

which no quarter was given on either side. The harassed fugitives again tried to repass the Loire, reduced in number to ten thousand survivors. The final destruction of "the Catholic army" soon closed that first great struggle of the Vendéans. The brave Henri de la Rochejaquelein was killed. The horrible proceedings of the Jacobin Proconsul Carrier at Nantes—his *noyades*, in which boat-loads of victims were sunk daily by this exulting ruffian,—these formed the climax of the horrors of the royalist war. The details of these tragedies are heart-sickening. "Cruel is the panther of the woods, the she bear bereaved of her whelps; but there is in man a hatred crueller than that." *

Whilst all these struggles in La Vendée, heroic but hopeless, were proceeding during that eventful year, the British government having twice been in communication with the royalists, at length roused itself to make an effort for their assistance. At the moment when the Vendéans had re-crossed the Loire, unable to maintain their position in Brittany, an expedition under the command of lord Moira, with eight English battalions and ten thousand Hanoverians and emigrants, was dispatched to their assistance. There was no signal from the shore. The help had come too late.

* Carlyle, book v., chap.

CHAPTER II.

The Reign of Terror in France.—Sentence upon Muir and Palmer in Scotland.—Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act.—Trials for High-treason of Hardy, Tooke, and Thelwall.—Invasion threatened.—National Defence.—State of the Navy.—Howe's Naval Victory of the first of June.—French decree of No Quarter for Englishmen and Hanoverians.—Jacobinism recognizes the Supreme Being.—The Fall of Robespierre.—Rottenness of the Coalition against France.—Successes of the French.—Recall of the Duke of York from the command of the British forces.—Holland lost.—Remnant of the British army leaves the Continent.—Poland finally enslaved when Kosciusko fell.—Corsica.—Siege of Bastia.

ON the opening of the Session of Parliament in January, 1794, the earl of Mornington (afterwards Marquis Wellesley) delivered a most remarkable speech, in which he traced the whole course of the French Revolution, contending that it was impossible to make peace with those who directed the government of France. His eloquent peroration was in some degree prophetic of the vicissitudes that the then possessors of revolutionary authority might be expected to undergo. Would a great nation rely upon her own sword, or entrust the whole frame of her laws, her liberties, and her religion, "to whatever may be the accidental caprice of any new band of malefactors, who, in the last convulsions of their exhausted country, may be destined to drag the present tyrants to their own scaffolds, to seize their lawless power, to emulate the depravity of their example, and to rival the enormity of their crimes?" * Assuredly the Revolution was then steadily pursuing the process of "eating its own children." The Girondins had all vanished—some by the scaffold, some by starvation, some by poison. Other chiefs of rival factions were about to follow. On the 24th of March, the Hébertistes were guillotined. On the 3rd of April, the Dantonists were guillotined. Hébert,—the most filthy of writers, the most violent of insurrectionists,—and a strange assortment of his disciples, were condemned for their love of blood. Danton, and Camille Desmoulins, who had grown sick of revolutionary horrors, stood equally in the way of Robespierre, and were condemned for their moderation. The Notabilities of the Revolution fall in quick succession; but the guillotine knows no distinction of

* "Parliamentary History," vol. xxx. col. 1213.

persons. It sweeps all opinions into its sack. It takes without any nicety of selection the widow of Hébert; the widow of Camille Desmoulins; the princess Elizabeth, the admirable sister of Louis; the duchess de Grammont, and the duchess du Chatelet;—famous members of the Constituent Assembly, D'Espremeni, Chapelier, and Thourot;—Malesherbes, the generous defender of the king, with his daughter and grand-daughter. For republicans and royalists, for rich and poor, for either sex, for bedridden fourscore, and for blooming sixteen, the Revolutionary Tribunal has its infallible prescription. The prisons of Paris are full—not of violators of the laws for the protection of person and property, but of *suspects*. The prisons must be emptied. In these pleasant months of April and May, when the orange blossoms are smelling sweetly in the Tuileries gardens, the dread machine is doing its daily work upon batches of a dozen or a score; and women sit upon its steps and knit—the “Tricoteuses of Robespierre” who were paid to assist in the “National fêtes,”—the priestesses of the sacrifices, during those two months, of five hundred and twenty-seven select victims out of seven thousand prisoners.

