

CHAPTER XXVI.

Connexion of the French Revolution with English history.—The public opinion of England on the Revolution.—Views of eminent men.—The king of France visits the National Assembly.—Session of the British Parliament.—Divisions in the Whig Party.—The Test Act.—Nootka Sound.—War with Spain averted.—Fate of the Federation in Paris.—Burke publishes his "Reflections on the French Revolution."—Russia and Turkey.—Siege of Ismail.—Mirabeau President of the National Assembly.—His negotiations with the Court.—His death.—Parliament.—Breach of the friendship between Burke and Fox.—Clamour against the Dissenters.—The Birmingham Riots.

THE history of the French Revolution is essentially connected with the history of England, almost from the first day of the meeting of the States-General. The governments of the two countries were not, for several years, brought into collision, or into an exchange of remonstrance and explanation, on the subject of the momentous events in France. But these events, in all their shifting aspects, so materially affected the state of public opinion amongst the British people, that they gradually exercised a greater influence upon our external policy and our internal condition, than any overthrow of dynasties, any wars, any disturbances of the balance of power, any one of "the incidents common in the life of a nation,"—to use the words of Tocqueville,—even a far greater influence than the American Revolution, which was the precursor of that of France. For this cause, we feel it necessary to relate the leading events of this signal uprooting of ancient institutions and established ideas, more fully than would at first sight appear proportionate in a general history of our own land. Nevertheless, we shall aim at the utmost brevity consistent with an intelligible narrative. At every act of this great drama, we shall endeavour to show the effect of its memorable scenes upon the thoughts and feelings of those amongst us who guided the national sentiment as statesmen and writers. "Between the spring of 1789 and the close of 1792, the public mind of England underwent a great change."* To trace the formation of that aggregate public opinion,—to which the most powerful statesman of the time was compelled to yield a reluctant obedience, and against which the most eloquent advocate of popular rights could only feebly protest,—is a task of which the

* Macaulay—"Life of Pitt."

execution must be necessarily inadequate, but which, however imperfect, must have some illustrative historical value.

The "change in the public mind" with which the fluctuating opinions of many eminent men were identified,—changes in most of those men very unjustly denounced as apostacy,—proceeded from the original inability of the most sagacious to see the probable career, and to estimate the real strength, of the new-born liberty of France. "The English," says Tocqueville, "taught by their own history, and enlightened by the long practice of political freedom, perceived dimly, as through a thick veil, the approaching spectre of a great revolution. But they were unable to distinguish its real shape; and the influence it was so soon to exercise upon the destinies of the world, and upon their own, was unforeseen."* Much of the early feeling associated with the French Revolution depended upon youth and temperament. To young and ardent minds, 1789 was a season of hope and promise.

"Bliss was it in the dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven! Oh! times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance."

Coleridge, who first gave to the world these verses of Wordsworth in his poem "On the French Revolution, as it appeared to enthusiasts at its commencement," says in prose, almost as eloquent as his friend's poetry, "Many there were, young men of loftiest minds, yea, the prime stuff out of which manly wisdom and practical greatness are formed, who had appropriated their hopes and the ardour of their souls to mankind at large, to the wide expanse of national interests, which then seemed fermenting in the French republic as in the main outlet and chief crater of the revolutionary torrents; and who confidently believed that these torrents, like the lavas of Vesuvius, were to subside into a soil of inexhaustible fertility in the circumjacent lands, the old divisions and mouldering edifices of which they had covered or swept away."† "I was a sharer in the general vortex," adds Coleridge. Such a young man, one of loftiest mind, William Huskisson, was in his twentieth year residing with his uncle in Paris. That young man, destined to form one of the most important members of a Tory government advancing towards liberal opinions, was present at the taking of the Bastille, and was a member of one of the Clubs of Paris. In 1823, when he was a candidate for Liverpool, he was accused of having been a member of the Jacobin Club. He denied the charge,

* "France before the Revolution," p. 3. † "The Friend," Essay ii.

