

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 Pillnitz.—French princes and emigrants at Coblenz.—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 Seditious.—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

a dupe or an accomplice? Why does he leave the avenues of the palace free?" The suspicions thus excited in the populace naturally produced a greater vigilance in La Fayette. For some time the whole of the interior of the Tuileries was under the watchfulness of the National Guard; and La Fayette and his officers were constantly about the palace, often till a late hour. The royal family, too, were surrounded by unfaithful menials. A waiting-woman had for several months been watching the queen; had seen her jewel-boxes empty, and had conjectured that the royal diamonds had left France. She reported her suspicions to an aide-de-camp of La Fayette; and for several nights a stricter watch had been kept within and around the palace. A secret correspondence had been maintained between the king and the marquis de Bouillé, the commander of the royalist army in the frontier provinces of Champagne, Lorraine, and Alsace; but the loyalty of a few regiments only could be relied upon. It was arranged between Louis and his faithful general that the king should leave Paris on the night of the 19th of June; and De Bouillé took his measures of placing relays of horses on the road, and detachments to guard the royal family at certain stations through which they were to pass on their way to Montmédy, at which fortress the general had formed a camp where the fugitives would be safe. The arrangements were disturbed by the delay of one day in setting forth; and, as in many of the minor occurrences of life, the misadventures of an hour or two were fatal to success. The count de Fersen, a Swiss, was admitted into the confidence of the king; and he accomplished the business of obtaining a passport for a Russian baroness, travelling home, with a waiting-woman, a valet, and two children; and he has had a new coach built; and has engaged horses. All at last is ready for a start. The Russian baroness is Madame De Tourzel, the gouvernante of the two royal children; her waiting-woman is the queen; the valet is the king. The king's sister, Elizabeth, is of the party as travelling companion. Three of the devoted soldiers of the king, who had belonged to the disbanded body-guard, were admitted into the confidence of count Fersen, and it was arranged that they were to mount behind the carriage, as some sort of protection.

The king and queen received at their usual hour, on the evening of the 20th of June, those who were accustomed to wait on them before they retired to rest. They dressed themselves in the clothes prepared for their disguise; and when a midnight stillness reigned around left the Tuileries, but not all at once. A lady in a hood had come out from a small door, leading two children—a visitor of some one of the household, no doubt. These pass into the open

space before the Tuileries, called the Carrousel, and thence into a street where a glass-coach is waiting. Another lady comes out, also hooded, and enters the same coach. A stout man now reaches the capacious carriage. One of the party is still wanting—the waiting-maid. She, in a gipsy-hat, attended by a servant, is about to join them, when the carriage of La Fayette, with torch-bearers, appears. He has been hastily sent for, upon some report from his aide-de-camp. The waiting-maid stands up under the arch and sees the well-known face. She is herself unobserved; but is somewhat flurried. The fair one and her attendant take the wrong road, and cross the Pont Royal to the other side of the Seine. They wander about the long Rue du Bac in great perplexity, but at last make their way over the river again, and find the coach waiting upon the quai. Count Fersen is the royal hackney coachman. He drives furiously off, but they have to go to a distant part to find the travelling carriage. At last they have passed the dark and narrow streets of the city, have reached the Boulevard, and at the Porte St. Martin the travelling carriage is waiting. Fersen is again upon the box, with a German coachman, who will be trusty; and after some time he receives the grateful adieus of those for whom he has risked so much, and leaves them to make his own way to Brussels. Another carriage is at Bondy, with boxes and waiting-women. Through the summer-night, the heavy coach, with six horses, is lumbering on towards Chalons, where it arrives, having found proper relays, about five in the afternoon of the 21st.

At six o'clock in the morning following that midnight when La Fayette has looked round the Tuileries, and can discover nothing wrong he is roused with the news that the king and royal family are gone. Paris is alarmed, and is quickly in motion; but there is no riot or outrage. The Assembly meets, and declares its sitting permanent. A letter has been found addressed by the king to the National Assembly, in which he goes through the chief events of the Revolution; describes the personal indignities he had undergone, and says that, finding it impossible for him to effect any good, or to prevent any evil, he has sought to recover his liberty, and to reach a place of safety for himself and his family. The Assembly confirmed an order which had been previously issued by La Fayette, which enjoined all functionaries to arrest the fugitives; and at once assumed the powers of an executive government. The news of the flight of the king reached London on the 25th, when George Rose thus wrote to Wilberforce:—"The National Assembly has acted in a collected manner, and with prudence in their situation. They have given assurances to the foreign ministers of firmness, continu-

ance of friendship, &c., and have ordered the great seal (we shall be told like our phantom during the regency) to be put to all instruments which require the royal authority.\*

