy by such pleasures as these.

For her wit and sparkling conversation there was no place; the slow, but kindly Germans, did not comprehend them. She was well received, and allowed to make her courtesy before the various magnates of the great world in Vienna; but one can easily understand that this was a sad sort of life to her. She owned that a lodging on a fourth story in Paris, and a hundred louis a year, would please her better. In the public gardens, on a summer evening, it saddened her to see the Viennese sipping their wine in profound indolence; they were happy, but silent. In the Paris she regretted, such an assemblage would fill the atmosphere with light laughter and elegant pleasantry. The contrast, to her mind, was all in favour of Paris.

The city of her youth, like Jerusalem to the mourners in Babylon, seemed all the fairer and gayer because she was forbidden to tread its streets. At the same time she was profoundly grateful for the Austrian hospitality, which enabled her quietly and pleasantly to pursue her interesting studies. And if we

had never before been sensible of the value of literature, the tale of her exile, so wonderfully sweetened by it, would suffice to kindle our thankfulness.

A year elapsed, during which she made such good progress as to render her protracted stay in Germany unnecessary. She was now familiar with her subject, and could pursue it where she pleased.

She returned to Coppet, to find herself shunned by almost all her neighbours; the influence of Napoleon had increased in vigour during her year of absence; to be disagreeable to him, was now to be shunned by all the respectabilities of Europe.

This tremendous power of one unbending, selfish will, during so many years and over so large a field, is perhaps the greatest phenomenon of modern times.

Madame de Staël was little inclined to consider it philosophically; the place-hunting disposition which the new *régime* seemed to have rendered more greedy than ever, irritated her against even her own countrymen; all her fine wishes for France seemed unnecessary, when very few persons were too dissatisfied with the present state of things to accept or to intrigue for a place under government.

Penetrated with sadness at the condition of public affairs, she tried to forget it by busying herself over "L'Allemagne," the finest of her philosophical works, and the production of her ripest intellect.

Her very limited circle of friends, and the total absence of anything like public interest or amusement, rendered desirable every means of relaxation available in a family circle. Her dramatic talent, whose childish exhibitions had provoked the tears of Marmontel, now operated to beguile the tedium of her circumscribed

existence. She composed many little pieces, some of them bearing the stamp of her peculiar genius, and these productions she and her friends acted in her house at Coppet. Thus, varied by alternate amusement and study, two quiet years wore away.

She had by this time completed her greatest work, her three volumes on Germany, the fruit of six years' toil and study. Germany was at that time very little known to the French, and a kind of polite contempt for its literature went, as is usual, hand in hand with complete ignorance of it. Information on this interesting subject Madame de Staël felt convinced would open up many sources of thought and feeling in France; she also wished, by giving some slight account of the different philosophical systems which divided the great intellects of Germany, to win the attention of her countrymen from that thorough absorption in the material present, into which they seemed in some danger of falling. Decked with the brightest jewels of a perfected intellect, her book is a complete storehouse of lovely sentiments and beautiful expressions: of philosophical ideas, and religious emotions. It is not that she has written in a directly didactic manner; but a sweet influence, like a delicate perfume, a gentle radiance of genius refined by Christianity breathes through the whole, and heightens the power, without impairing the personality of the writer. Compared with this, her other works resemble Galatea, before the sculptor's kiss had warmed the marble into life; "L'Allemagne" is the nymph perfectly animated, and lovelier than ever for the magical waking.

Her exile still permitted her to approach within forty leagues of Paris, and bringing her precious manuscript, she came to the old castle of Chaumont-sur-Loire, near the city of Blois, a romantic residence, no less from association than situation; it having been, successively, the home of Cardinal d'Amboise, Diana of Poitiers, Catherine de Medicis, and Nostradamus. Here, with her two sons, she established herself, to see her work, as she hoped, through the press; but her expectations were delusive. More vigorous persecution was in store for her.

The press was now under rigorous censorship, and she no doubt considered herself extremely fortunate in obtaining permission to publish. Some few passages and expressions were struck out by the authorities, and to this she submitted, dropping the objectionable sentences, and adding nothing in their places which could by any chance be construed into a forfeiture of her opinions.

Secure in the possession of a letter from her bookseller, which assured her that the censors had authorised the publication of her book, she set out to pay a visit to her venerable friend, Monsieur Matthieu de Montmorency, whose great age and childlike piety would have endeared him to her, had he not possessed the all-powerful claim of having been her father's valued acquaintance. She walked with Monsieur de Montmorency in the woods surrounding his house, and conversed, as she might have done with Monsieur Necker under the more familiar trees of Coppet.

The next evening she left his residence, intending

to return home; but the monotonous plains of the Vendômois completely puzzled her people, and she lost her way. Night had overtaken the little party, and uncertain what course to pursue, she was not sorry to see a horseman approaching, to whom she confided her difficulty, which was met by a courteous invitation to accept the shelter of his father's château, not far distant. She joyfully acknowledged the kindness, and accompanied Monsieur Chevalier to his house, where she received a hearty welcome, and was treated with great politeness.

The next day Monsieur de Montmorency, who had been informed of her accident, forwarded her a note from her son, which begged her instantly to return home, as her book had encountered fresh difficulties. But she anticipated only some trifling objections, and being amused by the Indian treasures belonging to her host, delayed her departure several hours in order the better to examine them.

The interference was, however, a much more serious thing. The young Baron de Staël, ever devoted to his mother, and anxious that she did not return, mounted his horse, and went in search of her. He, too, lost his way in the plain; and, oddly enough, happened to inquire at the gate of the very house into which she had been received. He left his sad message with one of her friends, and hurried home to put her papers in a place of safety. The next morning, she was told that the police agents had destroyed the ten thousand copies of her work already printed, and had issued an order commanding her to leave France within three days.

This blow, coming when she had flattered herself she was secure, was almost more than she could bear. The flagrant injustice of first sanctioning the publication, and subsequently cutting the work in pieces, seemed to her so insulting, that she lost all her self-command, and shed a flood of bitter tears. These were of no avail but to relieve her overladen heart. She was compelled to go, and being forbidden to embark from any port on the Channel coast, lest she should come to England, she chose to return to Coppet, which contained at least one mournful attraction—her dear father's grave.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE children of Madame de Staël had inherited the almost religious filial tenderness which was so distinguished an element in her own character.

Her elder son was fourteen years of age at the time of Monsieur Necker's decease, and could well remember his mother's devotion to her father; the younger son and his sister were also old enough to retain some recollections of the same kind. It seems as if her little family loved to repay her with the same affection wherewith she had consoled the old age of their grandfather. She had laboured to keep her idol before the eyes of her children; on the Sundays, she instructed them in religion by reading to them from his works on the subject; she lost no opportunity of presenting to them the beloved image. When she sent Auguste to Paris, to pursue his studies

at a private academy, previously to his entering the Polytechnic School, she bade him adieu, telling him he was but a year younger than Necker when he first arrived in the capital, where he had built up the fortune which had raised his family to consequence. She had heard a bad report of the pupils at the school to which she sent her son; but she must trust him to keep a watch over himself, and to inform her if he found his moral sense losing its delicacy. He must remember his grandfather's example.

The earnest young lad, so early the sharer of the exile's anxieties, answered all her wishes: grave and melancholy beyond his years, he devoted himself to his studies with determined ardour, hoping that a brilliant examination might soften the resentment of her enemies. He had the satisfaction of being assured that the authorities had never seen a candidate so perfectly successful; but his wish on his mother's account was vain.

He was trusted to act in her affairs at an age too early for his own enjoyment of youth: his premature participation in the cares of life quelled his gaiety, but he never deceived her expectations. While yet a child, he was wise, gentle, and persevering beyond many men. Madame de Staël was a woman who needed the support of a stronger arm than her own; when her father failed her, she seemed to depend on her son.

In the year 1808, when Napoleon passed through Savoy, young de Staël, then seventeen years of age, secured a personal interview with the emperor, and pleaded eloquently on his mother's behalf. One can-

not but admire the heroism inspired by the natural affections, which could bear such a youth through an ordeal dreaded by many older persons, who had to deal, face to face, with the Man of Destiny. But Napoleon was inflexible; he playfully took the young baron by the ear, and told him he liked to hear a son plead for his mother, but that he would not have Madame de Staël in Paris. "Paris is my home," he said; "I will have there only those who love me: to a residence in any other European capital she is welcome. Naples, Rome, Vienna, *London*" (with a sneer); "but she will not do at Paris—she lost me the tribunate, I will take care that she do me no more mischief." After a conversation which lasted an hour, the poor young man was dismissed to acquaint his mother with the failure of his effort.

Having detailed to her his requests, and the emperor's replies, he says fondly, "Dear, and ever dearest mamma, does not all this seem very cold to you? But indeed I tried to speak with energy."

The spoilt career of such a son was one of her greatest troubles; had he been an Englishman, to what honourable employ might he not have looked forward? The idea that her children could anticipate nothing but a share in her exile was a terrible temptation to give up her consistency. For the honour of human nature be it said, that not even this most powerful motive ever succeeded in inducing her to swerve from the painful path of truth and duty.

Exhausted by sorrow and persecution, she returned to Coppet after the infamous suppression of the book to which she had attached so much value, and on

whose success she had staked many hopes. As she approached her father's resting-place, a rainbow suddenly spanned the roof of the house, and her sad heart, eager for some relief, seized on this beautiful accident as a presage of happiness to come. This time she was not deceived.

Her first marriage, excepting that it had given her three loving children, had been fruitful only in disappointment: without blaming her own parents for their share in that transaction, she was accustomed to say, playfully, "I shall force my daughter to make a marriage of inclination." The example of her father had led her to look on love in marriage as one of the greatest blessings in life; and with reference to herself, she had said, alluding to her intended visit to England, that if she met with a noble character in that country, she would sacrifice her liberty. There was no reason, indeed, why she should not contract a second marriage; every insult offered to her seemed to hint that she needed a protector.

A young man, of good family, who had been fighting under Bonaparte in Spain, exhausted by his wounds and the weakness consequent upon them, had come to Geneva to recruit his health, and was there when Madame de Staël came into Switzerland in 1810. His frail condition, and the desperate wounds he had received, would have excited the pity of a harder heart than hers; she addressed to him some simple words of consolation, which had an effect she had not contemplated. The young soldier forgot his weakness when she pitied him, her glorious nature filled him with sympathy, and he had not seen her

many times before he loved her. Very early in their acquaintance he said to one of his friends, "I shall love her so much that she must marry me;" and he devoted himself to the fulfilment of his plan. He succeeded so well as to induce her to unite herself to him; and whether her desire to retain a name she had made illustrious, or what other motive, induced her to keep her marriage secret, it is not easy to say; but it is certain that she committed this unjustifiable step, and the fact that not all her talent was equal to the difficulties of such a situation, may well convince us that a concealed marriage is a fraud on society, whose evil consequences no care can obviate. There is one excuse to be made, which has never yet been offered, we believe, in her behalf. The vexatious interference of Napoleon in the most sacred connexions of her life might warrant the fear that, if he knew of the marriage, he would claim Monsieur Rocca as his soldier, and thus deprive her of the companion she had chosen. She may have had this idea; if so, it proved true in the sequel. We say thus much, not in defence, but in palliation. Any subterfuge regarding what ought to be a connexion recognised by society, is to our mind a fault which nothing can justify.

She had at one time entertained the design of sailing in an American vessel, as if she intended to proceed thither, and of seizing the first chance of putting back to England. But the government now exercised such a close supervision of her actions, that she felt afraid to undertake the risk, lest at the last moment the authorities should pretend to discover

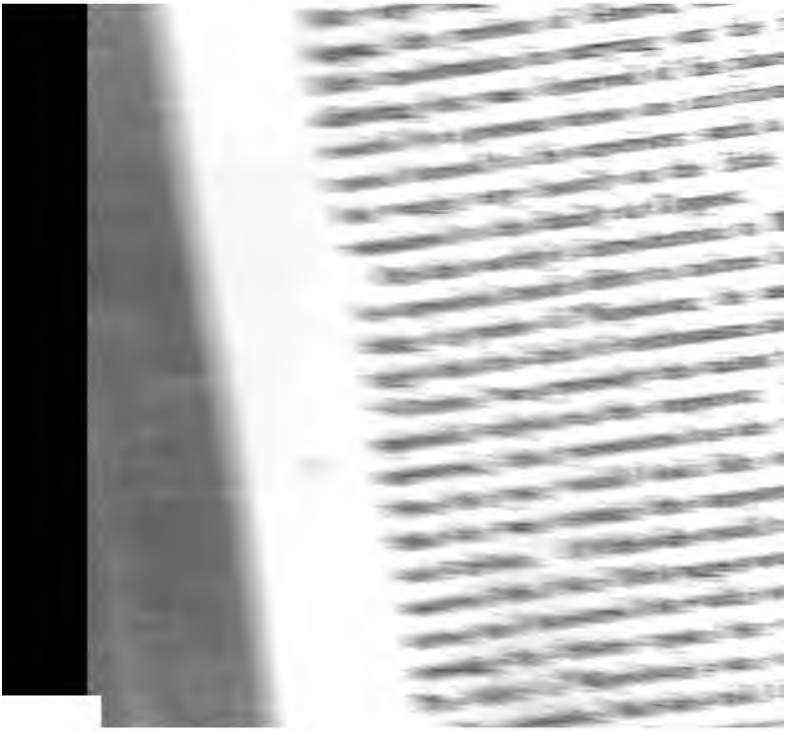
that she meant to come to England, the compassing of which measure, without the permission of the minister of police, would suffice to throw her into prison. Once under Bonaparte's key, only the fall of his power or her death would release her from captivity. Worn and weary as she was, the latter, at that time, appeared by far the more probable event.

She therefore almost resigned herself to expect nothing but to remain at Coppet, with the children whose hindered prospects were not the least part of her sufferings. Her sons would have interceded for her before she left France, and actually went to Fontainebleau for that purpose, but were threatened with arrest if they refused to abandon their project.

Madame de Staël had not long entered on her new exile, before the prefect of Geneva received orders to signify to the young baron and his brother, that they would not be permitted to visit France without special leave from the police. This, under their mother's present circumstances, they were not very likely to obtain.

Exile, which even the manly mind of Bolingbroke considered a punishment scarcely inferior to death, must be bitter enough under the least unfavourable circumstances; but when, in addition to personal distress, the sight of a family condemned to inaction completes the sum of sorrow, there are few misfortunes which could not be better endured. To say that many persons every day leave their native land to reside in distant parts of the globe, voluntarily incurring the necessity of bidding adieu to all the ties of childhood and youth, is utterly beside the mark.

