all his energies were directed to the prosecution of the war, and no other events of importance took place during his administration.

His genius most signally was displayed in his financial skill in extricating his nation from the great embarrassments which resulted from the American war, and in providing the means to prosecute still more expensive campaigns against Napoleon and his generals. He also had unrivalled talent in managing the House of Commons against one of the most powerful oppositions ever known, and in a period of great public excitements. He was always ready in debate, and always retained the confidence of the nation. He is probably the greatest of the English statesmen, so far as talents are concerned, and so far as he represented the ideas and sentiments of his age. But it is a question which will long perplex philosophers whether he was the wisest of that great constellation of geniuses who enlightened his brilliant age. To him may be ascribed the great increase of the national debt. If taxes are the greatest calamity which can afflict a nation, then Pitt has entailed a burden of misery which will call forth eternal curses on his name, in spite of all the brilliancy of his splendid administration. But if the glory and welfare of nations consist in other things — in independence, patriotism, and rational liberty; if it was desirable, above all material considerations, to check the current of revolutionary excess, and oppose the career of a man who aimed to bring all the kings and nations of Europe under the yoke of an absolute military despotism, and rear a universal empire on the ruins of ancient monarchies and states, — then Pitt and his government should be contemplated in a different light.

That mighty contest which developed the energies of this great statesman, as well as the genius of a still more remarkable man, therefore claims our attention.

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CHAPTER XXX.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

If the American war was the greatest event in modern times in view of ultimate results, the French Revolution may be considered the most exciting and interesting to the eye of contemporaries. The wars which grew out of the Revolution in France were conducted on a scale of much greater magnitude, and embroiled all the nations of Europe. A greater expenditure of energies took place than from any contest in the annals of civilized nations. Nor has any contest ever before developed so great military genius. Napoleon stands at the head of his profession, by general consent; and it is probable that his fame will increase, rather than diminish, with advancing generations.

It is impossible to describe, in a few pages, the great and varied events connected with the French Revolution, or even allude to all the prominent ones. The causes of this great movement are even more interesting than the developments.

The question is often asked, could Louis XVI. have prevented the catastrophe which overturned his throne? He might, perhaps, have delayed it; but it was an inevitable event, and would have happened, sooner or later. There were evils in the government of France, and in the condition of the people, so overwhelming and melancholy, that they would have produced an outbreak. Had Richelieu never been minister; had the Fronde never taken place; had Louis XIV. and XV. never reigned; had there been no such women as disgraced the court of France in the eighteenth century; had there been no tyrannical kings, no oppressive nobles, no grievous taxes, no national embarrassments, no luxurious courts, no infidel writings, and no discontented people, — then Louis XVI. might have reigned at Versailles, as Louis XV. had done before him. But the accumulated grievances of two centuries called imperatively for redress, and nothing short of a revolution could have removed them.

Now, what were those evils and those circumstances which, of necessity, produced the most violent revolutionary storm in the annals of the world? The causes of the French revolution may be generalized under five heads: First, the influence of the writings of infidel philosophers; second, the diffusion of the ideas of popular rights; third, the burdens of the people, which made these abstract ideas of right a mockery; fourth, the absurd infatuation of the court and nobles; fifth, the derangement of the finances, which clogged the wheels of government, and led to the assembling of the States General. There were also other causes: but the above mentioned are the most prominent.

Of those philosophers whose writings contributed to produce this revolution, there were four who exerted a remarkable influence. These were Helvetius, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot.

Helvetius was a man of station and wealth, and published, in 1758, a book, in which he carried out the principles of Condillac and of other philosphers of the sensational, or, as it is sometimes called, the sensuous school. He boldly advocated a system of undisguised selfishness. He maintained that man owed his superiority over the lower animals to the superior organization of the body. Proceeding from this point, he asserted, further, that every faculty and emotion are derived from sensation; that all minds are originally equal; that pleasure is the only good, and self-interest the only ground of morality. The materialism of Helvetius was the mere revival of pagan Epicurianism; but it was popular, and his work, called *De l'Esprit*, made a great sensation. It was congenial with the taste of a court and a generation that tolerated Madame de Pompadour. But the Parliament of Paris condemned it and pronounced it derogatory to human nature, inasmuch as it confined our faculties to animal sensibility, and destroyed the distinctions between virtue and vice.

