government. Civil liberty is indispensable for every citizen. Each individual needs it that he may live like a man. Political liberty, on the contrary, would be merely a luxury, necessary to a few but useless to the majority, if, like a faithful guardian of a house, it were not there for the purpose of giving warning when thieves approach and of preventing their entrance. Since its part is to assure the safety of our welfare, we must draw the inference that, the richer and happier societies are, so much the greater is the fruitful development of the active faculties and so much the more indispensable is political liberty. It is the only pledge that their welfare shall endure. For this reason it was, and deserved to be, the object of the great battle which we have sketched so rapidly.

XLI

REVOLUTION OF 1848

The victory of liberal Switzerland and of the constitutional party in Prussia, the agitation of Germany, Hungary and the Austrian duchies, the conduct of Pius IX, and the efforts of Italy to escape from the despotism of her rulers as well as from the grip of the Hapsburgs, had caused an immense sensation in France. In the legislative body the deputies of the Left Centre and of the Dynastic Left, led by MM. Thiers and Odilon Barrot, called upon the ministry to fulfil its promises. They demanded the modification of certain taxes, and electoral and parliamentary reform. The latter had been proposed in vain at each session since 1842. The ministry rejected these harmless demands and ridiculed the opposition for its ineffectual efforts to awake the country from political torpor. To this challenge the opposition replied by seventy banquets in the most important cities. These national complaints found a voice. They deplored the degradation of France, which no longer possessed its legitimate influence in Europe. They showed how the most legitimate reforms had been refused, and denounced the electoral and parliamentary corruption fostered by the government. Their demands were most moderate. They asked only the addition of 25,000 persons to the voters and that government officials should be refused membership in the Chamber.

Paris, by instinct and tradition fond of fault-finding when free from fear, was entirely devoted to the opposition. In the recent municipal elections not a single candidate of the ministry had succeeded in the richest and, consequently, the most essentially moderate quarter. A journal founded by the conservatives was unable to live. Dissatisfaction showed itself in the very heart of that party. Many influential members of the majority passed over to the opposition. Prince de Joinville openly showed his disapproval and went to Algiers in a sort of voluntary exile with his

brother the Duke d'Aumale. Several members of the ministry even were disgusted with an extreme policy. M. de Salvandy, who had undertaken numerous and liberal reforms in the Department of Public Education, retained his place only from the desire to defend certain proposed laws which he had introduced. But the President of the Council began the battle by causing the king in his speech at the opening of the session on December 20, 1848, to declare 100 deputies enemies of the throne.

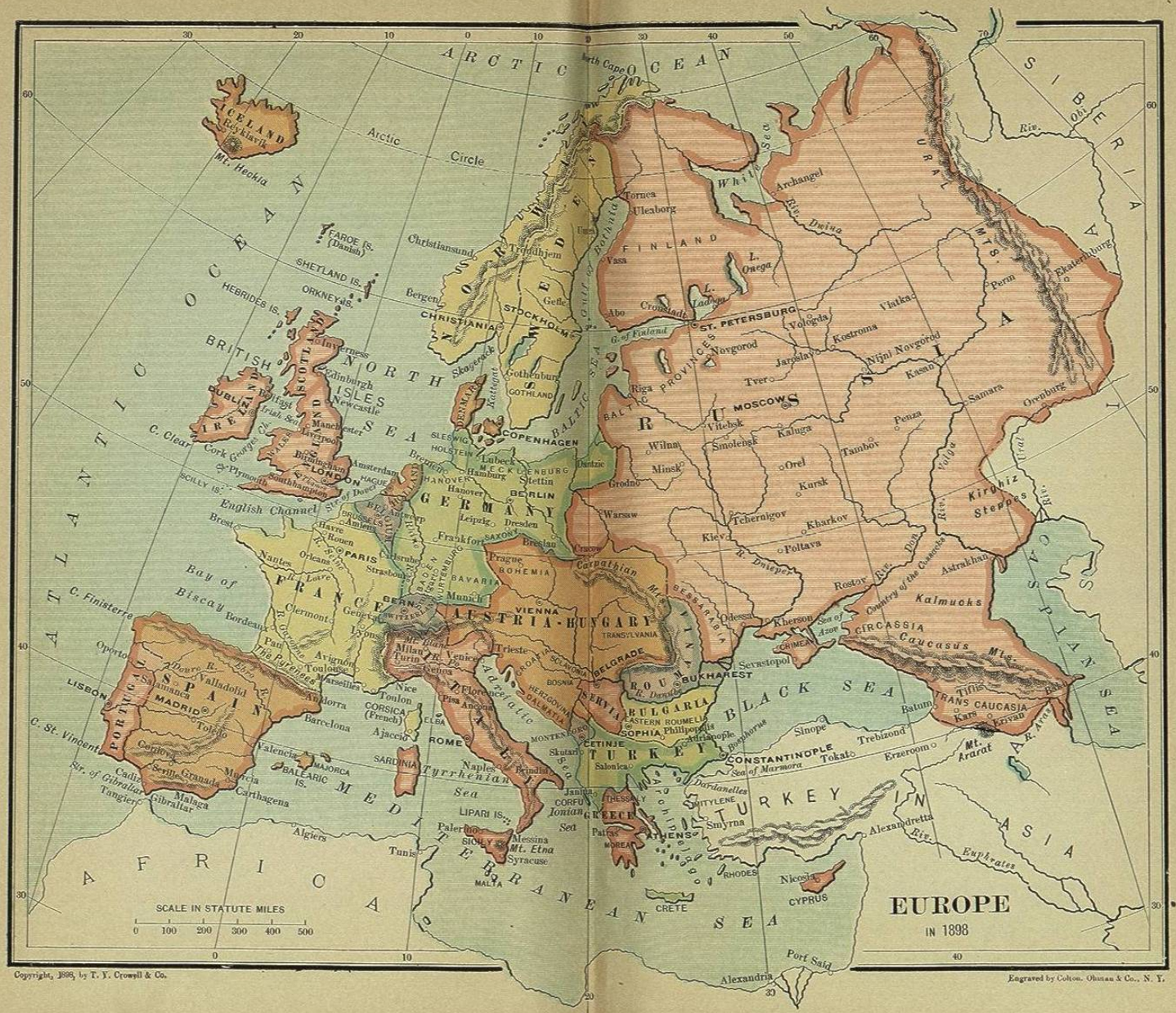
For the space of six weeks irritating debates kept public opinion in an uproar. The opposition made a final demonstration by appointing a banquet in the twelfth district. The republicans who had long been discouraged let things go on without opposition, but held themselves in readiness. "If the ministry authorizes the banquet," said one of their leaders on February 20, "it will fall. If it prohibits it, there will be a revolution." The Dynastic Left made a last effort to forestall the explosion. On February 21 M. Odilon Barrot laid upon the table of the Chamber an accusation against the ministers.

