France. The criminal faction which trembled before me will no longer have any bridle. The Commons won a victory in declaring themselves a National Assembly, of which they have never ceased to shew themselves unworthy. They have desired to govern the king, instead of governing by him; but very soon neither he nor they will govern. A vile faction will dominate over all, and fill France with horrors." * Mirabeau survived only three months after he had uttered this prophetic speech to Dumont. He repeated the same sentiments to Talleyrand. He died on the 2nd of April. The pomp of his funeral; the procession of nearly all Paris to the church of St. Geneviève; the mournful music; the intermittent cannon; the thousand torches; the deep and solemn silence of the countless multitude; have often been described, as the tribute of a great nation to the greatest of its citizens. By a decree of the Assembly, the church of St. Geneviève was to be called the Pantheon—was to bear the inscription, *Aux Grands Hommes la Patrie reconnaissante.* Mirabeau was the first occupant of the temple set apart by a grateful country as the tomb of its great men. In November, 1793, by a decree of the Convention, his body was disinterred as that of an unworthy aristocrat.

Six months elapsed between the publication of Burke's "Reflections" and his final separation from his party, involving an irrevocable breach of friendship with Fox. The night of the 6th of May exhibited a scene in the House of Commons of no ordinary interest. From that time this country became divided into two hostile bands, each upholding opinions that were calculated to make men irrational partisans rather than calm reasoners; that opposed exaggerated alarm to mistaken enthusiasm; that rendered the majority persecutors and the minority agitators. The passions then spread through the country inspired a panic about property, and a dread of revolution, when, as had been truly said, "the people were more heart-whole than they had been for a hundred years previously;" † and these passions drove a minister, really a friend to civil and religious liberty, into acts of tyranny, whose influence long survived the immediate occasion of their exercise, and produced fears and hatreds which arrested the march of social improvement for a quarter of a century. On the 15th of April, Mr. Fox had incidentally spoken in somewhat extravagant terms about "the new Constitution of France." He admired it, "considered altogether, as the most stupendous and glorious edifice of liberty which had been erected on the foundation of human integrity in any time or

* "Souvenirs sur Mirabeau," p. 186.
† Coleridge—"Table Talk," vol. ii. p. 192.

country." There had been animated debates on a proposition of Mr. Pitt for the government of Canada, which contemplated the establishment of two Houses of Assembly, one for the Upper and one for the Lower Province. In the discussion of this question, general principles of representative government were naturally brought under view. On the 6th of May, upon the question in Committee that the Quebec Bill should be read paragraph by paragraph, Mr. Burke took occasion to raise his voice against the possibility of sending to our colonies "a cargo of the Rights of Man;" and then entered upon some recent circumstances in Paris—the interference of the people to prevent the king going to St. Cloud, as he proposed to do. The orator was proceeding in this strain, when he was called to order. Five times he attempted to proceed in explanation of his views on the French Revolution, and five times was he interrupted by members of the Whig party—his old associates. Burke pertinaciously held his ground. The irony of Fox, and the remonstrance of Grey, moved him less than the incessant calls to order of smaller men. At last he exclaimed:

"The little dogs and all,
Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me."

Lord John Russell, quoting this anecdote from the "Life of Lord Sidmouth," says that Burke made his exclamation "with the grief, and somewhat, perhaps, of the insanity of Lear." The notion of attributing to insanity the extreme opinions of the most powerful mind of that age, has been maintained with much earnestness, and some attempts at proof.* To a certain extent it is true that Burke's mind, "once so steady, so little swayed by prejudice and passion, reeled under the pressure of events which turned the brain of thousands." But it may also be said, that the aspirations for a new æra of happiness for mankind also turned the brains of sober men, to regard only what was full of hope and promise in that Revolution, and to divert their eyes from its crimes and follies. The extreme views which produced enthusiasts on either side are very justly pointed out by a French lady, in her correspondence with Romilly: "We have had Mr. Paine's work in answer to Mr. Burke: it is the opposite extreme of madness."† On the night of the 6th of May, Burke, after his burst of indignation at "the little dogs" in answer to the taunt of Fox, that "minute discussions on great events, without information, did no honour to the pen that wrote, or the tongue that spoke, the words,"