but he frankly said, "In the earlier period of my life, when I was about nineteen, I was in France; and if I should then have been misled by a mistaken admiration of what I now think the errors of that revolution, I trust that the ardour of youth would be no discreditable excuse. . . . I am not ashamed to avow that I was anxious to see a rational system of liberty established in that fine country. . . . That guilt I share in common with many great and good men."* The predilections of Mr. Huskisson did not prevent him receiving the appointment of private secretary to lord Gower, then the British minister at Paris. The destruction of the Bastille was the type of the fall of tyranny to English men and also to English women. Hannah More writes to Horace Walpole, "Poor France! though I am sorry that the lawless rabble are so triumphant, I cannot help hoping that some good will arise from the sum of human misery having been so considerably lessened at one blow, by the destruction of the Bastille."† Dumont says that in England, the most free and the most noble of the nations, the destruction of the Bastille had caused a general joy.‡ He adds, however, what is correct, that the English government had not permitted this event to be celebrated in the theatres. An opera, founded upon the story of the Iron Mask, in which that mystery was blended with a scenic representation of the destruction of the Bastille, was "maimed and mutilated by the licenser. §" As might be expected, Fox was in raptures at the great event of the 14th of July. He writes to Fitzpatrick, on the 30th of that month, "How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world, and how much the best."|| Even Burke expresses himself soberly, within three weeks after that "greatest event." He writes to lord Charlemont, on the 9th of August, "Our thoughts of everything at home are suspended by our astonishment at the wonderful spectacle which is exhibited in a neighbouring and rival country. What spectators, and what actors! England, gazing with astonishment at a French struggle for liberty, and not knowing whether to blame or to applaud. . . . The spirit it is impossible not to admire; but the old Parisian ferocity has broken out in a shocking manner."¶ There was another remarkable Englishman, of French extraction, who had seen much of France, was intimate with Mirabeau, and who attempted, though French vanity rendered the attempt useless, to imbue the National Assembly, through Dumont, with some

* Appendix to Huskisson's Speeches, vol. iii. p. 647.

† "Memoirs," vol. ii. p. 170.

‡ Wright, vol. ii. p. 177.

§ Prior—"Life of Burke," vol. ii. p. 47.

¶ "Souvenirs sur Mirabeau," p. 95.

|| "Correspondence," vol. ii. p. 365.

respect for salutary forms, established by the experience of the English Parliament. Samuel Romilly, then in his thirty-second year, wrote thus to Dumont, on the 28th of July, 1789:—"I am sure I need not tell you how much I have rejoiced at the revolution which has taken place. I think of nothing else, and please myself with endeavouring to guess at some of the important consequences which must follow throughout all Europe. I think myself happy that it has happened when I am of an age at which I may reasonably hope to live to see some of those consequences produced. It will perhaps surprise you, but it is certainly true, that the Revolution has produced a very sincere and very general joy here. It is the subject of all conversations; and even all the newspapers, without one exception, though they are not conducted by the most liberal or the most philosophical of men, join in sounding forth the praises of the Parisians, and in rejoicing at an event so important for mankind."* The news of the murder of Foulon and his son-in-law somewhat abates his enthusiasm. When the events of the 6th of October were known in England, he dreads the removal of the National Assembly to Paris: "I fear for the freedom of debate in the midst of a people so turbulent, so quick to take alarm, and so much disposed to consider the most trifling circumstances as proofs of a conspiracy formed against them." He had seen France during a rapid visit in September, and had ventured an opinion that "the horizon was overcast." In October he writes, to express what is a presentiment of a coming change in English feeling:—"I find the favour with which the popular cause in France is considered here, much less than it was when I quitted England. We begin to judge you with too much severity; but the truth is, that you taught us to expect too much, and that we are disappointed and chagrined at not seeing those expectations fulfilled."†

The interest excited by the Revolution was not confined to the higher circles, metropolitan or provincial. Arthur Young, complaining in August of the apparent indifference to political affairs, as exhibited in their conversation, of the French in towns through which he passed, says, "The ignorance or the stupidity of these people must be absolutely incredible. Not a week passes without their country abounding with events that are analyzed and debated by the carpenters and blacksmiths of England." This was the result of what he frequently laments, the want of

* "Memoirs," p. 272.