These things were not done in a corner. Englishmen heard and read of the atrocities of the Reign of Terror—probably presented to them with some exaggeration. At this season the English government chose to believe that revolutionary principles had an especial attraction for some portion of the people of this country. Obscure quarters of London were swarming with emigrant nobility and clergy—learning to labour at some calling, or earning their bread by teaching their language. Delicately nurtured women were mantua-makers in garrets in the dingy regions of St. Pancras. There might be a few stern believers in equality who would rejoice to see the great ones of the earth humbled in the dust; but even these might have been softened in beholding how cheerfully adversity was borne,—in many cases how piously. What Englishmen heard of the course of Revolution abroad—its murders, its confiscations, its interruptions of all industry, its conscriptions;—what they saw of the privations and humiliations of those who had taken refuge where they might at least be safe from lawless violence—these things were not calculated to make them desirous of such organic changes as would substitute a sanguinary Despotism for a limited Monarchy, a National Convention for a House of Commons, and a Revolutionary Tribunal for a British Jury. Nevertheless, this was the dreaded danger, to proclaim which Burke first rang his alarm-bell. According to the belief of the great parliamentary majority, the advocates of Reform were the high-priests of Anarchy.

Pitt did not hold such extreme views. He said, as he had a right to say, that it was a dangerous time for any constitutional change. But he was carried along with the current; and he practically identified himself with the passions of the time, when he sanctioned the arbitrary attempts to punish Reformers as conspirators.

The disposition of the British government was exhibited in a very striking manner in the parliamentary proceedings arising out of the sentences passed by the Courts of Scotland upon Thomas Muir, and Thomas Fyssh Palmer. We are told by the biographer of lord Eldon that “the revolutionary poison, distributed by the French republicans, had now begun to operate extensively. A time therefore was considered by the government to have arrived, when the safety of the State required prosecutions, which should involve heavier consequences than those attaching under the English law to mere sedition. The first experiments were made in Scotland.”* These first experiments were certainly not greatly to the honour of those who, in the sister kingdom, contrived to inflict the punishment of fourteen years transportation upon Muir, a young advocate at the Scotch bar, and seven years transportation upon Palmer, an English clergyman, for an offence which in England would have amounted only to a misdemeanour, if a jury could have been found in England to convict the accused. They were agitators for Reform in the representation of the people. The lord justice clerk Braxfield summed up violently against Muir; and, says lord Campbell, “hardly attempted to conceal that the *corpus delicti* was the advocacy of Parliamentary Reform.” This specimen of a past time asked, what right had the rabble, who had been petitioning Parliament, to representation? The landed interest alone has a right to be represented. In passing sentence upon Muir it was proclaimed that by the Roman law, which is held to be the Scotch Common Law, transportation was amongst the mildest of penalties; that death was the proper punishment of sedition—death by the gallows or by exposure to wild beasts, as the merciful judge set forth in Latin quotations. In a most learned and able speech in the House of Commons, where these arbitrary proceedings formed the subject of several debates, Mr. Adam maintained that the offence with which these persons were charged in their indictments was what the law of Scotland termed Leasing-making; that is, uttering words, or publishing matter, tending to breed discord between the king and his people; and that the punishment of transportation could not, by the same law, be inflicted for the crime of Leasing-making. The lord advocate contended that he had indicted them

* Twiss—“Life of lord Eldon,” vol. i. p. 230.

under the Common Law, and that the judges in Scotland had a discretionary power of punishing by transportation what in England was known as Sedition. This law officer had the indiscretion to say that, Mr. Adam having talked of assimilating the law of Scotland to the law of England, and of calling the attention of the Scotch judges to the milder punishments of England for the same offence, "he saw no reason for this; on the contrary he saw many strong reasons for bringing the law of England up to that of Scotland." The indignation of Mr. Fox was withering. "If that day should ever arrive which the lord advocate seems so anxiously to wish for—if the tyrannical laws of Scotland should ever be introduced in opposition to the humane laws of England, it would then be high time for my honourable friends and myself to settle our affairs, and retire to some happier clime, where we might at least enjoy those rights which are given to man, and which his nature tells him he has a right to demand." Mr. Pitt had on this occasion, as in many other instances, to endure the reproach of departing from the principles he once professed, in now sanctioning the execution of the sentences upon these men; "whose offence," said Mr. Adam, "might perhaps be traced to the doctrines formerly inculcated by some of those who now held distinguished situations in the Cabinet." *