The king's route may be easily traced. The heavy carriage, called a "Berline," is somewhat remarkable. Escorts of dragoons have been hanging about on the road from early morning; and no one knows what they are waiting for. Suspicion is roused. As the evening draws on, a courier rides through the village of Sainte-Ménéhould; and then the lumbering vehicle with its six post-horses rolls in, and stops at the post-house. The master of the post has been to Paris. He looks hard into the carriage. He fancies he has seen the lady in the gipsy-hat in some public place. Another face is familiar to him, from the engraved head on the new assignat. He is sure the stout man is the king. The carriage moves on; and this vigilant post-master, by name Drouet, and a trusty companion, hurry after it upon fleet hackneys. The escort that followed the royal fugitives from Sainte-Ménéhould is impeded by the people at Clermont, who have been roused by Drouet. But the village of Varennes is reached by Louis and his family about four-and-twenty hours after they had been wandering out of the Tuileries through dark ways into a dark future. The small town of Varennes is divided by the river Aire. Relays of horses prepared for the travellers are in the upper town. The couriers can find no horses in the lower town, where the carriage is waiting. For half-an-hour the wearied and anxious sitters in the "Berline" listen with impatience for the sound of horses' feet. Two horsemen have dashed past them over the bridge. Drouet is an old dragoon, and knows something of barricades. He rides into the town, obtains help, and the bridge over the Aire is soon rendered impassible by an overturned cart. At length the carriage drives up, the post-boys having been induced to proceed with their jaded hacks. Passports are demanded by half-a-dozen National Guards, led by the inexorable Drouet. Resistance is vain; and Louis, his queen, his sister, his children, and the *gouvernante* are handed into the house of the Procureur of the town, named Sausse, a grocer. Refreshments are asked for by the king; and he relishes bread and cheese, and a bottle of Burgundy. The alarm-bell is rung; the people hurry out of their beds; the house is surrounded. Louis feels confident that a large force will arrive from M. de Bouillé for his deliverance. A squadron of hussars is at hand; but they have received no orders. The night is passed in terrible uncertainty. In the morning, National Guards are assembled in

\* "Wäberforee Correspondence," vol. i. p. 80.

great numbers, and La Fayette's aide-de-camp gallops into Varennes. It is all over. Even Bouillé flies across the frontier. The Berline is turned round; and is soon on the road to Paris, with the unfortunate family within, and the couriers bound with ropes upon the box. Three or four thousand men, armed with pikes and muskets, surround the carriage. As the cavalcade slowly went on, the people in the villages uttered reproaches and threats to the king and queen. They bore the insults with that calmness which marked their demeanour through all their subsequent heavy troubles. Two Commissioners from the National Assembly, Petion and Barnave, met them on the road; and their interference probably saved the lives of the unhappy family from the rage of barbarous crowds. At seven o'clock in the evening of Saturday, the captives re-entered the Tuileries. There was something more terrible than even the clamour of a mob, in the mode of their reception, as they passed through the streets of Paris. An Englishman has described the scene: "Profound silence was recommended to the people on the entrance of the royal family; and it was in general observed. I stood in the Champs Elysées, on the edge of the road, from three till near eight, and I never saw more tranquillity, or even indifference, on any occasion. An officer passed us about half-an-hour before the king's arrival, and called out as he passed, 'Chapeau sur tête.' This order was punctually obeyed. In all the conversation I heard, not a symptom of pity or sympathy appeared, nor much resentment."\* A placard had been everywhere affixed which, in a few words, prescribed the popular demeanour required by those who in this week of alarm had preserved Paris from anarchy: "Whoever shall applaud the king shall be flogged; whoever shall insult him shall be hanged."† The semblances of a monarchical government were to be maintained a little longer.

The flight of the king was the occasion of an unmistakable demonstration of the contentions that were likely to arise between those who desired to maintain the constitution to which the king had sworn, and the party—a minority in the Assembly, but overpowering in the clubs—who sought the abolition of the monarchy, or the deposition of the existing monarch. In the popular temper the hatred of royalty was displayed during the five days of the king's absence from Paris, by pulling down the signs over the shops that indicated the patronage of the Court. "Roi" was no longer a name to attract customers. There was in Paris an Englishman who had become hateful at home as the expounder of "The Rights

\* Trail to Rómilly, June 27.