What is it we love in our country? Surely not the mere material acres that compose it, but the laws and institutions under which we have been nurtured, the associations of history, of religion, of friendship, of kindred. We love her heroes, her martyrs, her social reformers. Now the man who leaves his fatherland to establish himself in a remote place, may bear with him the most sacred regard for all these things, and may be considered a true patriot if he attempt to sow at the antipodes the seeds of knowledge and freedom imparted to him at home. He may even nurse the idea that by extending the influence of his land abroad he is doing her more service than he could otherwise perform. He carries with him hope, energy, capability, and desire for action. Besides this, his determination is voluntary: the fruit of his circumstances, or his ambition to enlarge his means. Heaven forbid that the emigrant's lot be compared with that of the exile! The former is fulfilling the divine command, "Subdue the earth;" the other suffers the sentence of the first murderer, which even the heart hardened against fraternal instinct felt so keenly that the criminal bitterly declared it to be greater than he could bear. There is all this difference between the two.



During the summer of 1811, her younger son was seized with a complaint which rendered necessary the baths of Aix. Aix is in Savoy, at a distance of about twenty leagues from Coppet; and having warned the prefect of her little journey, she set out at a season when the baths were very little frequented. She had been in this dull little place waiting on her invalid son just ten days, when a courier from the prefect of Geneva ordered her home again. The prefect of Mont Blanc—a French Dogberry it may appear—instantly imbibed the alarm of his brother in authority, and Aix being in his department, he was violently afraid lest this dangerous woman should escape thence to London, to write against the emperor, and even took the precaution to send gendarmes along the road to forbid her the use of post-horses. All this against one little goose-quill! How near Savoy the prefect may have imagined London to lie, history does not tell us.

Her situation became daily more painful; on her return from this trip to Aix, her prefect, who seems to have had a malevolent influence, like some of the frightful Genii in the Arabian tales, gave her to understand that she was henceforth forbidden to travel in any place allied to France. As the fraternal arms of that country were then perpetually grasping some new state, it might soon become difficult to stir from Coppet at all.

No longer able to use her pen with the slightest hope of letting the world see what she did; for, as she says, if Napoleon forbade a publication, no continental state then dared hazard it; she was reduced

to her family for every amusement and occupation of life. The presence of Monsieur Schlegel, whose labours to forward the education of her sons she counted of great value, still afforded her such conversation as might keep in healthy condition a mind whose activity in solitude preyed on itself. Such an advantage, however, Napoleon was not inclined to spare his enemy; he took occasion to banish Schlegel from Coppet and from Geneva.

That accomplished man had brought out, some time before, a pamphlet in which, comparing Racine's "Phædra" with the tragedy of Euripides bearing the same title, he had awarded the palm to the work of the Greek author. This afforded Napoleon the puerile excuse that Schlegel's presence was calculated to make Madame de Staël *anti-French;* and her retirement was shorn of its principal alleviation. She had still, it is true, her children and Monsieur Rocca; but on the first, though they generously consoled her, she could scarcely look without self-questioning and reproach; and the devoted affection of her young husband rendered still more distressing to her his continued ill-health, the consequence of the frightful wounds he had received in Spain.

Shut up to sorrow and grief, she daily studied the map of Europe, to plan some means of escape from her oppressor; and such means became daily more difficult to compass. Her present situation was too exasperating to be long borne; she was shunned by her neighbours, and if they, with a few honourable exceptions, had not taken care to avoid her, she was too generous to show them any attention. To accept a

seat at her dinner table, required, she says, an act of Roman heroism; so certain was her visitor to be marked for the displeasure of the emperor. As in England in the sad days of the plague, people hurried away when they heard the melancholy bell announcing the vicinity of the fatal dead-cart, so her acquaintances carefully stood aloof from her; consoling themselves, no doubt, with the idea, that as her conscience was clear of any guilt, she could not really be unhappy in solitude. To understand all the annoyances of her situation, we ought to possess her gay, kindly, social disposition, which rejoiced in hospitality, and revelled in pleasant company, as a selfish man rejoices over his egotism. People in quarantine, she tells us, sometimes mischievously fling a handkerchief to a passing stranger, that he too may share the *ennui* of detention. With something of the same spirit, when Madame de Staël found how the place-hunters shunned her, she was particularly careful to show them more than ordinary politeness, if she happened to encounter them in the streets of Geneva; the only place by which she now held any connexion with the great world she had formerly known. She smiled to see how these slaves of a court-appointment shuddered at her greetings. The prefect had given out that whoever wished to stand favourably with Napoleon would do well to avoid visiting Madame de Staël, and we may be certain the hint was readily taken.

To see her acquaintance and society thus blight all it touched, was a severe affliction to a creature so generous. Beside this, she was in mortal terror of a prison, which was certainly at no great distance from

such a state of exile as hers. "I know," she says pathetically, "that I am not a courageous woman; my imagination, which heightens my every sense of enjoyment and happiness, paints in frightful colours all the evils that may befall me." The opinion that she was not courageous is one we cannot echo. We have formerly attempted to show that her courage was the fruit of self-conquest; and we now argue that it was therefore all the more worthy of respect. None but a courageous woman could have faced the police, when they made their domiciliary visit in search of De Narbonne; none but a courageous woman would have behaved as she did, in begging so many lives from the revolutionary tyrants. All these efforts, however, were for others; and it is certain that she was less brave when only her own interest was concerned. This could scarcely impair her courage now, for it was evident that the fate of her children was wrapped up with her own.

Every circumstance of her life led her to consider more and more seriously a plan of flight; but to leave the abode her father's industry had bought for his family, and the grave consecrated by the last sleep of her parents, required an effort she had not yet nerved herself to make. She considered the subject in many lights, often deciding it overnight, and debating it afresh in the morning, as if it presented itself to her for the first time. These cruel incertitudes and painful hesitations are no mean part of the exile's lot.

She was constantly harassed by these difficulties, when she received a letter from the aged Monsieur de Montmorency, to inform her that he intended to

pay her a visit. In spite of the emperor's displeasure towards all who came to see her, she thought that a life entirely unconnected with politics, and devoted exclusively to works of piety and charity, must prevent any interference, even though her venerable friend came to Coppet. And who can blame her for not having much dissuaded him from his amiable purpose?

The prefect of Geneva had already recommended her to confine her travels to a circle embracing two leagues around Coppet; but she disputed the right of the French to interfere with her proceedings in Switzerland, and as she had received no formal order on the subject, concluded herself at liberty to meet Monsieur de Montmorency at Orbe, and to return by Fribourg to Coppet. The hints of Bonaparte's subalterns, however, like royal invitations, were generally taken in the light of commands, and to contravene them was merely to provoke a more decided interference. After a little tour, which embraced a visit to the Trappist convent, near Fribourg, and the sight of a famous waterfall, she came back to Coppet, no doubt a little relieved by the soothing effect of De Montmorency's society and conversation; for he took a vivid interest in her, and talked to her of the religion which he lived only to cultivate: striving to lessen the pangs of her mortal suffering by representing to her that beautiful land, where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

On her return, her prefect was ready for her. He intimated that she had committed a great audacity in making a tour in Switzerland, and had positively

infringed orders by treading on ground belonging to France. She had forgotten that the waterfall she visited was already part of the French territory. Somehow Napoleon's taste for annexation recalls to us the notable Dragon of Wantley, whose appetite was universal, and spared nothing.

The few days which Monsieur de Montmorency had intended to spend at Coppet were not allowed to elapse in peace. On the return of the post which had carried to Paris the news of this estimable man's visit to the daughter of his old friend, the prefect had the business of bearing to Coppet an order of exile for the aged Christian, whose only offence was fidelity to a woman in adversity. He received the cruel command with resignation, and besought his poor hostess to do the same; but of such calmness she was not capable. This seemed the last drop in the cup of suffering. She wept, she agonised, she prayed unceasingly; all the passionate force of her nature rebelled against her wretched fate; her brain reeled, and the dreadful thoughts which rapidly succeeded each other seemed to threaten a suspension of her reason. Exhausted and frightened by the energy of her grief, she had recourse to opium to relieve her, for an hour or two, of a load to which she was quite unequal.

She was yet in the strivings of her agony, when she received a letter from her lovely friend, Madame Récamier, who remained true to her in all her sorrows. Madame Récamier announced that she was coming to the baths of Aix, and should stop on her way to spend some little time at Coppet. In two days she expected to arrive.

Alarmed lest the fate of De Montmorency should reward the kindness of this beautiful creature, Madame de Staël sent a messenger to meet her, imploring her by all that was dear, not to venture into a house, to tread whose threshold was to incur disgrace and banishment. But Madame Récamier had no idea of passing almost under her friend's windows without going to see her; if that friend were in distress, the kind lady saw all the greater reason to seek her out,—she insisted on coming to Coppet, and spent a day and night there.

Madame de Staël received her with many tears. Formerly, the presence of this kindly and lovely woman had irradiated the residence of her gifted friend; but now her simple intention to fulfil the commonest duties of friendship might entail on her an exile, which, from the reverses her fortune had suffered, would be doubly painful to her.

The inevitable stroke came; Madame Récamier too was banished.

"Madame de Staël," said the prefect of Geneva, "has made for herself an agreeable existence at home; her friends, and even foreigners, visit her at Coppet; the emperor will not suffer things to go on so."

Every indignity short of actual imprisonment now assailed her. The report was spread that the minister of police intended to put a guard at the gates of the avenue of Coppet, to arrest any person who came to see her; and the few friends she possessed used every effort to induce her to seek safety in flight.

The prefect assured her that every step she took was seen by a gendarme, and that the authorities

knew all that went on beneath her roof quite as well as she did. He was ordered by the emperor, he said, to surround her with observers.

There is not a falser saying current in society, than that which asserts that the innocent are quite indifferent to any scrutiny which may be applied to them. There is something so hateful to a generous and high-toned mind in being constantly watched and suspected —something so infamous to a person imbued with the divine instinct of freedom, in finding himself thus surrounded and spied upon—something so humiliating to the noblest pride of man, in affording occupation and amusement to a set of mean subalterns of tyranny, that the innocent person in such a case is probably scarcely less unhappy than a guilty one, whose moral senses are obscured, one may presume, by his disregard of their promptings. At one moment her fears urged her to depart, the next she seemed overwhelmed by a nervous dread of the effort necessary to separate her from Coppet. It was a thread on which all depended; if she were arrested and brought back, she could expect only imprisonment, which would probably endure until a more powerful monarch than Napoleon ended her earthly sufferings. Meantime, her prefect told her that any attempt to escape would infallibly cause her ruin; that at Berlin or Vienna she would be claimed and ignominiously brought back, a prisoner, into Switzerland.

It is impossible that all these troubles should have had no effect upon her; her health and her energies began to yield to the repeated strokes of misfortune which assailed her; she was painfully conscious that her

moral courage began to pale before the terrors of despotism. On all sides she heard the cry, "Why cannot she content herself? She has wealth, a good table, a garden for recreation, a fine château; what more is necessary for comfort?"

There is something diviner necessary to sustain the true life of a human creature; in how many senses are the words of scripture true—"Man doth not live by bread alone."

This truth, like a beacon-light, so plain to us who walk quietly ashore, but difficult to be seen from a frail boat out at sea, driven hither and thither by the winds, and almost overpowered by the force of the waves—began to grow less clear before the troubled gaze of our distressed exile. She seemed sometimes to take an intense and, for her, unnatural delight in the elements of physical comfort which surrounded her. To pass the days in peace and repose, to taste the sunshine, and at night to rest on a pillow of down, began to take the shape of life to her; to thrust out the nobler ideal which had formerly inspired her with eloquence. So true is it that tyranny debases even the innocent whom it afflicts. But if she had sunk so low as to be content with mere physical repose—and she was still far from that—it was quite uncertain how long even her present condition might remain to her.

Eight months were passed in this mournful situation; every day the idea of a prison became more horrible to her, every day her actual life grew more like imprisonment, and yet every day seemed to decrease her power of breaking the links that bound her to Switzerland. Already, if she escaped, she could

do it only by crossing Austria, and entering Russia by way of Poland; from Russia she could embark for Sweden, and thence might hope to reach England. Europe, she says, formerly so open to travellers, was now one great net, whose meshes entangled one at every step. The passage through Austria was not unattended with danger, for it was not to be supposed that the emperor who had felt compelled to give a daughter to Napoleon could refuse his son-in-law the cession of a poor refugee.

Her various and conflicting fears might have held her longer in hesitation, had not the immense preparations of Napoleon for the invasion of Russia threatened to shut the last door of hope. If he once gained possession of the ports on the Baltic, her fate and the fate of her children was decided for ever. She looked on the two kind, brave sons, whose affection had so relieved her exile, and on the lovely girl, scarcely fourteen years old, whom it seemed cruel to keep a prisoner at Coppet: their interest decided her. She made a convulsive effort, conquered her cowardice, and on Saturday, the 23rd of May, 1812, set out on her perilous journey. Before she left, she made a solemn visit to the tomb of the father whom she had so fondly loved and honoured, and kneeling before the gate of his burial-place, spent an hour in solitary prayer and meditation. Uncertain whether she should ever again gaze on the place where he had lived, she piously visited every spot where they had sat, walked, or talked together, invoking his spirit to sustain and accompany her, during the dangerous enterprise on which she was about to enter. She went to his cabinet,

where she had preserved everything as he had left it; his arm-chair, his papers, were all in their accustomed places; and these inanimate tokens of a friend departed came in for a share of her regrets. His cloak, which had rested since his death on the very chair where he had last left it, she took with her, intending to wrap herself in it if any danger approached her. Her love, no doubt, endowed it with all the wondrous power possessed by the prophet's mantle in olden days. These adieux completed, she seriously addressed herself to the task before her.

CHAPTER XLIV.

ALTHOUGH the day which saw her safely in Russia would, no doubt, end her subjection to the tyranny of Napoleon, it was but a kind of half liberty for which she hazarded so much. Return to her own country—her love for which, she says, Bonaparte, not being a Frenchman, could never understand—was of course impossible; that beloved land she could scarcely hope to see again. But by comparison with her present state, liberty to live where she pleased out of France, to go and come when she chose without being surrounded by *gendarmes* was a lot abounding in privileges. In those days a *gendarme* struck her with mortal terror, sooner or later she expected to be arrested by one of them, and thrown into prison; perhaps at Vincennes, where the unhappy Duke d'Enghien had so foully perished—perhaps in that cold, Alpine

prison where the cruel Toussaint l'Ouverture expiated his crimes, and where lay many patriotic Spaniards, who by defending their country had proved traitors to Bonaparte, and incurred his terrible vengeance. Napoleon had already left his palace, "which," as Count Segur says, "he was never again to enter victorious," and was giving the meeting at Dresden to the monarchs of Austria and Prussia, and other chiefs subservient to him. He brought to that city his young archduchess, and seemed proudly to taunt his enemy with all his power and glory. Prudence would at this time have kept him in France; for Spain had rebelled, and, four months before, Ciudad Rodrigo had been taken by the English, under an illustrious warrior, worthy to compete with Napoleon in the field, and in every moral regard incomparably his superior. But Bonaparte, with fatal obstinacy, disdained the advice of his generals, and approached the scene of conflict as if he were returning from a victory. His health did not second his ambition; he was now the victim of a painful disease, and not all his efforts and energy could hide the fact that he was far less strong than formerly.