On the 12th of May a Message from the king was delivered to the House of Commons by Mr. Secretary Dundas, in which it was stated that upon information of seditious practices carried on by certain Societies in London, their books and papers had been seized; and that his majesty had ordered them to be laid before the House. A Committee of Secresy was appointed by ballot to examine these papers, and on the 16th they presented their first Report. The Societies whose papers were thus examined were "The Society for Constitutional Information" and "The London Corresponding Society." † On the presentation of the Report, Mr. Pitt dwelt upon the various allegations of the Committee; and particularly upon their conclusion that a Convention was contemplated, which might take upon itself the character of a general representative of the people; a Convention evidently designed, said Mr. Pitt, "to exercise legislative and judicial capacities, to overturn the established system of government, and wrest from the Parliament that power which the people and the constitution had lodged in their hands." He then moved "That leave be given to bring in a Bill to empower his majesty to secure and detain such persons as his majesty shall suspect are conspiring against his per-

* "Parliamentary History," vol. xxx. col. 1490 to 1576. † See *ante*, vol. vi. p. 563.

son and government." The proposed measure was a Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act; * and its necessity was grounded upon the recital of the Bill, "that a treacherous and detestable conspiracy had been formed for subverting the existing laws and constitution, and for introducing the system of anarchy and confusion which had lately prevailed in France." It was opposed strenuously by the usual small minority, but was rapidly carried through the Commons; and was passed at three o'clock on Sunday morning, the 18th. On the 23rd it passed the House of Lords. On the 19th, after examinations before the Privy Council, six persons were committed to the Tower, charged with high-treason; amongst whom were the Rev. Jeremiah Joyce, private secretary to earl Stanhope, Horne Tooke, and John Thelwall. The State Trials arising out of these arrests, and of the arrests of others also charged with the highest offence known to the law, are amongst the most interesting proceedings in our constitutional history. Five months were employed by the government in preparation for the arraignment of thirteen persons to be charged with "compassing the death of our Lord the King." This resort to the law of Constructive Treason can scarcely now find a defender, except a remnant be left of the alarmists who regarded the long struggle against popular rights as the saving of the monarchy. Most men agree with the eminent lawyer who now holds the highest office under the Crown, that if the ministerial measure had succeeded, "all political agitation must have been extinguished in England; as there would have been a precedent for holding that the effort to carry a measure by influencing public opinion through the means openly resorted to in our days is a compassing of the death of the sovereign. The only chance of escaping servitude would have been civil war." †

The Grand Jury of Middlesex having found an indictment against twelve persons for high-treason, and a Special Commission having been appointed for their trials, this memorable proceeding commenced at the Session House in the Old Bailey, on the 28th of October, with the trial of Thomas Hardy. One who was amongst the twelve accused has described this crisis with some pomp of words which sounds like exaggeration, but which is scarcely an overstrained estimate of the popular feeling. Thomas Holcroft says, "Perhaps this country never witnessed a moment more portentous. The hearts and countenances of men seemed pregnant with doubt and terror. They waited, in something like a stupor of amazement, for the fearful sentence on which their de-

* See Vol. IV. p. 344.