† Thiers—"Histoire de la Revolution," livre iv.

of Man." Thomas Paine—a staymaker of Thetford in Norfolk, afterwards an exciseman; then a settler in America, who stimulated the revolt of the colonies by his writings; an agent of the Congress, employed in France towards the close of the war; a man of various talents, a powerful but coarse writer, an ingenious mechanic—was, in June, 1791, the guest of Condorcet, the philosophical patrician, who had become an ardent republican. After the peace Paine had been received with some respect in England, and even Burke admitted him to a sort of intimacy. But he hated his native country, and its institutions. Intensely vain, he believed that his writings had produced the American Republic; and he fancied, that his mission was to establish a republic in France. He asserted that, if he had the power, he would destroy all the books in existence which only propagated error, and would re-construct a new system of ideas and principles, with his own "Rights of Man" as its foundation.\* In the week of the flight of Louis, Paine wrote in English a proclamation to the French nation, which, being translated, was affixed to all the walls of Paris. It was an invitation to the people to profit by existing circumstances, and establish a Republic. Dumont perhaps ascribes too much to the influence of such a production, when he says that the audacious hand of Paine sowed the seed which germinated in many heads.† Many persons of condition, Condorcet amongst the number, were of opinion that the moment when the king had forfeited the confidence of the nation was favourable to the establishment of a republic. A majority of the Assembly were resolved that the disloyalty which had been increased so fearfully by the king's attempt to leave Paris, if not France, should not interfere with the establishment of the Constitution. This had now, after a long process, been elaborated into a complete digest of all the principles which were held to be necessary for the happy existence of a form of government so just and so harmonious, that it would command the obedience and admiration of all who were to administer it and of all who were to live under it. Dumont has described this constitution as in truth a monster:—"It had too much of a republic for a monarchy, and too much of a monarchy for a republic. The king was a *hors d'œuvre*"—a somewhat superfluous dish, such as the anchovy served between the soup and the meat. The populace did not comprehend these refinements; and so, as we have mentioned, on the 17th of July, the mobs of St. Antoine filled the Champ de Mars, signing petitions for the deposition of the king; and the once popular mayor hoisted the red flag, and dispersed

\* Dumont—"Souvenirs," p. 231. † *Ibid.*, p. 226.

them by sword and bullet. Bailly, La Fayette, and a majority of the Assembly, began to fear the Jacobins more than they feared the royalists. They began to see that, by the popular outrages, and the restraints which had been imposed upon the king, he had been driven to despair. They wished to retrace their steps; to make the sovereign a real power in the state, instead of a puppet. They found that it was easier to destroy than to re-establish. The popularity which they had acquired as destructives was lost when they began to be conservatives. The forms were, however, to be gone through to establish the anomalous Constitution. On the 5th of August, the multifarious document was presented to the Assembly by a committee, who had been for many months engaged in classifying and revising the various decrees which had been promulgated. On the 3rd of September it was presented to the king by sixty members of the Assembly; and on the 14th, Louis declared his solemn acceptance of what he considered, and not unjustly, his humiliation. "*Vive le Roi*" was again heard in the streets. The Assembly is to be dissolved on the 30th of September, and a new body of representatives, whose elections have been going on throughout all France, is to meet on the 1st of October, and to be called the Legislative Assembly. Seven hundred and forty-five members are to be chosen by primary assemblies, themselves chosen by every man of twenty-five years of age in every canton, who had paid direct taxes equal to three days' labour. The electors of the deputies were to be the possessors of a certain income, or the renters of a house of a certain value. No member of the first Assembly was eligible to be elected for the second. No member of the Legislative Assembly was allowed to be a functionary of the Executive Government. The sittings of the Assembly were to be permanent, leaving no power to the king to convoke the body, or to prorogue it. And so some of the best and most moderate men who formed the first States-General, are to be replaced by men of provincial reputation, chiefly of the legal profession; and the violent men of the old Assembly are to find fit exercise for their powers in the Jacobin clubs.