His rapid proceedings could not but hasten the departure of Madame de Staël; having concerted her plans with all the prudence possible, taking into her confidence only two of her servants, of whose fidelity she was well assured, she left Coppet on the day already indicated, at two o'clock in the afternoon. She and her daughter, accompanied by the young Baron de Staël and Monsieur Rocca, entered her carriage, as if about to take their ordinary exercise. Mademoiselle

de Stael and her mother took their fans in their hands, and no parcels of any kind, lest they should attract suspicion; the more completely to disarm which, Madame de Staël left word with her people that she intended returning to dinner.

As she drove down the avenue of Coppet, and realised that she was deserting, most likely for ever, a house associated with so many and mingled recollections, her forces deserted her, and she was threatened with a fainting-fit. But Monsieur de Staël, who felt how important it was that his mother should preserve her presence of mind at this trying crisis of her affairs, clasped her hand and reminded her that she was on her way to England. This word revived her; although the wonderful conquests of Bonaparte had made her road from Coppet to London embrace the traversing of half the continent, she felt that every step brought her nearer to a land of freedom.

She had arranged a rendezvous with Monsieur Schlegel (who had generously offered to be her conductor), at a farm-house just beyond Berne; here too she parted from the baron, who returned to Coppet to look after her interests there, and to obtain passports which would enable her to travel through Austria. This was a delicate undertaking; because, if they were refused, her plans were known, and further escape made impossible. In this difficulty the young man threw himself on the generosity of Monsieur de Schraut, the Austrian minister, who readily gave him the passports he required. Monsieur de Staël had seen his mother so completely deserted by those who

owed their life and fortune to her efforts, that this kindness from a stranger touched him very deeply. He had also the satisfaction of sending his brother to Vienna with servants and a travelling-carriage a few days after his mother's flight; and it was only on this second departure that our wise friend the prefect began to suspect mischief. So true is it that the greatest sages are sometimes at fault! He might have saved his credit if he had been kindly enough to favour the supposition that he winked at the escape, but as matters stand, we are compelled to conclude that his boast of knowing all that went on at Coppet was a little premature, and that this Swiss Machiavel was really and truly deceived.

When her son left her, Madame de Staël says she felt inclined to exclaim, in imitation of Lord William Russell, "the bitterness of death is passed!" but with the necessity for action her courage revived, and hope, so long an unknown guest, began to whisper sweetly, that the days of her mourning were ended. In this frame of mind she approached the Tyrol, for whose inhabitants she felt the respect invariably inspired by a people who are, or who long to be free.

At Inspruck she stopped a few hours to refresh, and as it was not prudent to seem too anxious about proceeding, she stayed to inspect the tomb of the great Maximilian; thence she hurried to Salzburg, whence she could readily reach the Austrian frontier. The most redoubtable part of her journey, after the few miles just beyond Coppet, lay in the passage from Bavaria into Austria, which road she had yet to traverse, and where she feared her anxious friend, the

prefect, might have preceded her coming by a courier, who would politely insist on her return to Geneva. But her health was so cruelly shattered that not all her eagerness for liberty could conquer her longing for physical repose; she was compelled to go very gently, and frequently to arrest her progress altogether.

As if nothing might be wanting to render this flight difficult, on entering the inn at Salzburg, a man approached Monsieur Schlegel, and told him in German, that a French courier, inquiring after a carriage from Inspruck, containing a lady and a young girl, had been at Salzburg a few hours before, and had engaged to call again for news of any such arrival. This terrible announcement deprived Madame de Staël of her little strength. Meantime Schlegel put fresh questions to his host, and the replies removed her misfortune beyond the reach of doubt. The courier was French indubitably. He came from Munich. He had been to the Austrian frontier in search of the lady, and not having found her, had promised to return to enquire for her. He was travelling post, and would no doubt arrive very shortly.

In this emergency Madame de Staël took a sudden resolution to leave her daughter and Monsieur Schlegel at the inn, together with the carriage and servants, and to set out alone on foot, entering the first house where she saw a promising physiognomy, and begging shelter and rest. Monsieur Schlegel engaged to conduct Mademoiselle de Staël into Austria; and the poor persecuted mother, almost exhausted by fear and trouble, could think of no better plan than to follow

them, as her strength served, on foot, in the disguise of a peasant-woman.

She was endeavouring to master the chances of such a course, when the awful courier himself burst into the room, and turned out to be none other than Monsieur Rocca; who, after one day's journey, had been forced to return to Geneva to wind up his affairs there. With a delightful impudence at which one cannot but smile, he had seconded his haste to rejoin his wife, by giving out that he was a French courier going after a lady, whom he described. The terror and respect inspired by his assumed office and errand procured him the quickest horses, and sure relays at every post. He had thus gone boldly as far as the Austrian frontier, and had assured himself that no evil messenger had preceded her on the road. He now mounted the box of the carriage, to conduct her to Vienna, and, much relieved by his assurance that she had nothing to fear, Madame de Staël found her "cruel terror changed into a very sweet feeling of security and gratitude."

Before reaching Vienna, the little party stayed for a day at the Abbey of Melk, which, from the height on which it stands, commands a view of the smiling country irrigated by the picturesque windings of the Danube. She amused herself by treading in the footsteps of Napoleon, who, from the same terrace where she walked, had looked abroad on the peaceful land which was to be invaded by his arms.

A little calmed by her sense of security and peace, she arrived at Vienna on the 6th of June, just before the departure of a courier for Wilna, where the Rus-

sian emperor was then staying. The Russian ambassador in Vienna behaved to her with the most perfect kindness; he wrote by this courier to procure her the passport from St. Petersburg, which she must have before crossing the frontier, and assured her that in less than three weeks she would receive the requisite papers.

These three weeks she resolved to pass in Vienna. Her Austrian friends, who had received her with the greatest hospitality, assured her that she might remain in the city without any dread. The dull solitude of Coppet, since her stricter exile began, had prepared her to find pleasure in the society of Vienna. She says nothing on this occasion of the heaviness of the social life, but confesses that she found herself in the midst of a circle of acquaintances who sympathised with her. The Austrian emperor was at Dresden, entertaining Napoleon, whose wife, it is said, provoked the jealousy of her stepmother, the empress of Austria, by outdoing her in the splendour of her costume.

Madame de Staël found that the marriage of Maria Louisa with Napoleon was not much to the taste of the Austrians. The emperor, in order to escape the heavy taxes threatened by his conqueror, had capitulated by agreeing to give him his daughter; but the measure was taken without the concurrence of the people.

Monsieur de Metternich was at Dresden with his master, and in his absence the superintendence of the foreign police was consigned to a person whose name need not be mentioned, as he used his "little brief

authority" simply to make himself ridiculous. For some days Madame de Staël remained in perfect peace; she had already passed a winter in Vienna, very well received by the emperor, the empress, and all the chief nobility; and it was rather difficult to persecute her for her disgrace with Napoleon, which she had partly incurred by her appreciation of the German manners and literature. But, she tells us, it was still more difficult to risk displeasing a power for whom Austria had already sacrificed so much; and fresh information arriving on her relations towards Napoleon, Monsieur de H. thought it his duty to set spies to watch her. His manner of doing this partook strangely of German slowness, and French cunning. He posted spies at her door, who followed her on foot when her coachman drove at a moderate pace, and who took cabriolets to look after her when she made a little trip into the country, or travelled at a rate quicker than ordinary. The whole value of Napoleon's system of police depending on its secrecy, this wretched imitation of it could not but afford her some amusement.

It was troublesome, nevertheless. She felt convinced she could only save herself by flight, and her friends began to excite her fears on the subject of her Russian passport. They dreaded, lest, after several months' detention in Vienna, the Declaration of War might render it impossible to proceed. This idea excessively alarmed her. There was only one route which was altogether independent of Russia, and this was one which had been already used by the Archduke Francis. The Archduke Francis had been compelled

to travel on horseback—a thing very easy to him, but impossible to Madame de Staël, whose timidity made her a poor rider. There were other reasons for avoiding this road; it was replete with dangers and infested with thieves, and the adoption of it presupposed a separation from her daughter, who was much too young to bear a protracted and dangerous journey. But she had many objections to leave Mademoiselle de Stael.

And yet it was necessary she should decide on some course, for it was not very likely she could remain in Vienna when the French ambassador came back from Dresden. In this strait she applied to the Russian minister, who had already stood her friend, to give her the means of reaching Odessa, whence she might get to Constantinople, and so attain her destination by Greece, Sicily, Cadiz, and Lisbon. Yet the first step in this route demanded a Russian passport equally with the other course, Odessa belonging to that empire.

Uncertain on which plan to decide, she applied at the Foreign Office for a passport which would enable her to leave Austria by either Hungary or Galicia, as her convenience should determine. This she found impossible; the authorities were not able to give a passport of this kind. Thus driven, she decided on Galicia, and, in accordance with the advice of her friends, at once left Vienna, after obtaining the promise of a person in whom she confided, that he would ride after her, night and day, with the important missive, so soon as it should arrive from St. Petersburg.

From Monsieur Rocca she had been compelled to separate; for Napoleon had sent a description of him all along the route, with orders for his arrest in the quality of a French officer. Yet the young man was quite incapacitated for service, and had some time before thrown up his commission. This new piece of tyranny was no doubt provoked by some information which had reached the emperor regarding the relations of Rocca with Madame de Staël. However that might be, the young man was obliged to precede, alone and in disguise, the wife he longed to protect. A meeting-place had been appointed, as we shall see. In his absence, Monsieur Schlegel and Albert de Staël conducted the poor lady and her daughter. The baron, as we have noted, had returned to Coppet, to attend to his mother's pecuniary interests, and was paying the penalty of her escape by a little imprisonment, such as she had suffered.

She hoped, in leaving Vienna, to escape from the state of *espionnage* (thank Heaven, there is no English for *that!*) in which she had been living, and which, no doubt, was excited by the ill-will of the French government. In this hope she was mistaken: she stayed a day or two at Brunn, the capital of Moravia, and found the difficulties of her situation rather augmenting than diminishing. Not only was she tormented with anxiety about the passport, which had not yet arrived, but those she had brought from Vienna, though perfectly correct, were looked on with suspicion. She begged that her son might be permitted to return to the city she had left, and explain her condition to some person in authority.

The answer was, that neither her son nor any of the party would be allowed to retrace a single league of their road. She was also bidden to traverse Galicia as quickly as possible, stopping at Lanzut (whither she intended to call) no more than four-and-twenty hours. Thus pressed, though without the means of leaving Austria, she was in a state of some perplexity.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE independence of Poland was made Napoleon's excuse for this war with Russia: how much he really cared about her freedom, may be judged by the fact that the third of Poland belonged to his father-in-law, and with this portion he expressly declared he did not intend to interfere. Austria now held, therefore, a most anomalous position: she was, on the one hand, tyrannising over part of Poland, and on the other, raising soldiers to avenge her enslavement by Russia.

Madame de Staël endeavoured to represent to the governor of Moravia, that, if she were thus compelled to approach the frontier without the means of clearing it, she must spend her life at Brody, a town between the two empires, inhabited chiefly by Jews, who supported themselves by the carriage of merchandise. All her horror at such a necessity, the official in question would not probably understand; he merely bowed, apologised, and appealed to his instructions. She further urged, that as Austria had sent Prince

Schwartzenberg at the head of thirty thousand men to fight for the re-establishment of Poland, she was puzzled to know why she was precluded remaining some longer time at Lanzut, the estate of a Polish princess well affected towards Austria. Her remonstrances, however, served no purpose, but to vent a little honest resistance. She set out for Galicia completely deprived of spirits; tyranny seemed to pursue her wherever she went; and the Germans, whom she had formerly known so candid and openhearted, seemed depraved by their subjection to the French, whose worst qualities they tried to imitate. The journey through Poland was not calculated to revive her: the education of the people she found miserably defective, and their condition, of course, lamentable. The Jews, she says, filled all the posts of industry, and were accustomed to buy of the peasants, for a supply of brandy, the harvest of the year. And the contrast between the luxury of the nobles, and the sordid poverty of the lower classes, painfully affected her. The country seemed inhabited by three sorts of people, who ran round her carriage at every halt. These were Jewish merchants, Polish beggars, and German spies. The processions of psalm-singers, carrying the standard of the cross, and bearing in their countenance every sign of misery; and the abject servility of the common people, who crowded round every person of respectable appearance, bending to embrace his knees, were also features in the scene. In the midst of such dismal spectacles, she saw a man or two, in old coats, keeping guard over misery: for these spies could see little beside. Such wretched subalterns refused passports

to the Polish nobility, who were obliged to present themselves once a week, to answer for their presence. No device more odiously offensive to a proud race, could possibly be chosen.

Her own situation, however, engrossed her chief thoughts. The route she had taken obliged her to have her passport examined at every third stage by the captain of the circle. In the police-offices of every such town, she found herself placarded, and read directions to the authorities to survey her strictly as she went through. This was performed after the German fashion; at the offices a corporal or a clerk, sometimes both (pipe in mouth), would come out to stare at her; and after making the tour of the carriage, retired in silence. The publicity of these police advertisements amused her: she says they recalled to her memory our old friend, Monsieur de Sartines, of geographical memory, who, while lieutenant of police, wisely proposed putting the spies into uniform. Meantime, she went as slowly as possible in order to be overtaken by the important Russian passport. Her path lay through roads of which only they who have travelled in Poland can form any idea. It was a melancholy kind of journey, though it had hope at the end. One morning as she, accompanied by her son, crossed a kind of desert, she was saluted in French by a man on horseback; before she could reply, he was already at some distance, but this simple accident recalled a flood of recollections concerning the country whose government so persecuted her.

The character of the Poles she considered pleasing; the servants of the Austrian government seemed like

men of wood, compared with the mobile and kindly race they were sent to manage. The greatest contrasts met in the social condition of the people; some of the houses most remarkable for elegance did not contain a single bed; in others, though the inhabitants had neither meat nor white bread, she found exquisite Hungarian wine, and perfumes thrown on the hearths to scent the atmosphere.