His fame was eclipsed by the brilliant career of Voltaire, who exercised a greater influence on his age than any other man. He is the great apostle of French infidelity, and the great oracle of the superficial thinkers of his nation and age. He was born in 1694, and early appeared upon the stage. He was a favorite at Versailles, and a companion of Frederic the Great — as great an egotist as he, though his egotism was displayed in a different way

He was an aristocrat, made for courts, and not for the people, with whom he had no sympathy, although the tendency of his writings was democratic. In all his satirical sallies, he professed to respect authority. But he was never in earnest, was sceptical, insincere, and superficial. It would not be rendering him justice to deny that he had great genius. But his genius was to please, to amuse a vainglorious people, to turn every thing into ridicule, to pull down, and substitute nothing instead. He was a modern Lucian, and his satirical mockery destroyed reverence for God and truth. He despised and defied the future, and the future has rendered a verdict which can never be reversed — that he was vain, selfish, shallow, and cold, without faith in any spiritual influence to change the world. But he had a keen perception of what was false, with all his superficial criticism, a perception of what is now called *humbug;* and it cannot be denied that, in a certain sense, he had a love of truth, but not of truth in its highest development, not of the positive, the affirmative, the real. Negation and denial suited him better, and suited the age in which he lived better; hence he was a "representative man," was an exponent of his age, and led the age. He hated the Jesuits, but chiefly because they advocated a blind authority; and he strove to crush Christianity, because its professors so often were a disgrace to it, while its best members were martyrs and victims. Voltaire did not, like Helvetius, propose any new system of philosophy, but strove to make all systems absurd. He set the ball of Atheism in motion, and others followed in a bolder track: pushed out, not his principles, for he had none, but his spirit, into the extreme of mockery and negation. And such a course unsettled the popular faith, both in religion and laws, and made men indifferent to the future, and to their moral obligations.

Quite a different man was Rousseau. He was not a mocker, or a leveller, or a satirist, or an atheist. He resembled Voltaire only in one respect — in egotism. He was not so learned as Voltaire, did not write so much, was not so highly honored or esteemed. But he had more genius, and exercised a greater influence on posterity. His influence was more subtle and more dangerous, for he led astray people of generous impulses and enthusiastic dispositions, with but little intelligence or experience.

He abounded in extravagant admiration of unsophisticated nature, professed to love the simple and earnest, affected extraordinary friendship and sympathy, and was most enthusiastic in his rhapsodies of sentimental love. Voltaire had no cant, but Rousseau was full of it. Voltaire was the father of Danton, but Rousseau of Robespierre, that sentimental murderer who, as a judge, was too conscientious to hang a criminal, but sufficiently unscrupulous to destroy a king. The absurdities of Rousseau can be detected in the ravings of the ultra Transcendentalists, in the extravagance of Fourierism, in the mock philanthropy of such apostles of light as Eugene Sue and Louis Blanc. The whole mental and physical constitution of Rousseau was diseased, and his actions were strangely inconsistent with his sentiments. He gave the kiss of friendship, and it proved the token of treachery; he expatiated on simplicity and earnestness in most bewitching language, but was a hypocrite, seducer, and liar. He was always breathing the raptures of affection, yet never succeeded in keeping a friend; he was always denouncing the selfishness and vanity of the world, and yet was miserable without its rewards and praises; no man was more dependent on society, yet no man ever professed to hold it in deeper contempt; no man ever had a prouder spirit, yet no man ever affected a more abject humility. He dilated, with apparent rapture, on disinterested love, and yet left his own children to cold neglect and poverty. He poisoned the weak and the susceptible by pouring out streams of passion in eloquent and exciting language, under the pretence of unburdening his own soul and revealing his own sorrows. He was always talking about philanthropy and generosity, and yet seldom bestowed a charity. No man was ever more eloquent in paradox, or sublime in absurdity. He spent his life in gilding what is corrupt, and glossing over what is impure. The great moral effect of his writings was to make men commit crimes under the name of patriotism, and permit them to indulge in selfish passion under the name of love.