* See Buckle—"Civilization in England," pp. 424 to 431.
† "Mr. Paine's work" was "The Rights of Man," Part I.

addressed him no longer as "his honourable friend." He complained of the asperity with which he had been treated that night. He had differed from Mr. Fox on former occasions; but no difference of opinion had ever before interrupted their friendship. There was no loss of friendship, Fox whispered; Burke instantly exclaimed that he had done his duty at the price of his friend; "their friendship was at an end." This was too much for the kind nature of Fox. He wept, and was for some minutes unable to speak. Then there was mutual explanation; and mutual recrimination. Mr. Curwen, the member for Carlisle, relates a circumstance which shows how intense was the hostility of Burke to any who exhibited even a slight indication of admiring or tolerating the principles of the French Revolution; "The most powerful feelings were manifested on the adjournment of the House. While I was waiting for my carriage, Mr. Burke came to me and requested, as the night was wet, I would set him down. As soon as the carriage-door was shut, he complimented me on my being no friend to the revolutionary doctrines of the French; on which he spoke with great warmth for a few minutes, when he paused to afford me an opportunity of approving the view he had taken of those measures in the House. At the moment I could not help feeling disinclined to disguise my sentiments; Mr. Burke, catching hold of the check-string, furiously exclaimed, 'You are one of these people! Set me down.' With some difficulty I restrained him;—we had then reached Charing-cross; a silence ensued, which was preserved till we reached his house in Gerard-street, when he hurried out of the carriage without speaking."

In the debate on the proposed Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, on the 2nd of March, 1790, Mr Burke read extracts from a sermon of Dr. Price, and from the writings of Dr. Priestley and other Non-conformists; inferring from certain passages that the leading preachers among the Dissenters were avowed enemies to the Church of England, and that thence our establishment appeared to be in much more serious danger than the Church of France was in a year or two ago.* The "Reflections on the Revolution" diffused this alarm more extensively through the country' Burke, in reprobating the harangue at the chapel in the Old Jewry of Dr. Price, said that "politics and the pulpit are terms that have little agreement;" that "no sound ought to be heard in the Church but the healing voice of Christian charity;" that political divines, "wholly unacquainted with the world in which they are so fond of meddling, and inexperienced in all its affairs, have nothing of poli-

* "Parliamentary History," vol. xxviii. col. 439.

tics but the passions they excite." But he addressed these just remarks to "political theologians," such as Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley, who preached from heterodox pulpits; not to those who from the pulpits of the establishment made the French Revolution the constant theme of their invective; and whose churches "resounded with language at which Laud would have shuddered, and Sacheverel would have blushed."* The clamour was at last got up, that the Church was in danger. There were results of this spirit which were perhaps more disgraceful to the English character than the violence of the Parisian populace in the attack upon the Bastile or the march from Versailles. It was a lower and a more contemptible fanaticism than had been evoked by the first call in France to fight for freedom, that produced the Riots at Birmingham which broke out on the 14th of July, 1791.

Dr. Joseph Priestley, in 1780, became the minister of the principal Unitarian congregation in Birmingham. He was ardent in his political views, having written an answer to Burke's "Reflections," and he did not hesitate to avow his opposition to the Church, in his zeal to obtain what he deemed the rights of Dissenters. But in his private life he was worthy of all respect, and in his scientific pursuits had attained the most honourable distinction. But even as a politician he avowed himself a warm admirer of the English Constitution, as the best system of policy the sagacity of man had been able to contrive, though its vigour had been impaired by certain corruptions. He published, in 1791, "Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham"—a work in which, according to Robert Hall, "the seeds of that implacable dislike were scattered" which produced the outrages that we shall briefly relate.