† Lord Campbell—"Lives of the Lord Chancellors," vol. vi. p. 470.

liverance or their destruction seemed to depend. Never surely was the public mind more profoundly agitated. The whole power of government was directed against Thomas Hardy; in his fate seemed involved the fate of the nation.* Erskine and Gibbs were assigned as counsel for the prisoner. Sir John Scott, Attorney-General, opened the case for the prosecution in a speech of nine hours. He maintained that the evidence would establish the fact of a conspiracy to depose the king, which, in point of law, is an overt act of compassing his death; that this overt act was included in the still wider design of subverting the entire monarchy, and substituting a commonwealth, which was the real object aimed at, under colour of a full and fair representation of the people; that the Convention which the persons thus charged conspired to establish, was a Convention to alter the whole form of the sovereign power of this country, by vesting in a body formed upon universal suffrage and the rights of man, all the legislative and executive government of the country; and, contemplating the destruction of the regal office in the constitution of the state, was an overt act of high treason. The evidence to establish this statement occupied five days, from an early hour of each morning till midnight. "In the annals of English criminal jurisprudence there had not yet been an instance of a trial for high treason that had not been finished in a single day," says lord Campbell. This evidence embraced copious extracts of the voluminous publications issued by the reforming Societies—resolutions and speeches all over the country—toasts at public dinners—a vast variety of matters which Erskine, in his reply, described as not the peculiar transactions of the prisoners, but of immense bodies of the king's subjects in various parts of the kingdom, assembled without the smallest reserve. "Not a syllable have we heard read," said he, "in the week's imprisonment that we have suffered, that we had not all of us read for months and months before the prosecution was heard of." † This reply of the great advocate occupied seven hours in the delivery. No one, even at this distance of time, can read it without emotion; for assuredly in the whole compass of forensic eloquence is not to be found a nobler display of impressive reasoning, of constitutional learning, of earnestness in the assertion of the great principles of liberty, of fearlessness in the exposure of the tendencies towards arbitrary government. Men must then have acknowledged the force of the great truth which he uttered, as we now regard it from the historical point of view, when he said, "We are in a crisis of our affairs, which, putting justice out of the question,

* "Memoirs," vol. ii. p. 186.

† "Erskine's Speeches," vol. iii. p. 393.

calls in sound policy for the greatest prudence and moderation. At a time when other nations are disposed to subvert their establishments, let it be our wisdom to make the subject feel the practical benefits of our own: let us seek to bring good out of evil: the distracted inhabitants of the world will fly to us for sanctuary, driven out of their countries from the dreadful consequences of not attending to seasonable reforms in government,—victims to the folly of suffering corruptions to continue, till the whole fabric of society is dissolved and tumbles into ruin. Landing upon our shores, they will feel the blessing of security, and they will discover in what it consists: they will read this trial, and their hearts will palpitate at your decision: they will say to one another, and their voices will reach to the ends of the earth, May the constitution of England endure for ever—the sacred and yet remaining sanctuary for the oppressed." This confident anticipation of their verdict was not too bold. Although the House of Commons had made an *ex parte* declaration of guilt in the recital to the Act for suspending the Habeas Corpus—although "the protesting Commons was itself the accuser, and acted as a solicitor to prepare the very briefs for the prosecution"—the orator's belief was fully realised. After nine days close confinement, the jury returned a verdict of Not Guilty.

The advisers of the Crown now desperately resolved to cast the die for another chance of success. Upon the same charge, and with the same evidence, John Horne Tooke was arraigned. He took much of the conduct of the defence into his own hands, by cross-examining the witnesses for the prosecution. His coolness and readiness, his repartees and quaint questions, appeared to betoken a levity inconsistent with his serious position on a trial for life or death. But he had the discretion to leave the speech for his defence in the hands of Erskine. It was bolder and more confident than the speech for Hardy. Mr. Pitt was examined by Tooke as a witness for the defence; and he was subjected to a life-enduring mortification in having to say that he "did not recollect" having been present at a meeting of delegates previous to one of his motions in Parliament on the subject of Reform. There were others who did recollect. The trial of Tooke lasted three days. The jury, without retiring, returned a verdict of Not Guilty. A third prisoner was put to the bar. John Thelwall. He was also defended by Erskine; and the same verdict of Not Guilty was returned upon the third day. The service which Erskine rendered to his country, by his wonderful efforts on these trials,

* Speech on the Trial of Horne Tooke—"Erskine's Speeches," vol. iv. p. 7.