† *Ibid.*, p. 282.

that rapid and easy communication which almost every part of our island enjoyed. The carpenters and blacksmiths of England had some prejudices corrected by the early struggles of the French to be better governed. Their old notion of the subjects of the Grand Monarque was, that they ate frogs and wore wooden shoes; that they were a starved people, who had not spirit to resist their oppressors. Hogarth appealed to the popular notions when he published his prints of "The Invasion" in 1756, and wrote under them certain patriotic lines about "lanthorn-jaw and croaking gut," and "the hungry slaves have smelt our food." There is a remarkable testimony to a change in the popular feeling, supplied by an intelligent foreigner in 1790:—"The French used to be the great object of English national dislike and jealousy; but this seems now to be greatly abated, especially since the late revolution in France has given the English rather a more respectful opinion of the French nation."*

The beginning of the year 1790 presents a singular contrast between the aspect of the Parliament of England and of the National Assembly of France. On the 21st of January, George III. opened the Session with a royal speech which notices "the interruption of the tranquillity of other countries;" and expresses his majesty's deep and grateful sense of the favour of Providence, in continuing to his subjects "the inestimable advantages of peace, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of the invaluable blessings which they have so long derived from our excellent constitution." On the 4th of February, Louis XVI. went to the National Assembly, which held its sitting in the Salle du Manège, near the Tuileries, and addressed the deputies in very remarkable words, indicative not only of his acquiescence in the great changes which the Assembly had decreed, but of his earnest desire to unite with them in building up a solid and enduring fabric of public liberty. The Assembly, during the four months in which it had sat at Paris, had passed some sweeping measures of reform. The most important was that of a new territorial division of the kingdom. The old boundaries of provinces, with their various and conflicting systems of administration, were swept away; and France was distributed into eighty-three departments, with each its subdivision of districts and cantons. Throughout France one system of administration, under municipal functionaries to be chosen by the people, was established. The king declared to the Assembly that ten years previous he had desired to substitute some general system of administration for one founded upon ancient customs; but to the

* Wendeborn—"View of England," vol. i. p. 375.

Assembly was due the grand idea, the salutary change, of the new departmental division, which he would second by all the means in his power. The privileges of the nobility had been destroyed—feudal rights had been abolished—during the sittings of Versailles. A change of equal importance had since taken place. The question of church property, which in France was of enormous amount, had been warmly debated in the early sittings of the Assembly. Talleyrand, bishop of Autun, contended that the nation had the right of making a new disposition of that property; the Abbé Maury maintained that the proprietary rights of the clergy should be preserved inviolate. On the 2nd of November, it was carried by a large majority that all ecclesiastical property is at the disposal of the nation, but charged with a suitable provision for the expenses of religious worship, for the support of the ministers of religion, and for the relief of the poor. A better income than previously existed was to be provided for the inferior clergy. The religious houses were also suppressed, but provision was to be made for their inmates, whose vows were declared no longer binding. The king, on the 4th of February, expressed in words of no common force, his adoption of these changes, which were essentially a Revolution. "In concert with the queen, who partakes all my sentiments, I will at the proper time prepare the mind and the heart of my son for the new order of things that circumstances have brought about."* The address of the king worked up the excitable Parisians to a fever-fit of constitutional loyalty manifested in universal oath-taking and illuminations, each district having its own swearing and its candles in the windows. Nevertheless, Journalism, and Clubs, and secret advisers in the Tuileries soon clouded this "day-star of liberty;" and Englishmen generally felt that they were safer from storms under that tutelary genius which George III. invoked on all occasions, "our excellent Constitution." The time was approaching when those amongst us who looked with apprehension upon the French Revolution, should be violently opposed to those who as violently became its partisans. The progress of this conflict of opinions was very gradual; but the tendencies towards a rupture of the old ties of one great political party were soon manifest. The distinctions of Whig and Tory would speedily be obliterated. Those who clung to the most liberal interpretation of the principles upon which our Revolution of 1688 was founded, would be pointed at as Jacobins—the title which became identified with all that was most revolting in the French Revolution. The Tory became the Anti-Jacobin. Thus, through ten years of social bitterness, execra-

* The speech is given in Thiers' "Révolution Française," note 1561.

tion and persecution made England and Scotland very unpleasant dwelling-places for men who dared to think and speak openly. Democratic opinions, even in their mildest form, were proscribed, not by a political party only, but by the majority of the people. Liberty and Jacobinism were held to be synonymous.