But more powerful than either of these false prophets and guides, in immediate influence, was Diderot; and with him the whole school of bold and avowed infidels, who united open atheism with a fierce democracy. The Encyclopedists professed to know every thing, to explain every thing, and to teach every

thing, they discovered that there was no God, and taught that truth was a delusion, and virtue but a name. They were learned in mathematical, statistical, and physical science, but threw contempt on elevated moral wisdom, on the lessons of experience, and the eternal truths of divine revelation. They advocated changes, experiments, fomentations, and impracticable reforms. They preached a gospel of social rights, inflamed the people with disgust of their condition, and with the belief that wisdom and virtue resided, in the greatest perfection, with congregated masses.

They incessantly boasted of the greatness of philosophy, and the obsolete character of Christianity. They believed that successive developments of human nature, without the aid of influences foreign to itself, would gradually raise society to a state of perfection. What they could not explain by their logical formularies, they utterly discarded. They denied the reality of a God in heaven, and talked about the divinity of man on earth, especially when associated masses of the ignorant and brutal asserted what they conceived to be their rights. They made truth to reside, in its greatest lustre, with passionate majorities; and virtue, in its purest radiance, with felons and vagabonds, if affiliated into a great association. They flattered the people that they were wiser and better than any classes above them, that rulers were tyrants, the clergy were hypocrites, the oracles of former days mere fools and liars. To sum up, in few words, the French Encyclopedists, "they made Nature, in her outward manifestations, to be the foundation of all great researches, man to be but a mass of organization, mind the development of our sensations, morality to consist in self-interest, and God to be but the diseased fiction of an unenlightened age. The whole intellect, being concentrated on the outward and material, gave rise, perhaps, to some improvements in physical science; but religion was disowned, morality degraded, and man made to be but the feeble link in the great chain of events by which Nature is inevitably accomplishing her blind designs." From such influences, what could we expect but infidelity, madness, anarchy, and crimes?

The second cause of the French revolution was the diffusion of the ideas of democratic liberty. Rousseau was a republican in his politics, as he was a sentimentalist in religion. Thomas

Paine's Age of Reason had a great influence on the French mind, as it also had on the English and American. Moreover, the apostles of liberty in France were much excited in view of the success of the American Revolution, and fancied that the words "popular liberty," "sovereignty of the people," the "rights of man," "liberty and equality," meant the same in America as they did when pronounced by a Parisian mob. The French people were unduly flattered, and made to believe, by the demagogues, that they were philosophers, and that they were as fit for liberty as the American nation itself. Moreover, it must be confessed that the people had really made considerable advances, and discovered that there was no right or justice in the oppressions under which they groaned. The exhortations of popular leaders and the example of American patriots prepared the people to make a desperate effort to shake off their fetters. What were rights, in the abstract, if they were to be ground down to the dust? What a mockery was the watch-word of liberty and equality, if they were obliged to submit to a despotism which they knew to be, in the highest degree, oppressive and tyrannical?

Hence the real and physical evils which the people of France endured, had no small effect in producing the revolution. Abstract ideas prepared the way, and sustained the souls of the oppressed; but the absolute burdens which they bore aroused them to resistance.

These evils were so great, that general discontent prevailed among the middle and lower classes through the kingdom. The agricultural population was fettered by game laws and odious privileges to the aristocracy. "Game of the most destructive kind, such as wild boars and herds of deer, were permitted to go at large through spacious districts, in order that the nobles might hunt as in a savage wilderness. Numerous edicts prohibited weeding, lest young partridges should be disturbed, and mowing of hay even, lest their eggs should be destroyed. Complaints for the infraction of these edicts were carried before courts where every species of oppression and fraud prevailed. Fines were imposed at every change of property and at every sale. The people were compelled to grind their corn at their landlord's mill to press their grapes in his press, and bake their bread in his oven' In consequence of these feudal laws and customs, the people were