From the consideration of these painful contrasts, she was recalled by the arrival of the long-expected Russian passport, a circumstance which gave her intense pleasure. Her Viennese friends also assured her that they had prevailed on the government to interfere and prevent the annoyances to which she was subjected by the police. But the circular which had commanded the captains of circles to watch her had not been recalled, and the mere word of the minister availed little against positive orders. She forgot this probability, and considered that the kindness of her friends had put it in her power to stay at Lanzut with Princess Lubomirska, according to her first intention. Here she meant to stay two days, a period of rest which her exhausted strength imperatively demanded. She had determined to go on, after this repose, with the greatest possible haste, because everywhere she heard the news that war was already declared between France and Russia. It was early in July that Madame de Staël arrived at the chief town of the circle whence Lanzut depends; her carriage stopped, and, as usual, her son took charge of the passport, and went to submit it to the authorities. She had suffered so many disappointments and accidents that we can-

not wonder she felt alarmed when a quarter of an hour elapsed without bringing the return of Monsieur Albert de Staël. She begged Monsieur Schlegel to ascertain the cause of the delay. Both the gentlemen returned, followed by a man, whose features Madame de Staël never forgot; his stupid face, she says, was veiled by a broad smile, which gave his physiognomy a mean and disagreeable expression. Albert de Staël, a young man of high courage and hasty temper, was enraged at the news he had to tell. The captain of the circle declared that only eight hours delay would be allowed at Lanzut, and that to ensure obedience, an agent of police would accompany the party to the house of the princess, remain while they stayed, and see them safely off. In vain had Albert represented that his mother's state of fatigue demanded more than eight hours' rest, and that she was already so overcome with distress as to render any fresh interference the last degree of inhumanity. The servile subaltern of a wretched and demoralising system came up to his victim, bowing to the ground, and exasperating by his politeness the woman he insulted by his presence. So he entered a calèche whose wheels almost touched those of her carriage; thus accompanied, she was to enter the house of her friend, where she had fondly flattered herself she should find a little rest. She had another reason for alarm; at Lanzut she was to join Monsieur Rocca, who had gone there to await her coming; and who could tell that this agent of police might not see and arrest him? In his present weak state, a few months imprisonment would infallibly end his days. Added to these sources of wretchedness,

was a feeling of intense anger and indignation, a kind of mental fever of which, perhaps, only the victims of injustice have an adequate idea. To hear these wheels close on her own, to know that this miserable servant of oppressors was to sit as a spy at her friend's table, to dog her every step, and note her every gesture, was too much. Before she attained her destination, she was seized with a nervous attack of so violent a nature, that her son and Schlegel were obliged to take her out of the carriage, and lay her by the road-side. The agent sent his servant for a little water to revive her, and she says she hated herself for the weakness that provoked his detestable pity. After a time she recovered sufficiently to proceed, and the two carriages entered the courtyard of the château together.

Prince Henry Lubomirska, nephew to her hostess, quite unprepared for any such visitor as the obsequious agent, came forward joyfully to greet her. But she was helpless from terror, and well might she be so, for Rocca came rushing from the house, eager to assure himself of her safety. Happily a Polish gentleman, who happened to be present, saw there was something in Rocca's appearance which distressed Madame de Staël, and he managed to cover the retreat of the poor husband, before the police agent discerned his presence.

After supper, the commissary politely approached Monsieur de Staël, and told him, in the softest way, that he had received orders to watch during the night in Madame's bedchamber, to see that she held no conversations of a treasonable nature; but, he added,

that out of regard to the lady, he should not press this point.

The young man was maddened by the treatment his mother received, and he answered, angrily, "You may as well add, out of regard to yourself; for if you dare to plant a foot in Madame de Staël's bedchamber, I, her son, will fling you out of window."

This a little frightened the agent. He bowed lower than ordinary, and ejaculating, "Ah! Monsieur le Baron," was shown to his room. The next morning at breakfast, Prince Henry's secretary took possession of him, and kept him so occupied with the delicacies of the table, that there seemed every probability of his being willing to remain a few extra hours; but Madame de Staël felt humiliated by his presence under her friend's roof, and she left in haste, not half refreshed, and without having time to see the lovely gardens and pictures for which the château of Lanzut was famous. She says she shed tears of bitterness at the circumstances in which she was compelled to appear. After all these annoyances, she arrived safely at the capital of Galicia, and obtained an order to go into Russia. When she cleared the barrier which separates the two empires, she took a secret oath never again to enter a country subject to Napoleon. By a rather odd coincidence, she entered Russia on the 14th of July, the anniversary of the Revolution.

The person who first received her in Russia, happened to be a Frenchman, formerly in Necker's employ. This man spoke to her, with tearful eyes, of her father; and such a reception seemed to her affectionate heart an omen of good fortune. She was not

attended by a single servant who could speak Russian, and had not a German physician kindly offered to act interpreter for her, until she found means to supply the deficiency, she would have been most awkwardly situated. She was delighted with the hospitality shown by the people to a woman who spoke the language of their enemies.

The direct route to St. Petersburg she could not travel, for it was already occupied by the armies; she found she must go by way of Moscow. This was two hundred leagues out of her nearest line, but she had become so accustomed to winding roads, that this seemed a trifle. She was out of Austria—out of danger.

The first province she had to cross, that of Volhynia, is part of Russian Poland: the country is fertile, and much less miserable than Galicia, though, like it, overrun with Jews. She had a letter to a Polish nobleman here, which she presented, but was advised to proceed as soon as possible, because the French were expected to arrive in the course of a week.

That immense army, of which so small a portion lived to return to France, was already rapidly approaching. She was, indeed, half afraid of being overtaken by them, and would have turned southward to Odessa, had not her son persuaded her that her strength would scarcely bear the fatigues necessarily involved in such a course. She therefore wisely determined to continue her journey through Russia, with all possible speed.

The next place of consequence was Kiev, the chief town in the Ukraine, and formerly the capital of the

country, at a time when the Russians had many relations with the Constantinopolitan Greeks, and other eastern peoples. Of these connexions Madame de Staël fancied she could trace many remains in the character of the present Russians, who, according to her thinking, have much more in common with the southern and eastern than with the northern nations.

The Ukraine struck her as a fertile, but not an agreeable country; vast tracts of land are occupied by crops of grain, but there is scarcely a house or a human being to be seen. When she reached Kiev, the houses, which are built in wood after the figure of a tent, presented a perfectly novel sight, and the green and gilt cupolas of the churches, when lighted up by the sun, seemed to her more like a holiday illumination than real parts of a city. The Russian native costume, which partakes somewhat of the oriental character, also attracted her attention.

Meantime her Russian coachmen drove with incredible swiftness through large tracts of monotonous country; not varied, for they occurred at too regular intervals, by sandy plains, a few forests of birch, and villages immensely far apart, the houses of which seemed nevertheless to have been all built on the same model.

She was passed on the road by large bodies of Cossacks, going towards the theatre of war. They carried in their hands long lances, and wore a kind of gray cloak, the hood of which was drawn over the head. They looked, she thought, like ghosts.

She reached the government of Toula, and now felt quite out of danger. Her reception here much pleased

her. Several gentlemen came to her inn to compliment her on her writings; and she confesses, with her usual frankness, that she was delighted to find her literary reputation extending so far north. "Zulma, the priestess of Apollo, is still well pleased to be admired."

The governor's wife received her in the Asiatic fashion, presenting her with sherbet and roses. The saloon was elegantly ornamented with pictures and musical instruments; and not only from the governors, but from all with whom she had to deal, she experienced noble hospitality. The admixture of the oriental element was very fascinating to the imagination of Madame de Staël, who delighted in everything vivid and picturesque. Setting aside her admiration for the patriotism of the nobles, who cheerfully made large sacrifices to support the charges of the war, she does not seem to have formed a very high opinion of the national character.

At last, after traversing a great plain, the gilded cupolas of Moscow—so soon to blaze otherwise than with the sunlight—met the weary gaze of our fugitive, who was delighted thus to complete another most important step in her long journey. The size of the city, and the many eastern associations, the public buildings, including the Kremlin—the old residence of the czars—where, a month afterwards, Napoleon took up his quarters; and the churches, some of them full of national memories, occupied the brief space of her stay, and might have induced her to delay, had not the fear of the countrymen whose society she had spent her life in regretting, urged her rapidly north-

wards. During her visit to Moscow, she dined with Count Rostopschin, whose name has become historical, from the circumstance of his having, on the approach of the French army, set fire with his own hand to his elegant and lovely residence. She had also time for a very hurried meeting with the few literary men in Moscow. In this line, however, there was nothing to give much delight.

The road from Moscow to St. Petersburg was very bad,* being of a sandy nature; and on the falling of rain, it was immediately converted into mud, so that there existed considerable difficulty in finding the high-road. By the gradual disappearance of the birch-trees, Madame de Staël could trace her northward progress. There was something in the sterility of the north which seemed to oppress her spirits. In England, and North Germany (though it is not fair positively to compare either with Russia in this respect), the want of the southern richness of nature was compensated by great social and intellectual treasures; in Russia, these also were wanting. She belonged truly to the south and east by her passionate nature, extreme mobility, and the delicacy of her organs. The fragrance of a rose, a fair sky, an elegant dance, a beautiful face, sufficed at any moment to give her pleasure; even when she records the banishment of Madame Récamier, she cannot help calling her "my beautiful friend;" and during her flight in Russia, she does not forego the inspection of objects of loveliness, or forget to chronicle her picturesque impres-

* It is now macadamised the whole distance.

sions. This force of the sensuous pleasures is the dower of the southern and eastern nations.

On the other hand she had a strong reflective nature, and a power of analysing her mental operations which belongs to the graver northern countries; from this mingling of aptitudes and faculties we believe much of her fascinating power as a writer to spring, and dare venture to say that the more her works are studied the clearer this will appear. These elements of her character form her hero and heroine in "Corinne;" Oswald is her reflective melancholy northern element, Corinne the passionate, changeful, eloquent child of the south; reassured by a word or a look, but as easily tormented. Who can study the character of Madame de Staël, and fail to acknowledge the truth of this resemblance? Nevertheless the kindly reception accorded by Russia, and the real but simple virtues of the people interested her; it was a land of liberty to her; and the part which Russia seemed about to take in contending against Napoleon, of course, and naturally, disposed her to be very favourable towards the nation at large. She could not disguise from herself that the government was despotic, and a great proportion of the people in bondage; nor does she for a moment cease to avow that these are mighty evils. But her respect for the character of the emperor Alexander induces her to say that he administers despotism with a discriminating and gentle rule. Her impressions of St. Petersburg, the Paris of the north, must be reserved for the next chapter.

CHAPTER XLVI.

FROM Moscow, Madame de Staël went to Novgorod, and thence to St. Petersburg. The great effort she had made to reach the Russian capital, and its comparative vicinity to her ark of hope—England—prepared her to look on all she saw with indulgent eyes; and she spent her time here very pleasantly.

Her first sentiment on arriving was one of gratitude to Providence, who had led her in safety to the seashore. There never was a woman who mingled more than Madame de Staël the warmth of her affections with her devotional feelings. Her religious sentiment was touchingly like her love for her father; indeed, we know that those beautiful words, the hope of humanity through long generations, "Our Father," shut up most of her ideas on this subject.

There is little but marshy land in the immediate vicinity of St. Petersburg, and as there is no acclivity whence the city may be anticipated, the traveller enters it unprepared. To use Madame de Staël's happy comparison, it seems as if a magician's wand had suddenly called up in the midst of the desert all the wonders of Europe and Asia. The building of St. Petersburg on such a soil she considers the most forcible proof of the strength of the Russian will, which knows no impossibility.

The sight of the British flag—"the signal of liberty," gave her a delightful sense of ease and security, to which she had been too long a stranger. We, who are happily able to dwell in perfect peace and safety, no man daring, or wishing, to make us afraid, can scarcely comprehend the whole force of her feelings when she beheld the English standard floating over the majestic course of the Neva. The immense quays of granite wherewith Peter the Great had bordered the river of his city, and the superb houses, shining white in the moonlight, like ranks of immovable phantoms, calmly watching the flowings of the silent water, presented a picturesque appearance which she did not fail to note. The house she occupied was just opposite the celebrated statue of Peter, erected by Catherine II. With this monument, Madame de Staël's excellent taste could not, of course, be altogether pleased. The monarch is represented on horseback, climbing a steep mountain, whose slope is covered with serpents which endeavour to arrest his progress: these reptiles were no necessary part of the design, but were thrown in to support the immense weight of the horse and his rider, which could scarcely be safe on the summit of a block smaller at the top than at the foundation, unless something were done to counterbalance the weakness of the tapering height. The serpents, therefore, representing envy, with whom he is supposed triumphantly to contend, form a convenient accessory to the original idea of an equestrian statue. Madame de Staël says it is not envy which a sovereign has to fear, and that those who are servile enough to crawl, are not to be looked on as his

enemies; and we may safely add, that everything which in the development of a thought fails directly to strengthen it, must be a cause of weakness. Perhaps a statue of Peter on a colossal plinth of granite, would be more effective than the present monument, which seems to savour, somehow, of the circus. The action is too theatrical; the grandeur of simplicity ought to mark the treatment of a great subject.

Her theory regarding the Russian character seems to be fortified by her experience at St. Petersburg. In this city of the north, which seems set like a jewel on the brow of the frigid earth, the manners of the great nobility partake of the manners of the south and east. She was hospitably entertained; and had an opportunity critically to observe all she chronicles. The noble dwellings which adorn an island formed by the Neva in the very heart of the city, pleased her. She found here the perfumes of the east and an imitative southern Flora, cultivated and preserved beneath gigantic conservatories. The sun, she says, is fêted like a friend; his every ray is accepted as a benefit.