Burke, Fox, and Sheridan, from the commencement of the administration of Pitt, had been closely united as the chief leaders of the Whigs. They had been brought intimately together as managers of the impeachment of Hastings, whose trial at the commencement of the Session of 1790 had been proceeding for two years. Fox and Burke had cordially joined with Wilberforce, who was supported by Pitt, in taking a prominent part in advocating the total abolition of the Slave Trade, in 1789. On the 5th of February, 1790, when the army estimates were moved, Mr. Pitt held that it was necessary, on account of the turbulent situation of the greater part of the continent, that we should be prepared for war, though he trusted the system uniformly pursued by ministers would lead to a long continuance of peace. Mr. Fox opposed the estimates on the ground of economy alone. He had no dread of the increase of the army in a constitutional point of view. "The example of a neighbouring nation had proved that former imputations on armies were unfounded calumnies; and it was now universally known throughout all Europe that a man by becoming a soldier did not cease to be a citizen." On the 9th of February, when the Report on the Army Estimates was brought up, Mr. Burke proclaimed, in the most emphatic terms, his views on the affairs of France. He opposed an increase of our military force. He held that France, in a political light, was to be considered as expunged out of the system of Europe. "Since the House had been prorogued in the summer much work was done in France. The French had shown themselves the ablest architects of ruin that had hitherto existed in the world. In that very short space of time they had completely pulled down to the ground, their monarchy; their church; their nobility; their law; their revenue; their army; their navy; their commerce; their arts; and their manufactures. They had done their business for us, as rivals, in a way in which twenty Ramilles and Blenheims could never have done." Burke held that, in this fallen condition, it was not easy to determine whether France could ever appear again as a leading power. Six years afterwards he described the views he formerly entertained as those of "common speculators." He says, "deprived of the old government, deprived in a manner of all government, France, fallen as a monarchy, to common speculators might have

appeared more likely to be an object of pity or insult, according to the disposition of the circumjacent powers, than to be the scourge and terror of them all."* Burke's alarm, in 1790, was not an apprehension of France as a military power. In the age of Louis XIV. we were in danger of being entangled by the example of France in the net of a relentless despotism. "Our present danger, from the example of a people whose character knows no medium is, with regard to government, a danger from anarchy; a danger of being led, through an admiration of successful fraud and violence, to an imitation of the excesses of an irrational, unprincipled, proscribing, confiscating, plundering, ferocious, bloody, and tyrannical democracy." He went on to say, that, "in his opinion, the very worst part of the example set is in the late assumption of citizenship by the army." With the highest compliments to the masterly understanding and benevolent disposition of his friend, he regretted that Mr. Fox had dropped a word expressive of exultation at the conduct of the French army. He had no difference about the abstract principle whether the soldiers were to forget they were citizens. In France, where the abstract principle was clothed with its circumstances, he thought what was done there furnished no matter for exultation, either in the act or the example. Mr. Fox, in reply, avowed his deep obligations for the improvement he had derived from his friend's instruction and conversation. From him he had learnt more than from all the men with whom he had ever conversed. His friend might be assured that they could never differ in principles, however they might differ in their application. He maintained his opinion of the conduct of the French soldiers as men who, "feelingly alive to a sense of the oppressions under which their countrymen had groaned, disobeyed the despotic commands of their leaders, and gallantly espoused the cause of their fellow-citizens." It was manifest that the difference between the two great orators was something more than the application of principles. The respect which each felt for the understanding of the other prevented, at that time, a stronger expression of the thoughts that were tearing them asunder. A smaller man interfered in the friendly contention; and then the Whig ranks were first broken by Burke's war-cry. Sheridan elaborately defended the proceedings of the National Assembly, apologized for the excesses of the French populace, and charged Burke with being the advocate of despotism. Burke rose, and declared, as an inevitable necessity, that henceforth his honourable friend and he were separated in politics.

* "Letters on a Regicide Peace," Letter i. 1796.