very poor, their houses dark and comfortless, their dress ragged and miserable, their food coarse and scanty. Not half of the enormous taxes which they paid reached the royal treasury, or even the pockets of the great proprietors. Officers were indefinitely multiplied. The governing classes looked upon the people only to be robbed. Their cry was unheard in the courts of justice, while the tear of sorrow was unnoticed amid the pageantry of the great, whose extravagance, insolence, and pride were only surpassed by the misery and degradation of those unfortunate beings on whose toils they lived. Justice was bought and sold like any other commodity, and the decisions of judges were influenced by the magnitude of the bribes which were offered them. Besides feudal taxes, the clergy imposed additional burdens, and swarmed wherever there was plunder to be obtained. The people were so extravagantly taxed that it was no object to be frugal or industrious. Every thing beyond the merest necessaries of life was seized by various tax-gatherers. In England, severe as is taxation, three fourths of the produce of the land go to the farmer, while in France only one twelfth went to the poor peasant. Two thirds of his earnings went to the king. Nor was there any appeal from this excessive taxation, which ground down the middle and lower classes, while the clergy and the nobles were entirely exempted themselves. Nor did the rich proprietor live upon his estates. He was a non-resident, and squandered in the cities the money which was extorted from his dependents. He took no interest in the condition of the peasantry, with whom he was not united by any common ties. Added to this oppression, the landlord was cruel, haughty, and selfish; and he irritated by his insolence as well as oppressed by his injustice. All situations in the army, the navy, the church, the court, the bench, and in diplomacy were exclusively filled by the aristocracy, of whom there were one hundred and fifty thousand people — a class insolent haughty, effeminate, untaxed; who disdained useful employments, who sought to live by the labor of others, and who regarded those by whose toils they were enabled to lead lives of dissipation and pleasure, as ignoble minions, who were unworthy of a better destiny, and unfit to enjoy those rights which God designed should be possessed by the whole human race.

The privileges and pursuits of the aristocratic class, from the king to a lieutenant in his army, were another cause of revolution. Louis XV. squandered twenty million pounds sterling in pleasures too ignominious to be even named in the public accounts, and enjoyed almost absolute power. He could send any one in his dominions to rot in an ignominious prison, without a hearing or a trial. The odious *lettre de cachet* could consign the most powerful noble to a dungeon, and all were sent to prison who were offensive to government. The king's mistresses sometimes had the power of sending their enemies to prison without consulting the king. The lives and property of the people were at his absolute disposal, and he did not scruple to exercise his power with thoughtless, and sometimes inhuman cruelty.

But these evils would have ended only in disaffection, and hatred, and unsuccessful resistance, had not the royal finances been deranged. So long as the king and his ministers could obtain money, there was no immediate danger of revolution. So long as he could pay the army, it would, if decently treated, support an absolute throne.

But the king at last found it difficult to raise a sufficient revenue for his pleasures and his wars. The annual deficit was one hundred and ninety million of francs a year. The greater the deficit, the greater was the taxation, which, of course, increased the popular discontent.

Such was the state of things when Louis XVI. ascended the throne of Hugh Capet, (1774,) in his twentieth year, having married, four years before, Marie Antoinette, daughter of Maria Theresa, empress of Austria. He was grandson of Louis XV., who bequeathed to him a debt of four thousand millions of livres.

The new king was amiable and moral, and would have ruled France in peaceful times, but was unequal to a revolutionary crisis. "Of all the monarchs," says Alison, "of the Capetian line, he was the least able to stem, and yet the least likely to provoke, a revolution. The people were tired of the arbitrary powers of their monarch, and he was disposed to abandon them; they were provoked at the expensive corruptions of the court, and he was both innocent in his manners, and unexpensive in his habits; they demanded reformation in the administration of affairs, and he

placed his chief glory in yielding to the public voice. His reign, from his accession to the throne to the meeting of the States General, was nothing but a series of ameliorations, without calming the public effervescence. He had the misfortune to wish sincerely for the public good, without possessing the firmness necessary to secure it; and with truth it may be said that reforms were more fatal to him than the continuance of abuses would have been to another sovereign."

He made choice of Maurepas as his prime minister, an old courtier without talent, and who was far from comprehending the spirit of the nation or the genius of the times. He accustomed the king to half measures, and pursued a temporizing policy, ill adapted to revolutionary times. The discontents of the people induced the king to dismiss him, and Turgot, for whom the people clamored, became prime minister. He was an honest man, and contemplated important reforms, even to the abolition of feudal privileges and the odious *lettres de cachet*, which were of course opposed by the old nobility, and were not particularly agreeable to the sovereign himself.

Malesherbes, a lawyer who adopted the views of Turgot, succeeded him, and, had he been permitted, would have restored the rights of the people, and suppressed the *lettres de cachet*, reënacted the Edict of Nantes, and secured the liberty of the press. But he was not equal to the crisis, with all his integrity and just views, and Necker became financial minister.