has been estimated by one of the most eminent of the orators of our own age: "If there be yet amongst us the power of freely discussing the acts of our rulers; if there be yet the privilege of meeting for the promotion of needful reforms; if he who desires wholesome changes in our Constitution be still recognized as a patriot, and not doomed to die the death of a traitor; let us acknowledge with gratitude that to this great man, under Heaven, we owe this felicity of the times."* Lord Campbell affirms that Lord Loughborough was a principal adviser of these trials; and he adds a remarkable anecdote: "To the credit of George III., when the whole subject was understood by him, he rejoiced in the acquittals, and laying all the blame on the Chancellor, he said, 'You have got us into the wrong box, my lord, you have got us into the wrong box. Constructive treason won't do, my lord, constructive treason won't do.'" †

A sagacious observer of the public temper of this period—one who had lost all his original enthusiasm for the French Revolution, and dreaded that the French would "preserve nothing of civilized life but its vices"—writes in October, "There are many persons here who wish a total overthrow of our constitution, and many more who desire great changes in it." Romilly thus separates the smaller class of republicans from the larger class of reformers. There was a far more numerous class than either of these—"the majority of the nation," who are "most ardent zealots for maintaining our constitution as it is, and disposed to think the reform of the most palpable abuse, which has been of long continuance, as a species of sacrilege." ‡ We may be sure, therefore, that to "the majority of the nation" the determination of the government to resist every species of innovation offered no ground for alarm or solicitude. They thought there were greater dangers than abridgment of public liberty. Nevertheless, the confiding Englishman who believed himself free, at a time when the political spy was everywhere dodging his footsteps, had no desire again to look upon heads on Temple Bar, and was not sorry when Hardy, the shoemaker, and Parson Horne, and Thelwall, the lecturer, and nine other men of various grades in society, returned to their homes. Whatever might have been the general apathy, this was, indeed, a period of real danger—a period in which the rashness of impracticable theorists, and the terrors of party lawgivers, might have

* Lord Brougham—"Statesmen."

† "Lives of the Lord Chancellors," vol. vi. p. 267. Lord Campbell has no reference to an authority for this anecdote.

‡ "Memoirs of Sir S. Romilly," Letter ciii.

plunged the country into a contest which would have ended in anarchy or despotism. But the quiescent state of the bulk of the people was their safety. The rallying cry of Liberty at the beginning of the reign of George III. was no longer heard; but the principle was not dead. There is a noble passage in Erskine's Speech for Hardy, the truth of which is as fresh now as on the day of its utterance, and whose value may even be better estimated at the present day, after the experience of the last quarter of a century: "In reviewing the history of this highly favoured island, it is most beautiful, and at the same time highly encouraging, to observe, by what an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances, under the superintendence of a benevolent Providence, the liberties of our country have been established. Amidst the convulsions arising from the maddest ambition and injustice, and whilst the State was alternately departing from its poise, on one side and on the other, the great rights of mankind were insensibly taking root and flourishing. Though sometimes monarchy threatened to lay them prostrate, though aristocracy occasionally undermined them, and democracy in her turn rashly trampled on them, yet they have ever come safely round at last. This awful and sublime contemplation should teach us to bear with one another, when our opinions do not quite coincide; extracting final harmony from the inevitable differences which ever did, and ever must, exist amongst men."*

From the commencement of the war, the spirit of Reform in England was abundantly neutralized by the spirit of Patriotism. The French government at the beginning of 1794 threatened invasion. The English government not only increased the regular forces, but advocated the formation of bodies of Volunteers in every county. On the 17th of April an Act was passed, "for encouraging and disciplining such corps, or companies of men, as shall voluntarily enrol themselves, for the defence of their counties, towns, or coasts, or for the general defence of the kingdom, during the present war." This arming of the people was principally confined to corps of yeomanry cavalry. Lord Grenville, writing to his brother, says, "I think the natural defence of this country against an enemy once landed, is by the immense irregular cavalry that might be collected, and formed round small bodies of disciplined horse. This, of course, does not exclude the necessity of some infantry to oppose the enemy in front." † Lord Grenville's notions of national defence seem to have been as crude as the plans

* "Erskine's Speeches," vol. iii. p. 347.