The Legislative Assembly quickly arranged into two defined parties—the right side (*côté droit*) and the left side (*côté gauche*), with a fluctuating body known as the centre. The *côté droit* comprised the supporters of the Constitution, whose opinions were generally those of the middle classes, and were represented in the Club of the Feuillans. The Girondins, or deputies from the department of Gironde, of whom Vergniaud was the most eloquent, Brissot and Condorcet, two of the Paris deputies, were the t

of the more moderate of the *côté gauche*. The extreme men of this left side were in intimate connection with the Jacobin Club, and the Club of the Cordeliers; and the mobs of Paris were consequently at their command. Robespierre was the presiding spirit of the Jacobins, as Danton was of the Cordeliers. The extreme men of the Assembly were called the Mountain, from their seats on the topmost benches of the *côté gauche*. There is a Municipality, too, in Paris, which has more active power, for good or evil, than the Assembly. At the elections of November, Pétion has been chosen mayor of Paris, in preference to La Fayette; and in that common council, where there is much haranguing, Danton is a leading speaker. But the Mother-Society of Friends of the People, sitting in the old Hall of the Jacobins, with all the appliances of a parliament—president, secretaries, a tribune for fiery speakers, and large galleries for excited men and women—this terrible Society, with its branch Societies in every town and village of France, “forms,” to use those words of La Fayette which he spoke too late, “a distinct corporation in the middle of the French people, whose power it usurps in subjugating its representatives.” Robespierre moved and carried the self-denying ordinance of the first Assembly, which prevented its members being re-elected, that he might dominate in another place over thousands of fanatical worshippers of first principles of liberty and equality, who would risk any perils of anarchy and bloodshed for an idea, as he was ready to do out of the purest and most disinterested benevolence.

When the Legislative Assembly met on the 1st of October, a puerile contest, but not without its significance, ensued between the Constitutionals and the Republicans. The king should not be addressed as “Sire,” or as “Majesty,” contended one party; he should not sit in a gilded chair; the members should not be uncovered in his presence. Louis felt that it was intended to affront him, and he determined that the Assembly should be opened by his ministers. The republican spirit became moderated, and the constitutionalists became more assured, for the National Guard intimated their resolve that the revolution should go no further. On the 7th of October the king proceeded to the Assembly, and delivered a speech which seemed to give him back the loyalty which he had lost. There must be harmony, he said, between the king and the legislative body; that thus the property and the creed of every man would be protected, and no one would have a pretence for staying away from a country in which the laws should be faithfully executed and the rights of all respected. Confidence returned to the king and queen; and they thought their calamities were over when they

went that night to the Opera, and were received with unwonted shout, and even with the tears of those who were melted at seeing a mother, so long wretched, apparently at ease and happy as her little boy sat on her lap, and looked upon the people without fear.

In this autumn of 1791, whatever might be the apprehensions amongst a portion of the British nation of the progress of French doctrines, the prime-minister preserved an imperturbable serenity, which he appears to have communicated to the inferior members of the government. The editor of the “Diaries and Letters” of the Secretary of the Treasury, says, “It is a remarkable feature of this correspondence, that while the revolutionary mania in Paris was disclosing its horrors and crimes more and more, we look in vain to these letters [those of Rose and Pitt] for any intimation of what was going on. There is not a symptom of alarm or indignation, or even astonishment; both writers seem to be wholly intent upon the interior administration of the country, in a calm and undisturbed atmosphere.”\* Lord Sidmouth, in his old age, was fond of relating an anecdote of the period when, as Mr. Addington, he was Speaker of the House of Commons. In September, 1791, Pitt, for the first time, invited Burke to dine with him; Lord Grenville and Addington were the only other guests in Downing Street. “After dinner, Burke was earnestly representing the danger which threatened the country from the contagion of French principles, when Pitt said, ‘Never fear, Mr. Burke; depend on it we shall go on as we are till the day of judgment:’—‘Very likely, sir,’ replied Burke, ‘it is the day of no judgment that I am afraid of.’† The internal condition of Great Britain was so essentially prosperous, and the abuses which required a reform were so limited in comparison of the evils that in France demanded a revolution, that Mr. Pitt might well have looked without serious alarm upon the clubs that sympathised with the French Assembly, and upon writers that attempted to spread the doctrines of the Jacobins. Neither would a peace-loving minister, who was at heart a friend to liberty, take any part with the despotic sovereigns of the continent, or with the emigrant princes who were dreaming of conquering and avenging the Revolution. On the 24th of August, the emperor of Germany and the king of Prussia had met at the Château de Pilnitz, the summer residence of the elector of Saxony, who was their host. The count d’Artois arrived, to urge the intervention of these sovereigns to rescue his brother, the king of France, out of the hands of rebellious subjects: and especially sought to move the emperor

\* “Diaries, &c., of the Right Hon. George Rose,” vol. i. p. 109.