The day after her arrival, she dined with one of the most considerable merchants in the place, who, according to the Russian fashion, had announced to his friends, by raising a flag on his roof, that he dined at home, and would be very glad to receive his acquaintance. The gentle reception given by the Russians, she says, would induce people to believe that they readily admit strangers to their confidence, but this is not the case; one knows them as well by the third day as at the end of ten years, and no better at the end of ten years than on the third day. Yet the

sweetness with which every one greeted her gave her much pleasure; and although, when her host the merchant spreads his dinner-table in the garden, she cannot forbear a little sneer at the few poor summer-days, to which the people of southern Europe would scarcely accord that title, she allows that the garden was very lovely, and well filled with trees and flowers. Nature here, she says, is an enemy who must be perpetually conquered; directly man relapses in his efforts, she reclaims the marsh and the sandy desert, her proper rights in these barren quarters. The public buildings much interested her: she had a very amiable habit of throwing herself for the moment into the sensations of a patriotic native of the country she visited; at St. Petersburg she seems almost as proud of Peter as if she were a Russian, while at Rome she is equally penetrated with the heroic sentiment proper to the place. This cosmopolitan sympathy, while it did not impair her love for France, certainly gave her an advantage in seizing the salient points of a national character, and in presenting the features and ideas most favourably illustrative of it. She has been accused of making every place she described too lovely, but a remark of Monsieur Marmier on this subject is full of force. "If a painter," he says, "busied over a landscape, choose for his picture the moment when the whole scene is bathed with a brilliant sunlight, when the lake mirrors the flaky cloudlets of azured silver, and the plain recedes in the distance, bright with golden harvests and verdant turf, when the bird sings from the pendent branches of the old willow, while children play be-

neath, around the dwelling of their father; will not this picture, seen by the same sun, bear a precise resemblance to the real scene? And yet the artist will not have displayed the black clouds wherewith winter darkens the sky, nor the lake agitated by the tempest, nor the torrent which sometimes falls from the mountain heights, to lay waste the valley below, and alarm the shuddering peasant."

In most of Madame de Staël's travels, peculiar circumstances led her rather to overvalue whatever of beauty or of attraction the land of her sojourn presented: liberty, after harsh tyranny—society, after solitude, were things she was certain to appreciate very highly.

The church built by Peter in imitation of St. Peter's at Rome she did not admire; it was just enough like, she thought, to disgust one with the points wherein it differs. After her visit to this, she inspected the convent of St. Alexander Newski, and saw the tomb of Suwarrow, bearing simply the inscription of his name. This was enough for him, she says, but not enough for the Russians, to whom he had rendered such magnificent services. But here we must differ from her; there seems to us something noble in the idea that the name alone will call up all the enthusiasm wherewith one should view the last resting-place of a mighty patriotic conqueror.

Monsieur de Romanzow, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, received her with great respect: at his house she met Lord Tyrconnel and Admiral Bentinck, despatched from England on business concerning the peace between that country and Russia. They

were, she tells us, the first Englishmen who appeared on the continent whence their nation had been banished by Napoleon. Their presence delighted her; they seemed to create an atmosphere of truth to which she had long been unused; she says eloquently, that their nation, after a fitful struggle of ten years, was found faithful to conscience, the constant compass of her politics.

She spent a Sunday with the family of Count Orloff, at a residence situated on a little island of the Neva, called after the proprietor of the estate. The gardens here, too, were magnificent, and adorned with fine oaks, a rather uncommon feature so far north. Count Orloff was one of the best educated of the Russian nobility, and moreover, a patriotic man. He seems to have gained the respect of Madame de Staël.

It was his custom on the Sunday to throw open his gardens for the pleasure of the public; a real benefaction, in a country where any beauty of scenery is obtained only at a vast expense. Of this liberality the people largely availed themselves: among the motley crowd were seen many merchants wearing the old Russian costume; their grave faces rendered yet more striking by the long beards depending from their chins. The count had an excellent band, and the people clustered round the musicians, to listen to the English national anthem, which Orloff commanded in celebration of the newly-declared peace. This air, says Madame de Staël, is the song of liberty in a country where the monarch is its first guardian. When the merchants heard that the sea was once

more open to them, they made the sign of the cross, and ejaculated their gratitude.

Count Orloff's island was in the midst of those little islands on the Neva, where the great nobility and the royal family have their summer residences. Not far from this was the island of Strogonoff, the mansion of whose proprietor was adorned with antiquities brought, at a vast expense, from Greece. Count Strogonoff's hospitality seems almost fabulous: he issued no invitations; all who had once been presented to him were at liberty to sit at his table whenever they chose; sometimes he did not know half the persons with whom he sat down to dinner. Madame de Staël says, very truly, that such extensive receptions allow no real conversation, and preclude all intimacies.

Every day during her stay seemed a kind of fête-day, so constant and so brilliant was the display of luxury. But while the eye was gratified, and the imagination stimulated to a certain degree, the boundary was soon reached, and there was nothing to affect her deeply. It was very well for a holiday spectacle, but moral interests and the serious business of life had no place in such an existence. Again she longed to reach England, but she had yet to see the Russian Royal Family.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE Emperor Alexander had formerly been much dazzled (and who can refuse to be dazzled) by the resplendent military genius of Napoleon, and there had been a time when Bonaparte had not thought a coalition between his forces and those of the north, having for its object the entire subjection of Europe, an impossible thing; this, however, was over long since. Napoleon now seemed to dread the energy and increasing power of the Russian autocrat, who was full of strength and force, while the French conqueror began to suffer very painfully from declining health. From the testimony of Count Segur, who was an eyewitness of the Russian expedition, there is no doubt that, during the whole of that unhappy enterprise, Bonaparte was contending with a foe more insidious than the hardy Sclavonian troops. He began to be easily fatigued, and impatient of even short rides on horseback. The all-enduring strength, the fiery energy of youth, were no longer his. He ceased to command and direct with a comprehensive glance as formerly; he began to falter and to hesitate; his long and painful campaigns had sapped the fountain of his strength; it was evident to those who were nearest him, that their master was giving way before the fire of even a mightier conqueror than himself.

To humble the pride of Alexander was a tempt-

ing prospect; it was also a bold idea to turn the southern lands, till now the conquered, against the north; whence the victorious peoples had ever issued, to deck themselves with the glories of riper civilisation than theirs, and to take possession of fields, whose golden fertility mocked the paler harvests of their sterile and painfully cultivated lands.

A mighty army, composed from many peoples and tongues, ranged themselves under the banners of Bonaparte, and penetrated to Moscow, where they had promised themselves such a winter (climate excepted), as the troops of Hannibal enjoyed at Capua. But they found a city on fire:* the Russians had dared to sacrifice their old capital to the hope of freedom; even the Kremlin, the ancient abode of the czars, took the flames, which were only extinguished with great pains. The stoves, around which it had been calculated the poor, half-frozen French troops would eagerly cluster, had been filled with detonating balls of tremendous power. The silence and misery of the scene would require many strokes to describe; we may picture to ourselves the sad effect of the bells chiming midnight on the very arrival of the foe, while the churches were in flames, and the half-naked creatures who had ignited the buildings strove to avoid the element themselves had put in possession of the place. And as the imagination busies herself with the sublime but mournful scene of a vast city in flames, around and amid which is gathered an almost countless army, surely reason suggests, that only tremendous interests at stake can

* Appendix, Note O.

justify the use of armed force. National independence is worth any sacrifice, and we cannot hold with those who consider war the *last* misery of human nature, and a crime which, at all hazards should be avoided; though this is a very good doctrine for the exchange and the market. To our mind, however, a nation enslaved, a people over-ridden, is a more melancholy object than any field of battle after a collision. But surely every concession compatible with honour should be made—every resort tried—ere this brute force be called in to settle the disputes of reasonable men. How much progress and civilisation, the fruits of peace, are devoured at every meal of this monster? One shudders to think of it. But universal subjection and meanness were worse. War, we firmly believe, is being silently but surely abolished by the glad increase of all that is hopeful, by the spread of intelligence and the application of Christianity to the real circumstances of life. The less we view religion as an abstract system, and the more as a real living thing, impregnating every thought and phase of our condition, the better shall we be.* Away with the false, we had almost said the impious notion, that the world and humanity are degenerating. Never was either in so fair and blessed a state as now. Never, since our planet was first launched in the fields of space to take her turn in the lovely dance around the central sun, has that sun glanced on so many pure homes, so many bright hopes, so many heavenward aspirations as at the present time. "Human nature," says Luther, "is

* Why is it compared with salt? We do not eat salt alone, but it seasons all our food.

like a drunken peasant on horseback—supported on one side, he bends towards the other. And yet the horse and the man get on." There is profound truth in this homely comparison; it is a sentence enwrapping a real thought, and the nearer we get to the heart of it, the more forcible will it appear. Like a bee in a rose, we shall find the perfume strengthened and concentrated in the very middle of the flower; as is the case with everything worth our attention.

Madame de Staël paid her respects at the Imperial Palace, and was received by the empress, who excited her admiration, not by any display of grandeur or power, but by the harmony of her soul, to which all her words seemed to testify. Who has not felt the sweet influence of this mental proportion? It is pleasing to the heart, as an instrument in perfect tune is satisfying to the ear.

As she talked with the empress, the door opened, and the emperor, who kindly came to chat with her, made his appearance. There was in him, she says, a mingled aspect of dignity and kindness, of which two qualities he seemed to have made but one.* She was struck with the noble simplicity which marked his manner while he talked with her unreservedly of the great interests of Europe. She praises him as highly as she knows how, by saying he acted just as would act an English statesman, who depends on himself, not on external circumstances, for his greatness. He confessed to her that he regretted the admiration with which he had formerly beheld Napoleon; and said

* Her opinion of Alexander subsequently underwent considerable modification.

that the Machiavelian principles of Bonaparte, revealed in conversation, had first opened his eyes to the real character of the great Corsican soldier. Alexander expressed his regret that he himself was not a military genius, but Madame de Staël truthfully assured him that a good sovereign is a rarer man than a clever general, and that to sustain the public spirit by his example was to gain the most important of all battles. The emperor spoke enthusiastically of his nation and her capabilities; he also assured Madame de Staël that he earnestly desired the liberation of the serfs. She suggested, "Sire, your personal character is a constitution for your people, and your conscience is its guarantee." He gracefully replied, "Admitting that to be true; you must allow, after all, madam, that I am only a lucky accident."

From the emperor's palace, she went to that of his mother, an estimable princess, who devoted the evening of life to munificent works of charity. The charitable establishments of course attracted Madame de Staël's attention. She visited the Institute of St. Catherine, where two hundred and fifty young ladies of the upper and middle classes received a comprehensive and elegant education. This noble foundation was under the personal superintendence of the empress. The grace so natural to the Russian women did not fail to excite the notice of our observant visitor, when she saw it displayed by the pupils of the house. A peculiarly delicate compliment was here prepared for her; the young girls were invited to display their talents, and one of them recited several pages from Monsieur Necker's "Course of Christian Morality."

After this, there was graceful dancing, which no doubt recalled to her mind the lovely Madame Récamier, who excelled in this poetical amusement. Then, before placing themselves at table, the young ladies of St. Catherine's Institute sang, in chorus, certain psalms chosen for the occasion. Madame de Staël praises their music, and we may safely accept her verdict, for she herself had a splendid voice, and knew how to use it.

She also visited an Asylum for the Blind, and one for the Deaf and Dumb. She found both perfectly well appointed and controlled, and perhaps, as she inspected them, remembered her mother, who had lavished so much care on the prisons and hospitals of Paris. These multiplied occupations and interests had almost driven from her memory the war, which was, in a manner, to decide the fate of Europe.

This was probably recalled to her mind by the departure of the emperor for Abo in Finland, where he was to meet the Prince Royal of Sweden, formerly General Bernadotte, and Prince Monte Corvo, under Bonaparte. The sudden death of the heir to the Swedish crown in 1810, had produced a meeting of the diet, having for its object the choice of a successor to the then reigning King of Sweden. This body, with the concurrence of the monarch, and probably hoping to conciliate Napoleon by their choice, fixed on the French marshal, Bernadotte, with whom Bonaparte parted reluctantly. It was thought by some that the French emperor did not very well relish the promotion of his general; however that might be, Bernadotte went to Sweden, and ever after made his

interest in Bonaparte subordinate to the welfare of the country to whose throne he was called to succeed. His conduct has been variously canvassed, according to the prejudices of historians; but it certainly appears to us, that the first duty of a sovereign is towards his own people, even though its execution may militate against the interests of his most valued foreign relations. Putting the names of this case out of the question, we look on this principle as a simple truth in government which almost all will readily admit. But such a genius as Bonaparte, by the strange bewilderment his glory creates, often causes us to deviate from the simplest conclusions.

The emperor's conference with Bernadotte at Abo succeeded in procuring the assistance of Sweden against Napoleon. The news of the entry of the French into Smolensk arrived during the important correspondence between Sweden and Russia; and, in consequence, Alexander and his new ally made a solemn engagement never to sign peace with Bonaparte. This resistance was destined to end in the utter fall of the great warrior, who had held Europe in thrall, pulling down and setting up kings at his pleasure.

On the emperor's return from Finland, Madame de Staël had the honour of a second interview with him. He told her that General Berthier, after the taking Smolensk, had written a letter to the Russian general, which epistle he closed by saying, that Napoleon would ever preserve the very tenderest friendship for Alexander! Under the circumstances, such an expression would, no doubt, meet with reciprocation.

The health of Madame de Staël really required rest

before she ventured to England, where a reception which would need some energy in the acknowledgment was sure to await her. In that day, a woman who had in a sense conquered Napoleon,* was certain to be enthusiastically received in England, the country which had systematically opposed his daring encroachments. Not being strong enough for the society which awaited her arrival in London, she determined to put in at Stockholm, there to refresh and recruit herself before proceeding to England. She had every confidence in the kindness of the Swedish Prince Royal, and the sequel proved that she had rightly judged him.

At the end of September, Madame de Staël left St. Petersburg, which city, by presenting to her scenes and situations entirely novel, had done much to erase from her mind her previous persecutions and unhappiness.

The passage through Finland affords little occasion for remark, though on entering the country she was struck by the dissimilarity between the Finlanders and the Russians. The Finlanders give every evidence of belonging to the great German stock—their fair hair, light complexion, and extremely gentle manners, faithfully witnessing to their origin. They possess, she says, a conscientious honesty, which they owe to their Protestant instruction, and the purity of their manners.

The aspect of nature, also, presented a contrast; instead of the marshes and plains which gird St. Petersburg, she came on a rocky and wooded country.

* Appendix, Note P.

The features of mountain and forest generally produce romantic scenery; but, on observation, the great granite rocks of Finland grow monotonous, and the melancholy forests are composed of only two trees—the fir and the birch. There is nothing inviting here.

At Abo, the Finnish capital, is a university, where some laudable attempts at mental culture were made; but, as she says, the bears and wolves are such close neighbours, that the Finlanders are necessarily almost absorbed in securing a safe physical existence. In these northern countries, she thinks the creations of genius must needs be fraught with mystery, because man draws everything from the resources of his own spirit, his narrow circle of natural objects presenting little or no inspiration.