The influence of the French Revolution upon great questions of our domestic policy was very soon manifested in the proceedings of Parliament. In 1789, a bill for the relief of Protestant Dissenters was rejected by a very small majority. During the prorogation, the Dissenters had agitated for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, with unwonted earnestness and considerable indiscretion. Some of the Establishment were equally zealous in the encouragement of a resistance to the claims of the Dissenters. Mr. Fox, on the 2nd of March, proposed the abolition of these religious tests. Mr. Pitt opposed the motion. Mr. Burke declared that had the repeal been moved for ten years before, he should probably have joined Mr. Fox in supporting it. But he had the strongest reasons to believe that many of the persons now calling themselves Dissenters, and who stood the most forward in the present application for relief, were men of factious and dangerous principles, actuated by no motives of religion or conscience, to which tolerance could in any rational sense be applied. The motion was rejected by a very large majority. Two days after, a proposition made by Mr. Flood, to amend the representation of the people in Parliament, was withdrawn; the minister, who had three times advocated Reform, now holding that if a more favourable time should arise, he might himself bring forward a specific proposition; but he felt that the cause of reform might now lose ground from being agitated at an improper moment.

There was a warlike episode in May of this year, which indicated, perhaps advantageously to European powers, that Great Britain was not prepared to endure insults to her flag. In the previous year two England vessels had been seized by a Spanish frigate in Nootka Sound, a harbour of Vancouver Island, and the buildings for a settlement on that coast by English traders had been pulled down, by direction of the Spanish government, which claimed all the lands from Cape Horn to the 60th degree of latitude. His Catholic Majesty long refused to make reparation. War was the tone of a royal message to Parliament. A million was voted. But Spain yielded; and at a great crisis of European affairs we were saved from one of those petty quarrels which had so often been the beginning of lavish bloodshed for the attainment of small commercial advantages. Fox supported the minister in the spirited conduct which averted this conflict; and Pitt had the merit of obtaining, by resolute negotiation, concessions which rendered a future dispute improbable. The possibility of a war between Great Britain and Spain raised an important question in the French Assembly. The governments of Spain and France were bound by

treaty to mutual support. The question arose in the Assembly as to the power of making peace or war. Mirabeau, with surpassing eloquence, prevented the legislative body from assuming that power to itself; and it was resolved that war can only be decided on by a decree of the legislative body, passed on the formal proposal of the king, and sanctioned by him. A resolution was carried by acclamation that the French nation renounced for ever all ideas of conquest, and confined itself entirely to defensive war.

France during this summer presented the semblance of a happy people celebrating the triumphs of liberty and equality by a pompous spectacle in Paris; and the reality of disturbances in the army on the eastern frontier, with much bloodshed at Nanci, and a general resistance amongst the higher clergy to the adhesion required of them to the new order of ecclesiastical affairs. It was resolved that the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille should be honoured by a magnificent festival in the Champ de Mars—a grand Federation to which deputies should come from every one of the eighty-three departments of France. To prepare an immense amphitheatre for this gathering from the most remote parts, twelve thousand workmen were employed. But they worked too slowly. All Paris then went forth to dig and to move earth—all classes, men and women, coming in the early morning from their sections, and returning home by torchlight. Vast troops of federates had arrived in Paris, and were hospitably lodged. At six o'clock of the morning of the 14th of July, three hundred thousand persons, of both sexes, dwelling in Paris and the neighbourhood, had taken their seats on the grass of the amphitheatre, amidst a pouring rain. The federates marched into the area, each troop with the banner of its department. Fifty thousand armed men were in the space surrounded by the spectators on their grassy elevation. The king and the royal family, the president of the National Assembly, and the deputies, were on a raised seat, beneath an awning ornamented with *fleurs de lis*. Mass was celebrated by the bishop of Autun, attended by three hundred priests, at an altar placed in the centre of the amphitheatre. La Fayette then ascended to the altar, and swore, in the name of the troops and the federates, to be faithful to the nation, the law, and the king. The president of the National Assembly, and each of the deputies, took the same oath. Then Louis, standing in front of his throne, said: "I, king of the French, swear to the nation to employ all the power which is delegated to me by the constitutional law of the state, to maintain the Constitution decreed by the National Assembly, and accepted by me, and to cause the laws to be executed." The queen took

the Dauphin in her arms, and presented him to the multitude. The sun shone out; the cannon boomed; one universal shout went out as if to proclaim that France had attained the consummation of its felicity. But again a deluge of rain came down, whilst Talleyrand was blessing the banners of the eighty-three departments. Again sunshine; and illuminations; and dancing in the Champs Elysées; and merriment for a week before the federates went home—perhaps to think whether it were possible that the loving oaths of the 14th of July would ever be broken.