The latter prevented the banquet. Immediately vast crowds got together and here and there conflicts broke out. But on the evening of February 23 the opposition had won its case. A liberal ministry was appointed under the presidency of M. Thiers. But those who had so well begun the movement had made no preparations for arresting its course at the exact point which the majority of the country desired. Men, able to attack rather than to resist, critics rather than men of action, in a few hours they saw the control of the uprising slip from their hands and pass into those of a party which included professional conspirators and veterans of barricades. The latter were men of combat. They mixed among the masses, with whom the gayly decked and illuminated boulevards were crowded. A shot was fired by an unknown person at the guardhouse of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The troops replied by a discharge which killed fifty innocent promenaders. At the sight of these dead bodies borne into the city, the people of the faubourgs shouted, "They are assassinating our brethren! Vengeance!" and flew to arms. The king could count upon the army, commanded by General Bugeaud. That energetic leader had already taken measures to quell the riot, when, during the night of the 23d, he received

orders from the president of the new ministry to fall back with his troops upon the Tuileries. Rather than obey this senseless order he resigned his command, and the resistance was paralyzed. The national guard had been tardily assembled. They believed that the whole matter would be confined to a change of ministers, and allowed the movement to go on. Revolution followed. Soon they tried to arrest what their inactivity had aided, but it was too late. Even the Order of the National Guard, which dated from July 14, 1789, was morally overthrown on February 24. Abandoned by the burghers of Paris, Louis Philippe thought he was deserted by all France. At noon he abdicated, while fighting was still going on at the Palais Royal. He departed under the protection of several regiments without being either pursued or disturbed.

The Duke of Orleans, whose influence over the army had been great, was dead. The Prince de Joinville and the Duke d'Aumale, who enjoyed a well-earned popularity, were absent. There remained in addition to the Duke de Montpensier, who was still too young to be known, only a woman and a child, the Duchess of Orleans and the Count of Paris. The duchess, respected for her virtues and lofty spirit, but a stranger and alone, had no power. While the populace was entering the Tuileries, she went to the Chamber with the Count of Paris. The insurgents followed her here and caused a provisional government to be proclaimed.

Thus, through the incapacity of the government and the audacity of a faction, instead of legal accomplishment of requisite reforms, the monarchy was overthrown. The successful insurrection was to paralyze labor, waste hundreds of millions of francs and divert the country far from the path of peaceful progress. Two men above all others should have put on mourning for this useless revolution and for the overthrown dynasty. One of the two, the king, might have forestalled the insurrection by taking away its pretext. The other, the minister, might have crushed it by force, but did not dare.



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