At last she came to the place of embarkation, and here she makes the following touching revelation:—"Since I have been so cruelly persecuted by the emperor, I have lost all confidence in my destiny; *I believe all the more in the protection of Providence, but not under the form of happiness in this life.** It follows, that every undertaking frightens me, and yet my exile has frequently obliged me to take decisive steps. I now much feared the sea-voyage, though people reassured me by saying that hundreds sailed from Abo to Stockholm without any accident. Such are the commonplaces by which most travellers are consoled; but my imagination was not thereby withdrawn from the idea of the vast abyss, from which a few frail planks only would separate me. Monsieur Schlegel perceived my alarm concerning the little vessel which

* It seems to us that these few words in italics indicate the completest fortitude and Christian faith.

was to take us to Stockholm. He showed me, near Abo, the prison where the unhappy Eric XIV. of Sweden had been confined, and said, 'If you were there, how would you long for the chance of the little voyage which now so much alarms you!'"

This just reflection, she adds, a little consoled her; but when she lost sight of land, her terror returned. "Infinity," she says, "is as frightful to the senses, as it is pleasing to the soul."

After a somewhat stormy voyage she reached Stockholm, where she was received with as much kindness as Bernadotte and the nobility could possibly display. Her health, however, was wretchedly shattered by the anxieties and fatigues of an eventful and somewhat mournful life. She felt that her strength was decreasing.

During her stay in Sweden, she published an Essay on Suicide, which, in her grief, she had written to fortify herself against her temptation to this mode of ending her perplexities. In some of her earlier works, where the mention of this subject occurs, there is perhaps too much of the sentiment of that false line,

> "What Cato did and Addison approves,
> Cannot be wrong."

As if the approval or adoption of a wrong thing by all the heroes and Christians in the world could make a right one of it. The foundations of morals lie on a deeper basis than the approval of even the greatest of men, or we were unhappy indeed in striving to discern the path of right. Part of her early tolerance of suicide, though this term is almost too strong for the thing, we should rather say, her merciful verdict re-

garding it, sprung, no doubt, from her Latin studies; and perhaps from Rousseau, who asserts that the Creator, by sometimes making a man's life unbearable, gives him the right to take it away. But who tells a man his life is unbearable? Certainly a voice from heaven ought to be heard confirming the promptings of our misery, before we venture to lift a hand against the wonderful frame, the vehicle and instrument of our relations with the universe of God. Her more confirmed religious opinions caused her to shudder at the idea that her critics might be right, that she might have seemed indifferent to the guilt and indulgent to the commission of this fearful crime. She therefore occupied herself in her solitary exile by the composition of this work, which, as we have seen, was published at Stockholm in 1813.

She passed eight months in Sweden, at the expiration of which period she found herself sufficiently restored to embark for London. Her second experience of English life and manners will now occupy our attention.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

We formerly described at some length the circumstances attending Madame de Staël's first visit to England; we have now to notice a somewhat lengthened residence in that country, made under auspices of a far more favourable nature.

Of all the little party gathered at Juniper Hall in 1793, she was almost the only one who had been true

to her early ideas. Talleyrand, the political chameleon, a bishop under the old Bourbons, a minister under the directory, a courtier under Napoleon, was now preparing the way for the return of the ancient royal race, in whose antechambers he was content to linger still. Louis XVIII. received, in his retirement at Hartwell, a letter from the prince of courtiers, couched in terms of hope and promise. On this occasion the king remarked, "Napoleon's fate is settled when Talleyrand writes thus; he is always pretty sure of the course of events before committing himself; we shall soon return to Paris."

The Count de Narbonne, Minister of War under Louis XVI., in whose defence Madame de Staël had made such heroic efforts, had succumbed to the emperor, and taken a military appointment in his service. He was in the Russian expedition, and was one of the thousands who perished in the frightful retreat from Moscow.

General d'Arblay, who had been in the king's service, and had kept guard on the night of the unhappy attempt at escape, wished to resume his sword under Napoleon. He objected, however, to take arms against his wife's country, and begged that in the event of war with England, he might be allowed to throw up his commission. Bonaparte, of course, demurred to such an unusual reservation; and a civil appointment at once saved the conscience and eased the pocket of the poor soldier, who henceforth laboured at the *Bureaux de l'Intérieur*, where he was not likely to hear any very favourable report of his old friend, Madame de Staël.

She landed at Harwich in June, 1813, with profound emotions of affection towards a country she and her father had always loved. The road from Harwich to London pleased her; the neat houses, each encircled by a garden plot; the green hedges, the standing harvest, the shadowy trees, the cottages which appeared to her in excellent repair, all seemed to tell of English comfort and peace. She came, we must remember, prepared to admire us extravagantly; we shall see whether, when a nearer view gave her the opportunity critically to analyse our liberty and its sources, she preserved her respect for her model-country. If she did, we may safely conclude there really was something to love and value.

Arrived in London, she took up her abode at No. 30, Argyll-place, Regent-street, and soon beheld in her drawing-room the rendezvous of all the rank and fashion in town. She was the lion of the season, and according to an aristocratic witness, spoiled the campaign of Doctor and Miss Edgeworth, who had been the fashion during the earlier part of the year. The first nobility received her; at the house of Lord Lansdowne, at that time a young man, now the Nestor of the party he then dowered with the promise of his talent, immense crowds assembled to see her: the eagerness to catch a glimpse of her dark and striking face conquered all the ordinary restraints of high society, and the first ladies in the kingdom, we are told, mounted on chairs and tables to gaze at the woman who for ten weary years had endured almost unexampled insult and persecution. No wonder, she found the London parties so insufferably

crowded that to elbow her way through a fashionable reception-room, required no mean degree of physical energy. Whatever truth there may be in this statement, in a general way, the great crush of 1813 was caused by the universal desire to see and hear the person whom Lord Byron has called the first female author of his or any age.*

She was now as completely in her element as, out of Paris, she could possibly find herself. Sir James Mackintosh had returned from his Indian appointment, and was one of the first to honour her; he wrote, at that time, a review of her works in the "Edinburgh Review," in the course of which article he says, "The voice of Europe has already applauded the genius of a national painter in the author of 'Corinne.'" Everywhere she was received with fervour. It is a libel on the English, she tells us, to say they are cold and passionless. "They are like the Albanian dogs sent by Porus to Alexander, which disdained to fight any animal but a lion." This idea was probably the fruit of the brilliant and enthusiastic reception wherewith she was greeted. Lords Holland, Grey, and Harrowby, Erskine, Jersey, Lansdowne, and Byron, were successively her hosts, or her visitors; sometimes both. She revelled in the free atmosphere of England, breathing which, she might say all the truth she thought and fear no evil.

Her society was, to be sure, not very well assorted. Her political consequence and connexions gave her friends of a certain class and kind, while her literary reputation gathered around her admirers of all ranks.

* Appendix, Note Q.

She was too kindly, if not indeed too fond of incense to turn any away. Her hospitality was extended to all. Her table, Lord Byron says, reminded him of the grave, where all distinctions are levelled. He saw there peers and dandies, the azure jackets of the *littérateur*, and the regular Grub-street scribes. But a foreigner could not be expected to understand the delicate yet marked gradations of English society; and her trifling mistakes were forgiven for the sake of her enthusiasm and her honesty. Her maternal heart must have been gladdened by the admiration attracted by Mademoiselle de Staël, whose proficiency in music and graceful dancing made her as charming as she was amiable: Lord Byron, no mean critic, says he saw her dance a Russian saraband with much ease and elegance.

Madame de Staël was joined, soon after her arrival, by her elder son, who had remained in Switzerland to watch over her fortune. Sir Walter Scott says, the Baron Auguste de Staël was the only foreigner he ever heard who could speak English like a native, and the grave courtesy and kindly manners of the young man recommended him to the regard of all who saw him.

In the first flush of her triumph, however, Madame de Staël suffered a great loss. We have seen how, during her exile, she grieved over the spoilt prospects of her sons; Auguste, had much the same kind of talent as his grandfather, and had he lived under different conditions, might have aspired to political eminence. Albert, the younger, a generous, fiery, hot-tempered youth, was enamoured of a military career: and the revolt against Napoleon gave him an oppor-

tunity of adopting the profession of arms; but his maiden sword was yet unfleshed when he was killed in a duel at some town in Germany, of which the name escapes us. This was a severe blow to the whole family, who had placed high hopes in his ardour and bravery. The poor young baron, whose serious character was beyond his years, had learned to treat Albert with almost paternal care, and the impetuous lad had loved to have it so. We, who know Madame de Staël's passionate devotion to those she loved, can readily understand how very much grieved she also must have been by this unhappy occurrence.

She now devoted herself afresh to the study of English history, particularly to that portion of it which she believed contained many points of correspondence with the Revolution of France. Since her day Monsieur Guizot has enunciated a similar idea regarding the revolutionary crises of our annals. Indeed, most of her opinions are now the common property of Europeans; but they are not often traced to their source.

Her failing energies warned her that her mortal career would not be very much protracted, and she began to work on a treatise concerning the wondrous Revolution which had changed the aspect of her country. Her design at first, indeed, was merely to write a history of her father's political career, which was intended to rescue his memory from the shameful misrepresentations with which the Legitimists, the Jacobins, and the Bonapartists had alike delighted to cover it. Thus, good Protestants who wrangle and dispute among themselves, are willing to unite at the

rallying-cry, "Rome!" Her plan gradually swelled beneath her hands, and she had not elaborated her materials when she was called away to share her father's rest. The "Considerations on the French Revolution" must be viewed, then, with the indulgence necessarily claimed by an unfinished work. In parts it is diffuse, in parts bold; one can see the scaffolding yet about it; which is not the case, we are bold to assert, with any of her completed works.

Our political system, though essentially the same as at present, was then encumbered with much which has since yielded to the hand of wise and gradual reform. Many of us, whose fathers were then almost in their cradles, are too apt to look back on those times with something like contempt. Let us remember, however, that those days were training for us the men who have made 1853 so far beyond 1813, and be grateful for the bud which has flowered so richly.

Madame de Staël brought to the consideration of our system experience of no mean length or character; it had been her fate to live under many kinds of government, and her active intellect had analysed and criticised them all. She had, too, the penetrating eye which at once separates all unnecessary accessories from the main parts of a system; she does not, like some of her compatriots, conclude that rotten boroughs are as much an integral part of the British constitution as the Habeas Corpus Act and the Trial by Jury. She unhesitatingly pronounced them to be abuses, and does not despair of their correction when the public once get clear ideas on the subject. Neither need we yet despair, although the last few months have pre-

sented some curious revelations in regard to elections. So long as a nation hesitates to pronounce its system perfect and unalterable, so long is there hope of its endurance for an indefinite period; but if once it assert its completeness, and refuse to let it absorb any fresh element, or to fling off any needless hindrance, it is doomed to death, nothing can save it. Suppose a human being on attaining the full growth of his stature were to say, "Now I am perfect; my organs are fully developed, my system is all it was intended to be; I will eat and drink no more, for my structure is complete." We should smile at such absurdity. But how much more fatal is it for a nation, while yet in its infancy, to register such a vow? Media and Persia have not been exempted from the decay which waits on corrupted states, although their laws were fixed and unchangeable. The only rational hope of our country lies in the power to adapt her laws to the improvements and necessities of the times. But Heaven avert that her abuses should be corrected with rash and untaught hands! The old story in Esop, of the man who, asleep, had the flies brushed from his face by a bear, and was more hurt by the bear than he had been annoyed by the flies, has not been without its parallel in the histories of nations.

Madame de Staël, in her half-finished work on the French Revolution, makes a rapid survey of the English political system, and decides afresh that, all things considered, it is as near perfection as mortal men can hope to bring their works. We must hesitate, even at the present day, to follow her quite so far as she goes; but only because we believe there is no

degree of perfection of which Christian humanity, patient in the present, trustful for the future, ought to despair. But we must remember that she saw England in contrast with harsh and arbitrary states; and can then easily comprehend how, like a man dazzled by sudden light after darkness, she was conscious of nothing but brightness and beauty. After a brief but lucid summary of what she conceives to be the political advantages of England,—that is to say, the barriers around the royal prerogative, the representative system, the mercy and purity of the criminal law, and the publicity of the proceedings of government,—she adds, that Providence no doubt placed this example of wise and just rule so near the French coast, on purpose that France might look and imitate. And with a natural preference for her compatriots, for which we honour her, she decides that, if they will enter the field, they may even hope to leave us far behind.

Scandal, which had dared to blight her name in 1793, now recalled, or at any rate silenced, her pestilent whisperings. In a letter written about this time, Madame d'Arblay has the following:—"I am truly glad you had a gratification you so earnestly coveted—that of seeing Madame de Staël; your account of her was extremely interesting to me. As to myself, I have not seen her at all. Various causes have kept me in utter retirement, and, in truth, with respect to Madame de Staël, my situation is truly embarrassing." (Deservedly so, we think; but Madame d'Arblay further says) "I do not recollect if I communicated to you our original acquaintance, which, at first, was

intimate. I shall always, internally, be grateful for the partiality with which she sought me out upon her arrival in this country before my marriage, and still and far more, if she can forgive my dropping her ——. She is now received by all mankind—but that, indeed, she always was (all womankind, I should say)—with distinction and pleasure."

Madame de Staël attended a public charitable meeting, where the Dukes of York and Sussex, and Mr. Wilberforce, successively addressed the audience; our asylums and other foundations of charity she inspected and admired; in fact, she tried hard to master all the details of common English life.

The London season ended, she was invited to see some of the nobility in their country homes: among the rest, she visited Lord Jersey at Middleton, Lord Lansdowne at Bowood. "How is it possible," she exclaims, "that a French courtier is content, nay, even enraptured, with a life frittered away between Paris and Versailles, when an important and kindly career, like that of an English nobleman on his estate, is equally within reach of his realisation?"

The current of affairs in the course of the following spring brought about the abdication of Bonaparte, and the recall of Monsieur, now Louis XVIII., who went to Paris to take possession of the throne of his fathers. Before entering Paris, he stayed a little time at St. Ouen, formerly Necker's residence, whence he promulgated a constitution almost precisely the same as that projected by the minister at the meeting of the states-general. "As if," says Lamartine, "he wished to recall the memory of a popular minister

whom he himself had supported in the convention of the states."

The overthrow of Bonaparte—an event which some few years before had appeared almost impossible—gave Madame de Staël the long-desired opportunity of again beholding the centre alike of her hopes and memories. Having seen her proscribed book published in England, and received with enthusiasm by the whole of Europe, she returned shortly after the Restoration in 1814, to the city of her birth, there to take up a position infinitely more brilliant than any she had yet occupied.

CHAPTER XLIX.