The Sixteenth Parliament of Great Britain, having nearly completed its full term of seven years, was dissolved soon after the prorogation in June, 1790. The new parliament assembled on the 25th of November, when Mr. Addington was chosen Speaker. There was no allusion to the affairs of France in the king's Speech. That the great events which had taken place in that country were occupying the thoughts of public men, there could be small doubt. Whilst the royal Speech, and the echoing Addresses, dwelt upon a pacification between Austria and the Porte, upon dissensions in the Netherlands, upon peace between Russia and Sweden, and upon war between Russia and the Porte, the national mind was absorbed almost exclusively by conflicting sentiments about the Revolution in France. A few weeks before the meeting of Parliament, Burke had published his famous "Reflections on the Revolution." * Probably no literary production ever produced such an exciting effect upon public opinion at the time of its appearance, or maintained so permanent an influence amongst the generation to whose fears it appealed. The reputation of the author as the greatest political philosopher of his age; his predilections for freedom, displayed through the whole course of the American Revolution; his hatred of despotic power, as manifested in his unceasing denunciations of atrocities in India; his consistent adherence to Whig principles as established by the Bill of Rights—this acquaintance with the character and sentiments of Burke first raised an unbounded curiosity to trace the arguments against the struggle for liberty in another country, coming from a man who had so long contended for what was deemed the popular cause at home. The perusal of this remarkable book converted the inquirer into an enthusiast. In proportion as the liberal institutions of our own country were held up to admiration, so were the attempts of France to build up a new system of government upon the ruins of the old

* The title of the book indicates that its chief purpose was to spread alarm as to the prevalence of revolutionary opinions in England: "Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the proceedings in certain Societies in London relative to that event."

system; described as the acts of men devoted to "every description of tyranny and cruelty employed to bring about and to uphold this revolution." To the argumentative power was added an impassioned eloquence, which roused the feelings into hatred of the anarchists who led the royal family captives into Paris on the 6th of October, and directed every sympathy towards a humiliated king, a proscribed nobility, and a plundered church. Burke was accused of abandonment of his old principles, as he grew more and more strongly opposed to the French Revolution, even before the period of its greatest excesses. He who produced the most elegant and temperate answer to the "Reflections," most truly said: "The late opinions of Mr. Burke furnished more matter of astonishment to those who had distantly observed, than to those who had correctly examined, the system of his former political life. An abhorrence for abstract politics, a predilection for aristocracy, and a dread of innovation, have ever been among the most sacred articles of his public creed." * Coleridge, at a period when his Gallican enthusiasm had entirely sobered down, complains of "the errors of the aristocratic party," in lamenting with tragic outcries the injured monarch and the exiled noble, and displaying a disgusting insensibility to the sufferings and oppressions of the great mass of the population; and he adds, in a note, "The extravagantly false and flattering picture which Burke gave of the French nobility and hierarchy, has always appeared to me the greatest defect of his, in so many respects, invaluable work." † Another eminent thinker of our own day has thus given his opinion of the causes of Burke's indifference to the condition of the governed, and his sympathies with the governing: "It is the natural tendency of men connected with the upper ranks of society, and separated from the mass of the community, to undervalue things which only affect the rights or the interests of the people. Against this leaning, to which he had yielded, it becomes them to struggle." ‡

Mackintosh, writing in 1791, says: "No series of events in history have probably been more widely, malignantly, and systematically exaggerated than the French commotions." He adds, with reference to the furious indignation with which Burke had spoken of some popular atrocities: "The massacres of war, and the murders committed by the sword of justice, are disguised by the solemnities which invest them." § "The massacres of war"

* Mackintosh—"Vindiciæ Gallicæ," Introduction.

† "The Friend," Essay I.

‡ Lord Brougham—"Statesmen of the time of George III."—Art. "Burke."