† “Life of Lord Sidmouth,” vol. i. p. 72.

in the cause of that emperor's sister, the humiliated queen. Out of these interviews came the famous declaration of Pilnitz, which appealed to the other European powers to make common cause with the emperor and the king of Prussia, and to employ, conjointly with them, "the most efficacious means, proportioned to their forces for enabling the king of France to strengthen, with the most perfect liberty, the basis of a monarchical government, equally conformable to the rights of sovereigns and the welfare of the French nation." The German courts were not agreed upon that policy of armed intervention which was thus timidly threatened. Prussia was reluctant to adopt the warlike views of Austria. Catherine of Russia and Gustavus of Sweden agreed to raise an army, which Spain was to subsidize; and they sent plenipotentiaries to the emigrant princes at Coblenz. Mr. Pitt wisely kept aloof from counsels in which the timid and the rash appeared equally likely to precipitate a war of opinions. He maintained the truly elevated position of the minister of a country enjoying its own constitutional liberty, which could neither sympathize with the regal despotism that would crush all freedom, nor with the popular violence that would overthrow all order.

There can be no doubt that, about the close of 1790, the king of France was in correspondence with foreign courts, either directly or through the emigrant princes and nobles. But in 1791, after his solemn acceptance of the Constitution, brought about by his conviction that his escape from the nets in which he was bound was impossible, he, apparently with sincerity, earnestly desired the emigrants to disarm. His injunctions were treated with contempt, as coming from a prince under duress. The Declaration of Pilnitz had raised a violent spirit of indignation amongst nearly every class and every party of Frenchmen, against the threat of any interference with their domestic concerns. For a short time the Constitution and the Monarchy seemed capable of being worked together; but the delusion soon came to an end. The king has an absolute veto according to the Constitution. The orators of the Palais Royal and the mobs of the street knew very early in the revolution what Veto meant. Mirabeau advocated the Veto. His carriage stopped at a bookseller's door, and a crowd surrounded it, crying out to the great orator, "You are the father of the people—you might save us—if the king has the Veto we have no need of the National Assembly—we are slaves."\* On the 9th of November the Legislative Assembly decrees that all emigrants shall be "suspect of conspiracy,"

\* Dumont—"Souvenirs," p. 108.

that is, that they shall be outlawed unless they return before the following new year's day; that the revenues of the absent French princes should be sequestered; that priests who would not take the oaths should forfeit their pensions, and sustain other penalties. The king to these decrees ought to apply his Veto, say the friends of the monarchy. The king's ministers and the Assembly argue these matters with fluent pertinacity. The time will come when this question will be settled by a force stronger than words. The king now feels strong enough to refuse his consent to these decrees in their entirety.

Whilst some of the leading emigrants of rank were gathered round the French princes at Coblenz, a large number of the nobility, and of the higher orders of clergy, were living in obscurity in England, many in very painful poverty. The grave-stones in some of the suburban churchyards of London used to present the memorials of many a great family who found obscure resting-places in the foreign land which had afforded them the means of a humble existence. In 1791, even after the unsuccessful flight to Varennes, many of these emigrants had still hope and confidence. Charles Butler, in August of that year, having called on Burke, saw him surrounded, as he usually was at that time, by many of the French nobility, and discoursing eloquently on the horrors of the Revolution. One of his hearers interrupted him with the ill-timed question, "But when shall we return to France?" "Never," was the reply; "False hopes," continued the orator, "are not the money that I keep in my drawer." "*Coquins!*" exclaimed one. "Yes," said Burke, "they are *coquins*, but they are the most terrible *coquins* that the world has known."\*

In the winter of 1791-2, M. de Talleyrand visited London, to make his observations upon the temper of British statesmen, and to dispose the ministry to regard the French Constitution without alarm. According to the self-denying decree of the National Assembly, he was restrained from holding office. But he was no less the agent of the French government. The British cabinet had appeared decided not to depart from its neutrality in the event of war, but it manifested no sympathy with the new order of things. Talleyrand, according to Dumont, who was in his confidence during this visit to England, had a long conference with Lord Grenville; but the Secretary of State was dry and laconic. Talleyrand had known Mr. Pitt, who, when he was in France in 1783, was a guest at the house of Talleyrand's uncle, the archbishop of Rheims; but

† Butler's "Reminiscences"—*Coquin* has a comprehensive application to roguery and beggary.