In her *salon* at Paris now congregated all the reasonable members of every party; the universal tolerance of her enthusiastic genius seemed to point her out as the head and defender of talent and progress; and there was no pure aim, no good ambition, which lacked a representative at her brilliant receptions. Lafayette and Guizot, the old and the young, were there, both sustained by the lofty courage her words expressed, and cheered by an eloquence which had never degraded itself in favour of tyranny. A list of her company after the Restoration embraced the most celebrated names of Europe. Among her visitors might be seen Wellington and Châteaubriand; from

Berlin, Humboldt and Blucher; from Switzerland, Sismondi and Benjamin Constant; from Hanover, the two Schlegels; Canova, the sculptor, swells the list, and Madame Récamier, whom the fall of Napoleon once more restored to liberty. The English, we are told, attended her with such zeal, that it seemed as if a general emigration of British rank and talent had taken place. Of all this circle she was the inspiring genius—the centre of attraction.

As for the king, he looked on her, according to Lamartine, as an ally of his crown, because she was the representative of European public opinion. All, indeed, now delighted to honour a woman, unspoiled by a long course of adversity, who brought from her exile a chastened piety, and an undimmed hope in the final triumph of truth, justice and liberty. She was still busy in disseminating the ideas for which she had made such sacrifices; the newspapers brought daily demands on her pen, and she devoted a portion of time to her book on the Revolution.

Thus occupied, she was startled in March 1815 by the sudden return of her old tyrant. "I felt," she says, "when I heard of his coming, as if the ground yawned beneath my feet." She once more took refuge at Coppet, and would have come back to Paris when the second abdication took place, had not the health of Monsieur Rocca excited her serious alarm.

Italy was recommended for him, and thither he was accompanied by Madame de Staël, who lavished on him in his weakness every care affection could suggest, or activity execute. Her tenderest anxieties for him were awakened; it would have been a cruel

misfortune to lose him just as her life was restored, and more than restored, to the brilliance of its youthful days.* This was spared her; the frail invalid outlived her by a few months.

In the spring of 1816, she returned to Coppet, and during the following summer, her house in Switzerland was full of pleasant society. Lord Byron, who since her visit to England had married and was now separated from his wife, hired a house near Geneva, the Villa Diodati, and was frequently her guest. There is no doubt that he was at this time profoundly unhappy, for though he tried hard to be a stoic, he never succeeded. Madame de Staël, with the right her superior age allowed, kindly and seriously addressed him, and did not hesitate to tell him where she saw him in fault. His wayward but affectionate heart melted at this treatment. She even prevailed on him to seek a reconciliation with Lady Byron; but the negotiations were fruitless. He retained, however, the most vivid sense of her kindness. In a letter, dated Diodati, 1816, he says, "Madame de

* We get the following little glimpse of her from Maroncelli's sketch of the life of Silvio Pellico, who was, at the time of Madame de Staël's second visit to Italy, tutor to the sons of Count Luigi Porro:—"Tornò a Milano, e visse dappoi sempre in casa Porro, ov' era il raduno di quanti nel paese erano più distinti scienziati ed artisti, e di quanti più distinti viaggiatori traversavano la peninsola. Là vide e parlò alla Staël e a Schlegel, che furono quasi veicolo presso noi tra i capi della letteratura germanica e quelli della italica. Là vide Lord Byron ed Hobhouse, che furono altrettanto tra la letteratura inglese e la nostra. Là Davis, Brougham, Thorwaldsen, e cento e cento. Così può dirsi che Dante e Shakespeare, Petrarca e Schiller, la poesia e la scienza, l' artista e il cittadino, venivano a darsi la mano in questo templo d' Insubria, ove Silvio era sacerdote." What varied associations do all these names awaken!

Staël has made Coppet as agreeable to me as kindness and pleasant society can make a place." One cannot but lament he had not earlier fallen into such hands.

The party at Coppet was now permanently enlarged by the presence of the Duke de Broglie, to whom Madame de Staël had married her lovely daughter. Between the young baron and his brother-in-law a tender sympathy reigned, and the marriage itself had been altogether prompted by affection. The ties of the family, instead of loosening with the lapse of time, seemed to be clasping the heart of Madame de Staël more firmly than ever.

Yet full of life and vigour, and having, it appeared, many years before her, she returned to Paris in the autumn of this year, little expecting that she went thither for the last time. She resumed all the activities of her city life, wrote for the *Mercury*, chatted with her friends, received her visitors; but in February, 1817, she was threatened with a violent fever, whose germs had, no doubt, been some time lurking in her system. The use of strong remedies succeeded in throwing off the excitement for a season, and she once more rallied; but the enemy was routed only to return, and the disorder finally took full possession of her.

The keenest interest was felt in her condition; many of the wisest men in France considered her recovery of great importance to the country, because it was apprehended she would be useful in assisting to settle on a firm basis the infant liberties of France; the hope was vain. After a long separation, she had been enabled to return to the city of her love, and there

triumphantly to excite into admiration the voices which had harshly judged and falsely condemned her; but this brilliant period was, alas, very brief.

Life gradually left the extremities, and before she expired her limbs were helpless; her intellect, however, continued fresh and active, she conversed with her children on family concerns, and even on important topics of general interest. Not all the care of her friends could save her; some of the royal family were constantly seeking news of her state, and the Duke of Wellington daily came to her door to ask if hope might yet remain; but the close of the earthly career of this kindly and gifted being rapidly approached.

The day before her death she read a portion of Lord Byron's Manfred, and emphasised some of the most melancholy and beautiful passages. After this, she gave herself up to religious reflection and prayer; spoke tenderly of her father, and said in reference to him, "I know he is waiting for me on the other shore;" she then commended her children to the care of that Providence in whom she had ever trusted. At one period of her illness, the nervous excitement consequent on her disorder, created a terrible fear of death; this painful symptom, however, entirely ceased before she really died. An Englishwoman, Miss Randall, who for years had been her friend and companion, watched by her to the last.

Madame de Staël took leave of her son in the tenderest manner, and recommended to him the poor little infant by her second marriage, who was so soon to be completely orphaned. The baron undertook the charge, which he most faithfully executed.

To her daughter she tried to perform a similar part,

but here the mother's heart failed; her voice was drowned in convulsive sobs, and the duchess was obliged to leave the room in order to allow her time to calm herself.

She subsequently murmured many ejaculations and prayers, such as, "God is good, he will soften the last struggle." "Merciful Saviour." "Oh, forgive me," and others.

At two o'clock she fell asleep, and without awaking, without one sigh or struggle, at four she yielded up her spirit. She died in perfect peace on Monday, 14th July, 1817, aged fifty-one. The day of her death, by a somewhat striking coincidence, was the anniversary of the Revolution which had exerted so large an influence on her life.

Monsieur de Staël, almost heart-broken by the loss of a mother to whom he had been devoted beyond the example of most sons, took charge of the beloved remains, and did not once leave her coffin until he arrived at Coppet. There he laid her in the dust beside her father; and so long as genius can charm, and filial piety excite the admiration of the world, so long will that grave in the garden at Coppet be one of the holiest shrines of the imagination.

Her husband did not long survive the blow he now sustained. He went into Provence to be near a brother whom he loved, where he soon yielded to the pressure of sorrow and disease.

What remains to be said? If this life have been sketched with any power, if, in the faintest degree, it be calculated to answer the purposes of a biography, there is no chapter of it without a serious lesson. To

point out a moral at the close, is, at best, the expedient of a clumsy workman.

Lovingly, we admit, have we traced the progress of her mind, and the fluctuations of her fortunes, and we have lingered ever on the brightest and best side of her character. Of human errors she had her share, but they were such as are the excrescences of a proud, high-toned, faithful, and most kindly spirit. To the father who trained her, to the friends who loved her, was she invariably loyal and true: no petty interest, no threatening danger, ever tempted her to fail in the steadfastness of love and friendship. To be sad was to have an irresistible claim on her bounty; to be faulty, was to secure her pity and her aid. She despised nothing but meanness and dishonesty, and these, though sitting in kings' palaces, and clad in imperial purple, she attacked to the very utmost of her strength.

Farewell, beloved shade! We have in fancy journeyed with thee through all the changes and chances of a very varied career. Rest with those who were dear unto thee, until the day when "there shall be a resurrection not of persons alone, but of names and reputations!"

APPENDIX.

Note A, page 2.

Necker's family was originally of Irish extraction, but his ancestors being Protestants, were driven to expatriate themselves by the troublous persecutions under Queen Mary. They found refuge in Prussia, whence their offshoots emigrated into Switzerland.

Note B, page 23.

We have seen a curious little tract, entitled "*Frau Von Krüdner in der Schweitz,*" containing an account of Madame Von Krüdner's proceedings during a visit to Switzerland, and reporting some of her addresses on religious subjects. Her career is replete with strange interest; in her most pious days there is such a smack of the pretty woman of the world in all she does, that but for her evident sincerity she would be laughable. Her novel "*Valérie,*" is remarkable for nothing but that a Livonian woman should have written such easy and elegant French. Her vanity was laughable: during her widowhood, when her daughter's suitor applied to her for her consent to his offer, she mistook his object, and was about to murmur her own willingness to marry him, when some timely word discovered the mistake, and she fainted. This seems to us a situation worthy of either comedy or tragedy, according to the character the author might choose to give his heroine.

Note C, page 37.

On the subject of expression in features, the following quotations are interesting:—

"His person and temper (Charles the Second's), his vices as well as his fortune, resemble the character that we have given us of Tiberius so much, that it were easy to draw the parallel between them. . . . . At Rome I saw one of the last

statues made for Tiberius, after he had lost his teeth. But, bating the alteration which that made, it was so like King Charles, that Prince Borghese and Signor Dominico, to whom it belonged, did agree with me in thinking that it looked like a statue made for him."—BURNET, *History of his Own Times.*

"Jugurtha, Tamerlane, and some other great warriors, are celebrated for a certain ferocity of aspect, which they had, no doubt, contracted from a perpetual and unrestrained exertion of fortitude, contempt, and other violent emotions. These produced in the face their correspondent expressions, which being often repeated, became at last as habitual to the features, as the sentiments they arose from were to the heart."—DR. BEATTIE.

NOTE D, PAGE 101.

"Who can describe the rage, the horror of hope deceived, on the news of Necker's dismissal. Necker was not a politician; he was, as we have seen, timid, vain-glorious, and ridiculous. But in what concerned subsistence, it is but justice to say, that he was an indefatigable, ingenious administrator, full of industry and resources. What is far better, he showed himself to be an honest, good, kind-hearted man; when nobody would lend to the state, he borrowed in his own name and engaged his credit as far as two millions of francs, the half of his fortune. When dismissed, he did not withdraw his security, but wrote to the lenders that he maintained it. In a word, if he knew not how to govern, he nourished the people, and fed them with his own money."—MICHELET, *History of the French Revolution, Cocks's translation.* We quote this testimony, because it is the verdict of Michelet, a writer decidedly not inclined to partiality for men of moderate opinions.

NOTE E, PAGE 113.

"L'augustissima imperatrice regina incinta dell' ultima delle sue figliuole, poi regina di Francia, fece scomessa a discrezione che partorirebbe un' arciduchessa. Subito sgravata, fece dire al conte Carlo Dietrichstein, che aveva sostenuto il contrario, che il parto era una principessa, e che somigliava alla Madre, comme due gocce d' acqua. Il perditore

pagò il suo debito con una elegante figurina di porcellana, rappresentante il proprio di lui ritratto, con un ginocchio in terra, ed in atto di porgere con la destra mano i Versi seguenti, scritti in un minutissimo pezzuol di carta.

To perdei ; l' augusta figlia
A pagar mi ha condannato ;
Ma s' è ver che a Voi somiglia,
Tutto il mondo ha guadagnato.

METASTASIO, *Works, Vol.* 10.

NOTE F, PAGE 142.

The revolutionary treatment of names and titles has something comic in it. A gentleman presents himself at the barrier.

"Your name ?"

"Monsieur de St. Janvier, at your service."

"Monsieur is no longer used."

"De St. Janvier."

"De has been resigned since the new era.'

"Saint Janvier, then."

"Saints are no more."

"As you will—simple Janvier."

"Pardon me, the calendar has been reformed. Janvier has changed its name. Your passport will be made out in the name of the *Citoyen Nivose.*"

NOTE G, PAGE 170.

Burke—

"Whose genius was such
We scarcely can praise it or blame it too much,
Who, born for the universe, narrowed his mind,
And to party gave up what was meant for mankind."

Had Burke lived, it is a question whether the peace of 1802 would have been effected; but he was sleeping several years before at Beaconsfield, beside the son whose untimely death dropped a veil over the closing years of the orator. His reflections on the French Revolution abound in eloquent passages; but the line of argument he took provoked the ardour of Mr. Mackintosh, then a young man, who, in answer

to Burke, produced in 1791 his *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*. The excesses which were subsequently committed by the revolutionists considerably modified the ideas of Mackintosh.

It would be impossible to reckon how many great minds have received an impulse from the French Revolution. The eloquence and genius it has called forth cannot be computed; it is the era whence the modern revival of arts, letters, and philosophy will date. Nor has social progress failed to be proportionably accelerated by its influence, direct or otherwise.

Note H, page 182.

We have met somewhere with an account of the manner in which the days, if no accident occurred to disturb them, were passed by the family at Coppet and their refugee guests; but, as must occasionally happen to desultory readers, we forget the source of the information, which we subjoin. In the morning, all assembled to breakfast in Madame de Staël's apartment; she generally started the conversation, avoiding politics, which still formed a painful subject for Monsieur Necker, and choosing in preference social, philosophical, or literary subjects. On such themes she was eloquent, so that the first meal was often a long one. But the breakfast at Coppet, like all mortal concerns, came to an end; and then Madame de Staël and her visitors walked or drove out, while Monsieur Necker saw his major-domo and ordered the dinner. The afternoon was given to study; at seven in the evening, the whist-table was drawn out, and Monsieur Necker and his daughter were usually partners. It is added, that at this game they generally disagreed, and there is probably some truth in the report. We can well imagine that Madame de Staël's play would not be so strictly in accordance with rule and precedent as Necker's love of order would have had it.

Sometimes, instead of cards they had music or recitations, and in these harmless recreations (for though they played whist they were no gamesters) attempted to forget the external evils that threatened them.

This account, which contains no reference to Madame Necker, probably refers to a period rather later than the precise time indicated in the text.

Note I, page 182.