On the 11th of July, according to a royal proclamation of the 27th of that month, "a certain scandalous and seditious paper was printed and published in the town of Brimingham," for the discovery of the author of which a reward of one hundred pounds was offered. This handbill called upon the people to celebrate on the 14th the destruction of that high altar and castle of despotism, the Bastile; but not to forget that their own parliament was venal; the ministers hypocritical; the clergy legal oppressors; the reigning family extravagant; the crown too weighty for the head that wears it. This paper, says the proclamation, was printed and published in the town of Birmingham.† William Hutton, a cautious man, says that it was fabricated in London, brought to Birming ham, and a few copies privately scattered under a table at an inn. On that 14th of July, about eighty persons assembled at a tavern,

* Mackintosh, vol. iii. p. 165. † See "Annual Register," 1791.

known as Dadley's, to commemorate this anniversary; and at the Swan Inn, some magistrates, and persons opposed to the celebrationists, met to drink "Church and King." There was a small mob about Dadley's travern, who hissed and hooted; and there was another mob around the Swan. The dinner went off quietly amongst the friends of French liberty, the King and Constitution being duly toasted, and afterwards the National Assembly of France. After the company had separated, a rabble broke into the tavern in search of Dr. Priestley, who had not dined there, crying out that "they wanted to knock the powder out of Priestley's wig." The loyal company at the adjacent Swan huzzaed; and it is affirmed that a gentleman said, "Go to the Meetings." In another hour Priestley's chapel, in New Street, called the New Meeting-House, was on fire. This work accomplished, the Old Meeting-House was also quickly in a blaze. Dr. Priestley lived at Fair Hall, about a mile and a-half from the town. He and his family had fled from mob vengeance; but his house was destroyed, and his books burnt, with his manuscripts and his philosophical instruments. The disgraceful scene has been related by some with more or less of apology for a fury which it is held that Priestley had provoked; and by others with more or less of indignation against a brutal intolerance which it is alleged was encouraged by loyal churchmen. There was a young man then dwelling at Birmingham, who was a member of the congregation then under the care of Dr. Priestley, and to some extent was his pupil; for the younger members of Priestley's flock received instruction from him on moral and religious subjects. In after life he would relate to his children the scene which he witnessed on that night of July, 1791. One of the family, since so honourably distinguished, has given this interesting notice of a memorable incident in his father's life: "My father formed a strong attachment to Priestley, and when the famous, or rather infamous, riots of 1791 broke out, he, with a small body of his fellow-pupils, repaired to Dr. Priestley's house, which they offered to defend against the mob. To their sore disappointment their services were declined. The doctor had scruples as to the lawfulness of withstanding a religious persecution by force—the why and wherefore of this distinction between repelling civil injuries and religious, which indeed are only civil injuries on religious grounds, my father never comprehended. His companions went away, perhaps to escort their good pastor and his family, whose lives would not have been secure against the ruffians coming to demolish their home and property. My father barred the doors, closed the shutters, made fast the house as securely as he could

against the expected rioters, and then awaited their arrival. He has often described to me how he walked to and fro in the darkened rooms, chafing under the restriction which had been put on him and his friends. He was present when the mob broke in, and witnessed the plunder and destruction, and the incendiary fire by which the outrage was consummated. Lingering near the house, he saw a working-man fill his apron with shoes, with which he made off. My father followed him, and as soon as the thief was alone, collared him, and dragged him to the gaol, where he had the mortification to witness the man quietly relieved of his booty, and then suffered to depart, the keeper informing my father that he had had orders to take in no prisoner that night." * The burnings and plunderings, invariably of the houses of Dissenters, continued till the night of Sunday, the 17th, in Birmingham and the neighbourhood. On the 15th, the house of Mr. Ryland, at Easy Hill, was burnt down; six or seven of the rioters, who had drunk themselves insensible with the booty of the wine-cellar, perishing in the flames. Mr. Ryland was a friend of Priestley—a man devoted to the public interests of Birmingham, and emphatically described as "a friend to the whole human race." On that day, Bordesley Hall, the residence of Mr. Taylor, another dissenter, was burnt. The warehouse of William Hutton was then plundered; and on the next morning his country-house, at Bennett's Hill, was set on fire and consumed. Five other houses of Dissenters, whether Presbyterians, Baptists, or Unitarians, were that day burnt or sacked. Justices of the peace sat in conclave; squires made speeches to the mobs, telling them they had done enough. The Birmingham magistrates issued a placard, addressed to "Friends and Brother Churchmen," entreating them to desist; for that the damage, which already amounted to £100,000, would have to be paid by the parishes. On the Sunday there were burnings of chapels and private houses in the neighbourhood of Birmingham; and then three troops of Light Dragoons rode into the town, having come in one day from Nottingham, and this disgraceful exhibition was at an end. Five of the rioters were tried at the assizes at Worcester, for offences committed near Birmingham, but only one was convicted. A larger number were tried at the Warwick Assizes, and four were sentenced to death. Three of the whole number were executed. Every attempt was made to impede the conviction of the rioters. The prosecutions were confined to the ignorant mob, whose passions were undoubtedly inflamed by their superiors in station. There