Mr. Pitt made no allusion to his former acquaintance. Talleyrand went to Court. The king paid him little attention, and the queen turned her back upon him. Talleyrand, in spite of the charms of his conversation, did not find a ready admission to the highest society of London; although he had special introductions to Lord Lansdown and other leading Whigs. Amidst the reserve of the ministry and the neglect of the court, Talleyrand could expect little success from his irregular mission. He returned to Paris at the beginning of March.

At this period of Talleyrand's return from London, the Girondin party, as we shall have to relate in the next chapter, had acceded to power, with Dumouriez as minister for foreign affairs. It was then determined to send an embassy to London. The difficulty with regard to Talleyrand was still an obstacle to his appointment as plenipotentiary. The title was given to M. Chauvelin, a young negotiator; the power was with Talleyrand, who formed part of a numerous suite that accompanied the ambassador. The party left Paris in two carriages in a fine spring season; several, such as Talleyrand and Dumont, familiar with England; the greater number eager to gratify their curiosity in an unknown country. Garat, a man of letters, who afterwards acquired a hateful distinction as minister of justice, was one of the most agreeable of this large company. The impressions of England made upon this man, who desired the reputation of a philanthropist, and became the apologist of massacre, are pleasantly described. When they arrived at Dover, Garat mounted the imperial of the carriage, with Dumont at his side. He adjusted his eye-glass, and exhibited as much excited curiosity as if they had arrived in the moon. He made the most amusing exclamations, upon the small cottages, the small gardens, the neatness that reigned throughout, the beauty of the children, the modest air of the female peasantry, the decent dress of the country people;—in a word, this scene of ease and prosperity, which contrasted so strongly with the misery and the rags which they had just seen in the people of Picardy, struck Garat in a singular manner: "Ah, what a pity, what a pity," he exclaimed, "if they set about to revolutionize this fine country! When will France be as happy as England?"\* The man of letters, who was preparing to write the history of the French Revolution, might have considered that the comparative happiness of the English peasantry would render such attempt at revolutionizing altogether vain. One of the great causes of the Revolution did not here exist—the feudal privileges which had long made the

\* "Souvenirs," p. 298.

people slaves, and in revenge of which they became savages—the crushing despotism of a government of centralization, which stood in the way of all social improvement. The embassy of Chauvelin and Talleyrand was established in London; but it was coldly received by the court, and almost injuriously by the public. Its members were attacked by the ministerial newspapers, and they committed the imprudence of assiduously cultivating the society of the Opposition. The official communications of the embassy and the Secretary of State were not of a very agreeable character. Their public reception was anything but flattering. Talleyrand and Chauvelin went to Ranelagh, Dumont being of the party, with five or six others of the ambassador's suite. They saw that they attracted the attention of the gay crowd; but that regard was not complimentary; for as they moved round the ring a free passage was made for them, right and left, as if the people feared to breathe an atmosphere of contagion. They also saw the duke of Orleans walking alone, shunned even in a more especial manner. Nevertheless, at this period the British government was anxious to preserve its neutrality in the affairs of France: it was cold, but it was not hostile.

The Parliament of Great Britain was opened on the 31st of January, 1792. The king's speech was not a speech of alarm, but of unbounded confidence. It declared that the general state of affairs in Europe appeared to promise to his majesty's subjects a continuance of their present tranquillity. "Under these circumstances," said the king, "I am induced to think that some immediate reduction may safely be made in our naval and military establishments." The speech also announced "a continual and progressive improvement in the internal situation of the country." The private correspondence of members of the government clearly shows that the expectation of continued peace, and the boast of internal prosperity, were not used as devices to keep up the spirits of the nation. "Everything looks like peace, on the side of France," writes Lord Grenville in January. "There certainly are some in France who wish the war, but very many more who fear it; and the ruin of the finances is approaching with very rapid strides indeed. What a contrast we shall make with them, when I come to state to you the particulars."\* The finances of England and France were scarcely capable of being compared. The disturbance of the ordinary laws of exchange produced by the issue of Assignats in 1790—which paper-money was based on the security of the Church Lands remaining unsold—had rendered the financial

\* "Court and Cabinets of George III.," vol. ii. p. 201.