§ "Vindiciæ Gal."—Mackintosh, Miscellaneous Works, vol. iii. p. 32.

were never more fearfully exhibited than at the season when the revolutionists of France were held up to execration, and the savage murders perpetrated by the ministers of vengeance let loose by Catherine of Russia provoked no parliamentary denunciation, and excited little public feeling. On the anniversary of our Saviour's nativity, in 1790, Suwarrow, the Russian general, wrote to his court: "Glory to God and to the Empress, Ismail is ours." It is not necessary to read the two cantos of "Don Juan," which Byron devoted to the siege of Ismail, to shudder at the atrocities which have been perpetrated by established authorities. This fortress, the key of the Lower Danube, was stormed; the Turks obstinately resisted till midnight, and then the conquering Russians entered the body of the place. The rising sun exhibited such a spectacle in Ismail as had not for several ages shocked the feelings of mankind. In the morning, when the Russian generals put an end to the carnage, thirty thousand of the Turkish population, of all ages, sexes, and conditions, had perished.*

Mirabeau, in January, 1791, was named President of the National Assembly. During the previous year he had pursued a systematic course of opposition to the measures of the extreme democratic party. He supported, as we have seen, the king's prerogative as to the right of peace and war. He opposed the violent measures that were contemplated with regard to emigrants. He maintained a complete independence of clubs and mobs. He saw that the Revolution was passing out of the hands of the few who were qualified to guide it to a moderate course, into the management of factions, who were ready to stifle the comparatively sober voice of the legislative body. He dreaded the turbulence of those who were becoming a real and a terrible power, as the Club of the Friends of the Constitution (who, from their place of meeting, the Hall of the Jacobins' Convent, came to be known as Jacobins); and of another body, still more violent, the Club of the Cordeliers. There were in Paris, too, somewhat more than a hundred Journals. Mirabeau was himself a journalist, and counselled in this character adherence to constitutional moderation. Marat, the representative of the fury of the Revolution, was for erecting eight hundred gibbets, and for hanging Mirabeau the first, as the chief of the advocates of order. Nevertheless, the wonderful energy, the indomitable courage, the overwhelming eloquence of Mirabeau not only made him supreme in the National Assembly, but gave him the hearty allegiance of the people, in their universal recognition of his intellectual supremacy. The very post-boys called the best

* There is a very graphic account of this event in the "Annual Register," 1791.

horse of a team—the horse that did the most work—their Mirabeau. The king and queen of France began to feel that their safety might depend upon the efforts of this man, who had done so much to destroy the ancient order of things, but in whom the will, and probably the power, abided, of saving the monarchy. Mirabeau secretly met Marie Antoinette at St. Cloud, to which palace the royal family had removed in the summer of 1790, and there enjoyed some little freedom. He came away with the conviction that she was the only man of the family. He was poor; and he doubtless accepted great presents from some source, for his style of living suddenly became extravagantly luxurious. Louis wrote to Bouillé that he had paid the services of Mirabeau at an enormous price. Dumont believes that Mirabeau thought himself, on receiving payment, as an agent who could accomplish salutary ends with adequate means. He also says, that Mirabeau's only object was to have the ministerial power in his hands; that he had no notion of a counter revolution; that his desire was to re-establish the royal authority, with a national representation; that he even would have endeavoured to revoke the decree of the National Assembly which had abolished the nobility; and that he was dissatisfied with the part he had himself taken as to the question of the clergy. When Mirabeau entered upon his functions as President of the National Assembly, the versatility of his talent was signally displayed. He was no longer the impassioned tribune of the people. He was the moderator of a tumultuous body—the impartial supporter of orderly proceedings—the dignified assertor of the respect due to the legislature. But the physical health of this extraordinary man was gone. Dumont parted with Mirabeau, on quitting Paris after the nomination of his friend to the presidency of the Assembly. "If I believed in slow poisons," said Mirabeau, "I should think I was poisoned. I am perishing. I am consuming with a slow fire." His mode of life, Dumont pointed out to him, would have long before killed any man not so robust as he was:—unremitting work; imprudent regimen. Intellectual and sensual excess, Dumont might have added—those destructive agencies that, combined, always destroy the victims who unite the loftiest ambition to the grossest indulgence. "You should have been a salamander," said Dumont, "to live in a devouring flame without being consumed." The image was founded upon a popular error applied to a great truth. When Dumont quitted Mirabeau, the dying man, to whom an intense egotism was pardonable, said, "We shall never meet again. When I am gone, they will know how to value me. The misfortunes which I have arrested will rush in from all parts over