* Autobiography of Thomas Wright Hill—with "Continuation of Mr. Hill's Life, by his son, Matthew Davenport Hill."—Privately printed, 1859.

was no zealot prosecuted of the many whose offences were undoubtedly as great as that of the madman, lord George Gordon, in 1780. There was in Birmingham a hateful spirit of slavishness and ferocity, in the guise of loyalty and religion, which unhappily, to some extent, pervaded the whole kingdom. The atrocities were almost justified from the pulpit as "a judgment." One of the most eloquent of Dissenters—one strongly opposed to Priestley's theological opinions—published in 1791 a tract, in which he says, that to the unenlightened eyes of posterity "it will appear a reproach, that in the eighteenth century—an age that boasts its science and improvement—the first philosopher in Europe, of a character unblemished, and of manners the most mild and gentle, should be torn from his family, and obliged to flee, an outcast and a fugitive, from the murderous hands of a frantic rabble; but when they learn that there were not wanting teachers of religion who secretly triumphed in these barbarities, they will pause for a moment, and imagine they are reading the history of Goths or of Vandals." *

* Robert Hall—"Christianity consistent with a love of freedom, being an answer to a Sermon by the Rev. John Clayton." 1791.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Flight from Paris of the king and his family.—The National Assembly after the discovery of the flight.—Hatred of Royalty.—Thomas Paine.—National, or Constituent, Assembly at an end.—Meeting of the Legislative Assembly.—The Declaration of Pilnitz.—French princes and emigrants at Coblentz.—Opening of Parliament.—Pacific Speech.—Pitt's display of British prosperity.—The Slave Trade.—Pitt's eloquence.—The Libel Law.—Attempts to form a Coalition.—Proclamation against Seditions.—Chauvelin and Lord Grenville.—Partition of Poland.

WHILST from the night of the 14th July to the night of the 17th, the rabble of Birmingham were shouting "Church and King," and plundering and burning chapels and houses, the rabble of Paris, many thousands in number, were assembled on Sunday, the 17th, in the Champ de Mars, clamouring for the deposition of the king, and manifesting their patriotism by hanging two men denounced as spies. The magistrates of Birmingham looked smilingly on the loyal and orthodox havoc; but the authorities of Paris, with their mayor, Bailly, at their head, resolved to put down this mob-dictation, and, hoisting the red flag of martial law, to disperse the multitudes with volleys of musketry. What has produced this demand for the deposition of the king? He has attempted to fly from his good people of Paris. He broke out of his prison-house, and he has been brought back again. He has been suspected of a plan to escape, when he desired to keep Easter at St. Cloud; and a fierce mob, when he was seated with the queen in his carriage, then prevented their departure from the Tuileries although La Fayette was desirous to make way for them by force. It was known that an Austrian army was gathering on the frontiers; that the royal princes, d'Artois and Condé, were surrounded by emigrants, ready to return in arms. "Citizens," wrote Marat, the most influential of the journalists because the most ferocious, "watch closely around the palace. . . . . The genius of Austria is there, hidden in committees over which Antoinette presides. They correspond with foreigners, and furnish the armed tyrants who are assembling on your frontier with gold and materials of war." The writings of Marat echoed the denunciations of the Clubs. The National Assembly, and the National Guard, were growing less and less popular with the anarchists. "What is La Fayette doing?" asked Marat, "is he