The following piece, descriptive of the Reign of Terror, assumes to imitate Tacitus; it is quoted from Mignet's *Histoire de la Révolution Française.*

"A cette époque, les propos devinrent des crimes d'Etat; de là il n'y eut qu'un pas pour changer en crimes les simples regards, la tristesse, la compassion, les soupirs, le silence même. Bientôt ce fut un crime de lèse-majesté ou de contre-révolution à *Crémutius Cordus,* d'avoir appelé Brutus et Cassius les derniers des Romains; crime de contre-révolution à un descendant de Cassius, d'avoir chez lui un portrait de son bis-aïeul; crime de contre-révolution à *Mamercus Scaurus,* d'avoir fait une tragédie, où il y avait des vers à qui l'on pouvait donner deux sens; crime de contre-révolution à *Torquatus Silanus,* de faire de la dépense; crime de contre-révolution à *Pomponius,* parce qu'un ami de Séjan était venu chercher un asile dans une de ses maisons de campagne; crime de contre-révolution à la mère du consul *Fusius Geminius,* d'avoir pleuré la mort funeste de son fils.

"Il fallait montrer de la joie de la mort de son ami, de son parent, si l'on ne voulait s'exposer à périr soi-même. Sous Néron, plusieurs dont on avait fait mourir les proches, allaient en rendre grâces aux dieux. Du moins, il fallait avoir un air de contentement: on avait peur que la peur même ne rendît coupable. Tout donnait de l'ombrage au tyran. Un citoyen avait-il de la popularité? C'etait un rival du prince qui pouvait susciter une guerre civile. Suspect.—Fuyait-on au contraire la popularité, et se tenait on au coin de son feu? Cette vie retirée vous avait fait remarquer. Suspect.—Etiez-vous riche? Il y avait un péril imminent que le peuple ne fût corrompu par vos largesses. Suspect.—Etiez-vous pauvre? Il fallait vous surveiller de plus près; il n'y a personne d'entreprenant comme celui qui n'a rien. Suspect.—Etiez-vous d'un caractère sombre, mélancolique, et d'un extérieur negligé? Ce qui vous affligeait, c'est que les affaires publiques allaient bien. Suspect.—Un citoyen se donnait-il du bon temps et des indigestions? C'est parceque le prince allait mal. Suspect. Etait-il vertueux, austère dans ses mœurs? Il faisait la censure de la cour. Suspect.—Etait-ce un philosophe, un

orateur, un poëte? Il lui convenait bien d'avoir plus de renommée que ceux qui gouvernaient. Suspect.—Enfin, s'était-on acquis de la réputation à la guerre? On n'en était que plus dangereux par son talent. Il fallait se défaire du général ou l'éloigner promptement de l'armée. Suspect.

"La mort naturelle d'un homme célèbre ou seulement en place, était si rare que les historiens la transmettaient comme un évènement à la mémoire des siècles. La mort de tant de citoyens innocents et recommandables semblaient une moindre calamité que l'insolence et la fortune scandaleuse de leurs meurtriers et de leurs dénonciateurs. Chaque jour le délateur sacré et inviolable faisait son entrée triomphale dans le palais des morts, et recueillait quelque riche succession. Tous les dénonciateurs se paraient des plus beaux noms, se faisaient appeler *Cotta, Scipion, Régulus, Saevius, Sévérus.* Pour se signaler par un début illustre, le marquis *Sérénus* intenta une accusation de contre-révolution contre son vieux père déjà exilé, après quoi il se faisait appeler fièrement Brutus. Tels accusateurs, tels juges; les tribunaux, protecteurs de la vie et des propriétés etaient devenus des boucheries, où ce qui portait le nom de supplice et de confiscation n'était que vol et assassinat."

Note J, page 187.

The following quotation is also from Mignet's work on the French Revolution:—

L'histoire de la révolution française commence en Europe l'ère des sociétés nouvelles, comme la révolution d'Angleterre a commencé l'ère des gouvernements nouveaux. Cette révolution n'a pas seulement modifié le pouvoir politique, elle a changé toute l'existence intérieure de la nation. Les formes de la société du moyen âge existaient encore. Le sol était divisé en provinces ennemies, les hommes étaient distribués en classes rivales. La noblesse avait perdu tous ses pouvoirs, quoiqu'elle eût conservé ses distinctions; le peuple ne possédait aucun droit, la royauté n'avait pas de limites, et la France était livrée à la confusion de l'arbitraire ministériel, des régimes particuliers et des priviléges des corps. A cet ordre abusif, la révolution en a substitué un plus conforme à la justice et plus approprié à nos temps. Elle a remplacé

l'arbitraire par la loi, le privilége par l'égalité: elle a délivré les hommes des distinctions des classes, le sol des barrières des provinces, l'industrie des entraves des corporations et des jurandes, l'agriculture des sujétions féodales et de l'oppression des dîmes, la propriété des gênes des substitutions; et elle a tout ramené à un seul état, à un seul droit, à un seul peuple."

Note K, page 190.

The following is Monsieur Villemain's sketch of France after the Revolution:—

"La France offrait alors un des spectacles les plus curieux dans l'histoire morale des peuples. La lassitude du crime avait amené des lois plus douces. Une sorte de trève avait suspendu les vengeances civiles; dans cette intervalle, l'ordre social essayait de renaître. Ses maux s'oubliaient rapidement; on se hâtait d'espérer, et de se confier au sol tremblant de la France. Une joie frivole et tumultueuse s'etait emparée des âmes, comme par l'étonnement d'avoir survécu; et l'on célébrait des fêtes sur les ruines. Ainsi, dans les campagnes ravagées par le Vésuve, quand le torrent de flamme a détruit les ouvrages et les habitations des hommes, bientôt la sécurité succède au péril, on se réunit, on se rapproche, et l'on bâtit de nouvelles demeures avec les laves refroidies du volcan."

Note L, page 191.—*Jours de décade.*

See Châteaubriand's eloquent work, "*Le Génie du Christianisme,*" for some striking arguments drawn from various departments of the creation, but all tending to establish the propriety of the division of time into the scriptural week of seven days. It is much to be regretted that this lovely and impressive book contains so much that is peculiar to the Romish church. It presents, perhaps, some of the most conclusive arguments ever put forward in advocacy of the essential truth and beauty of the Christian system; and he must have a cold heart indeed who can read it without emotion. At the same time, it is a work which wavering Protestants, anxious to keep on this side the pale, should avoid; for though there is nothing Romish in it which a good Bible student

could not readily refute, it addresses itself so touchingly to the affections, that few young persons, at any rate, could keep cool enough for argument during its perusal. We speak from experience.

NOTE M, PAGE 269.—*Murder of the Duc d'Enghien.*

Our brief account of this infamous transaction is substantially that given by De Bourrienne, a devoted imperialist, who had a personal account of the affair from Harrel, one of the culprits, the man who dug the pit.—*See* DE BOURRIENNE'S *Memoirs.*

NOTE N, PAGE 291.

Her high idea of the Roman character, may be best seen by the following passage, in which she compares her father to the great men of that nation:—

Mais en vain ce beau ciel, cette vive nature,
Ces chants délicieux ressemblaient au bonheur,
Toujours j'ai ressenti la cruelle blessure
Du poignard que la mort a plongé dans mon cœur.
Où fuir cette douleur? Sur ces débris antiques,
D'un antique moderne on croit trouver les pas;
Aussi grand qu'un Romain par ses vertus publiques,
Persécuté comme eux, trahi par des ingrats;
Mais plus sensible qu'eux, et pleuré sur la terre,
Comme un obscur ami dont les paisibles jours
Aux devoirs d'un époux, aux tendresses d'un père,
Auraient été voués, dans leur tranquille cours.
Zéphyr que j'ai senti, caressiez-vous sa cendre?
Harmonieuses voix, cantique des élus,
Dans le sein de la tombe a-t-il pu vous entendre,
Et nos cœurs séparés se sont-ils répondus?
Ciel parsemé de feux, aujourd'hui sa demeure,
Eternité des temps, éternité des mers,
Ne me direz-vous pas, et devant que je meure,
Si ses bras paternels me sont encore ouverts?"

NOTE O, PAGE 351.

The French did not at first compass the idea that the Russians had set fire to Moscow. The following is from the English translation of Count Segur's "History of the Expedition to Russia:"—

"Most of us imagined that want of discipline in our troops and intoxication, had begun the disaster, and that the high wind had completed it. We viewed ourselves with a sort of disgust. The cry of horror which all Europe would not fail to set up, terrified us. Filled with consternation by so tremendous a catastrophe, we accosted each other with downcast looks: it sullied our glory; it deprived us of the fruits of it; it threatened our present and our future existence; we were now but an army of criminals, whom heaven and the civilised world would severely judge. From these overwhelming thoughts and paroxysms of rage against the incendiaries, we were roused only by an eagerness to obtain intelligence; and all the accounts began to accuse the Russians alone of this disaster. In fact, officers arrived from all quarters, and they all agreed. The very first night, that of the 14th, a fire-balloon had settled on the palace of Prince Trubetskoi, and consumed it: this was a signal. Fire had been immediately set to the Exchange: Russian police soldiers had been seen stirring it up with tarred lances. Here howitzer shells, perfidiously placed, had discharged themselves in the stoves of several houses, and wounded the military who crowded round them. Retiring to other quarters which were still standing, they sought fresh retreats; but when they were on the point of entering houses closely shut up and uninhabited, they heard faint explosions within; these were succeeded by a light smoke, which immediately became thick and black, then reddish, and, lastly, the colour of fire, and presently the whole edifice was involved in flames.

Note P, page 357.

Et, si l'on me demande comment Philippe l'a emporté? tout le monde répondra pour moi: par ses armes, qui ont tout envahi; par son or, qui a tout corrompu. Il n'en était pas en moi de combattre ni l'un ni l'autre; je n'avais ni trésors, ni soldats. Mais, pour ce qui est de moi, j'ose dire que j'ai vaincu Philippe; et comment? en refusant ses largesses, en résistant à sa corruption. Quand un homme s'est laissé acheter, l'acheteur peut dire qu'il a triomphé de lui,

mais celui qui demeure incorruptible, peut dire qu'il triomphe du corrupteur."—*Fragment d'une harangue de Démosthène. Quoted from* La Harpe's *Cours de Littérature.*

Note Q, page 363.

The following beautiful notice of Madame de Staël occurs in the historical notes to the fourth canto of *Childe Harold.*

"In Santa Croce's holy precincts lie."

Stanza liv. line 1.

"This name will recall the memory, not only of those whose tombs have raised the Santa Croce into the centre of pilgrimage, the Mecca of Italy, but of her whose eloquence was poured over the illustrious ashes, and whose voice is now as mute as those she sung. *Corinna* is no more; and with her should expire the fear, the flattery, and the envy, which threw too dazzling or too dark a cloud round the march of genius, and forbad the steady gaze of disinterested criticism. We have her picture embellished or distorted, as friendship or detraction has held the pencil: the impartial portrait was hardly to be expected from a contemporary. The immediate voice of her survivors will, it is probable, be far from affording a just estimate of her singular capacity. The gallantry, the love of wonder, and the hope of associated fame, which blunted the edge of censure, must cease to exist.—The dead have no sex; they can surprise by no new miracles; they can confer no privilege: *Corinna* has ceased to be a woman—she is only an author: and it may be foreseen that many will repay themselves for former complaisance, by a severity to which the extravagance of previous praises may perhaps give the colour of truth. The latest posterity, for to the latest posterity they will assuredly descend, will have to pronounce upon her various productions; and the longer the vista through which they are seen, the more accurately minute will be the object, the more certain the justice, of the decision. She will enter into that existence in which the great writers of all ages and nations are, as it were, associated in a world of their own, and, from that superior sphere, shed their eternal influence for the control and consolation of mankind. But the individual will gradually disappear as the author is more distinctly seen: some one, therefore, of all those whom the charms of involun-

tary wit, and of easy hospitality, attracted within the friendly circles of Coppet, should rescue from oblivion those virtues which, although they are said to love the shade, are, in fact, more frequently chilled than excited by the domestic cares of private life. Some one should be found to portray the unaffected graces with which she adorned those dearer relationships, the performance of whose duties is rather discovered amongst the interior secrets, than seen in the outward management, of family intercourse; and which, indeed, it requires the delicacy of genuine affection to qualify for the eye of an indifferent spectator. Some one should be found, not to celebrate, but to describe, the amiable mistress of an open mansion, the centre of a society, ever varied, and always pleased, the creator of which, divested of the ambition and the arts of public rivalry, shone forth only to give fresh animation to those around her. The mother tenderly affectionate and tenderly beloved, the friend unboundedly generous, but still esteemed, the charitable patroness of all distress, cannot be forgotten by those whom she cherished, and protected, and fed. Her loss will be mourned the most where she was known the best; and, to the sorrows of very many friends, and more dependants, may be offered the disinterested regret of a stranger, who, amidst the sublimer scenes of the Leman lake, received his chief satisfaction from contemplating the engaging qualities of the incomparable *Corinna*."

Lord Byron somewhere remarks on Madame de Staël's affectation in assuming to be able to write in one room only. But had she this affectation? In Sweden, England, Germany, and France, she exercised her pen as well as in Switzerland. No doubt there was one room at Coppet which she preferred to all others as a study. Was not that room her father's cabinet, from whose window she could see the boughs that waved over his grave? That she wrote better here than anywhere else might be no fancy, for every object was calculated to affect her. and all that deeply stirs the soul may minister to the inspiration of genius. Lord Byron himself very truly says, "the fit of composition is like a fever," and a fever we all know is fed by excitement. Every one who uses the pen must remember some season of pain or violent agitation when every word seemed doubly forcible, and when the very agony

of the soul lent new life and vigour to the theme that occupied him. That theme might be very foreign to his woe—a comedy even—and yet the circumstance that excited him roused the hidden forces of his soul, as, after an eruption of Vesuvius, the vine grows very quickly and beautifully near the heated substances that seemed to threaten its destruction. This is true of only a certain kind of suffering; there are griefs so crushing that they deaden every power and talent. I should say such griefs are those only that involve deep repentance, remorse, or terror. Some persons ascribe to insensibility the instinct that compels an author to confide his sorrows to his pen, but they who thus judge have never fathomed certain depths of the experiences of all passionate natures. Hartley Coleridge—and I write that name with infinite tenderness and respect—Hartley Coleridge writing to his mother on the occasion of his father's death, after writing a snatch of poetry, says—"Dear mother, this is a sad attempt at verse, and it may seem to you to evidence small sense of my orphan state that I should choose such a vehicle; but I have so long used myself to express my deeper feelings in metre, that I find a difficulty in expressing them in prose." But Hartley Coleridge never wrote a line, I believe, on the dark passages of his own wrecked life; that life, which like a strain of music, joyous at first, suddenly changes into the minor mode, and dies away pathetically into silence. It was a song incomplete on earth; and has, we hope, returned to its primal key.

> "What's done we partly may compute,
> But know not what's resisted."

THE END.

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