He was a native of Geneva, a successful banker, and a man who had won the confidence of the nation. He found means to restore the finances, and to defray the expenses of the American war. But he was equally opposed by the nobles, who wanted no radical reform, and he was not a man of sufficient talent to stem the current of revolution. Financial skill was certainly desirable, but no financiering could save the French nation on the eve of bankruptcy with such vast expenditures as then were deemed necessary. The nobles indeed admitted the extent of the evils which existed, and descanted, on their hunting parties, in a strain of mock philanthropy, but would submit to no sacrifices themselves, and Necker was compelled to resign.

M. de Calonne took his place: a man of ready invention

unscrupulous, witty, and brilliant. Self-confident and full of promises, he succeeded in imparting a gleam of sunshine, and pursued a plan directly the opposite to that adopted by Necker. He encouraged the extravagance of the court, derided the future, and warded off pressing debts by contracting new ones. He pleased all classes by his captivating manners, brilliant conversation, and elegant dress. The king, furnished with what money he wanted, forgot the burdens of the people, and the minister went on recklessly contracting new loans, and studiously concealing from the public the extent of the annual deficit.

But such a policy could not long be adopted successfully, and the people were overwhelmed with amazement when it finally appeared that, since the retirement of Necker in 1781, Calonne had added sixteen hundred and forty-six millions of francs to the public debt. National bankruptcy stared every body in the face. It was necessary that an extraordinary movement should be made; and Calonne recommended the assembling of the Notables, a body composed chiefly of the nobility, clergy, and magistracy, with the hope that these aristocrats would consent to their own taxation.

He was miserably mistaken. The Notables met, (1787,) the first time since the reign of Henry IV., and demanded the dismissal of the minister, who was succeeded by Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse.

He was a weak man, and owed his elevation to his influence with women. He won the queen by his pleasing conversation, but had no solid acquirements. Occupying one of the highest positions in his church, he yet threw himself into the arms of atheistical philosophers. A man so inconsistent and so light was not fit for his place.

However, the Notables agreed to what they had refused to Calonne. They consented to a land tax, to the stamp duty, to provincial assemblies, and to the suppression of the gratuitous service of vassals. These were popular measures, but were insufficient. Brienne was under the necessity of proposing the imposition of new taxes. But the Parliament of Paris refused to register the edict. A struggle between the king and the parliament resulted; and the king, in order to secure the registration of new taxes, resorted to the *bed of justice* — the last stretch of his royal power.

During one of the meetings of the parliament, when the abuses and prodigality of the court were denounced, a member, punning upon the word *états*, (statements,) exclaimed, "It is not statements but States General that we want."

From that moment, nothing was thought of or talked about but the assembling of the States General; to which the minister, from his increasing embarrassments, consented. Moreover, the court hoped, in view of the continued opposition of the parliament, that the Tiers Etat would defend the throne against the feudal aristocracy.

All classes formed great and extravagant expectations from the assembling of the States General, and all were doomed to disappointment, but none more than those who had most vehemently and enthusiastically called for its convocation.

The Archbishop of Toulouse soon after retired, unable to stem the revolutionary current. But he contrived to make his own fortune, by securing benefices to the amount of eight hundred thousand francs, the archbishopric of Sens, and a cardinal's hat. At his recommendation Necker was recalled.

On Necker's return, he found only two hundred and fifty thousand francs in the royal treasury; but the funds immediately rose thirty per cent., and he was able to secure the loans necessary to carry on the government, rich capitalists fearing that absolute ruin would result unless they came to his assistance.

Then followed discussions in reference to the Tiers Etat, as to what the third estate really represented, and as to the number of deputies who should be called to the assembly of the States General. "The Tiers Etat," said the Abbé Sièyes, in an able pamphlet, "is the French nation, *minus* the noblesse and the clergy."

It was at last decided that the assembly should be at least one thousand, and that the number of deputies should equal the representatives of the nobles and clergy. The elections were carelessly conducted, and all persons, decently dressed, were allowed to vote. Upwards of three millions of electors determined the choice of deputies. Necker conceded too much, and opened the flood-gates of revolution. He had no conception of the storm which was to overwhelm the throne.

On the 4th of May, 1789, that famous Assembly, which it was