† "Court, &c., of George III." vol. ii. p. 255.

of the ministry for carrying on the war abroad. In the naval administration there was less to be deplored. A great writer has said, "The English navy no mismanagement could ruin. But during a long period whatever mismanagement could do was done."* A great naval commander, on the contrary, says of the period at which he first joined the service (June, 1793), "The energy of the government kept pace with the patriotism of the nation. That fearful system of naval jobbery,—which unhappily characterized the subsequent progress of the war, crowding the seas with worthless vessels, purchased into the service in exchange for borough influence,—had not as yet begun to thwart the unity of purpose and action."† A system different to that of the present time seems to have been then pursued. "Dockyards in those days were secondary objects. At Sheerness, the people lived like rabbits in a warren, in old hulks, hauled up high and dry; yet everything was well done, and the supervision perfect. . . . The service now seems to savour too much of the dockyard, and too little of the seaman. Formerly, both officers and men had to lend a hand in everything; and few were the operations which, unaided by artificers, they could not perfectly accomplish."‡ There was no false economy in the supply of means for manning the navy; although the want of men was sensibly felt. The number of 85,000 seamen and marines, voted by Parliament for the year, could only be obtained by the wretched system of impressment. Heavy guns, known as carronades, were being gradually introduced in a few ships of the line. Invention was busy in the arts of war as well as in those of peace. The French had invented the Telegraph; and they had applied the hitherto useless Balloon to observations of the nature of a country, and the position of an enemy. Steam-navigation for warlike purposes had even been dreamt of. Experiments upon the application of the steam-engine to the propulsion of mercantile vessels had been tried, at great cost, and with small results. It is stated that Fulton had, in 1793, submitted some drawings of an apparatus for steam-navigation to lord Stanhope. This ingenious nobleman, as ardent as a projector as he was violent as a politician, in 1794 believed in the immediate practicability of that extraordinary application of mechanical power which, half a century afterwards, was to revolutionize the entire system of naval warfare. He thus writes to Wilberforce: "I know, and in a few weeks shall prove, that ships of any size, and for certain reasons the larger the better, may be navigated in any narrow or

* Macaulay—"Life of Pitt."

† Earl of Dundonald—"Autobiography of a Seaman," vol. i. p. 53. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

other sea, without sails, though occasionally with, but so as to go without wind, and even directly against both wind and waves." The earl did construct such a paddle vessel, but its speed did not go beyond three miles an hour. Nevertheless, he saw with remarkable clearness the final results of what he terms a "stupendous fact;" that it would "render all the existing navies of the world—that is, military navies—no better than lumber. For what can ships do that are dependent upon wind and weather, against fleets wholly independent of either. Therefore the boasted superiority of the English navy is no more. We must have a new one."*

The old fashioned naval battles of the war of the French Revolution,—when adverse winds baffled many an attempt to bring an enemy to action; when admirals manœuvred for days to get the weather-gage, if they came in sight of their adversary; when "a short range was ever the chosen distance," †—these yard-arm to yard-arm contests may seem of inferior importance to those who may hereafter have to read of a great sea-fight between fleets of screw-steamers, armed with rifled-cannon whose range is estimated by miles. But they can never be without their interest to a nation whose "home is on the deep"—whose safety will be insecure when its young men read with indifference of the victories achieved by Howe, and Jervis, and Duncan, and Nelson. In the first years of these momentous wars, the signal triumphs of the British fleets were the counterbalance to the long series of disasters and mistakes in the employment of the British armies. The earliest in the series of great naval victories was that of earl Howe on the first of June. The veteran who had been a midshipman under Anson in 1740 was in command of the Channel fleet in 1794, waiting at Portsmouth for intelligence from his cruisers that the Brest fleet had put to sea. That fleet was declared by the French journalists to be the most formidable that had ever anchored in Brest harbour; and they proclaimed that "all burn with desire to fight the enemies of their country to the very banks of the Thames, and under the walls of London." The French Convention had sent its commissioner, Jean Bon St. André, to watch over the movements of its admiral, Villaret Joyeuse; and to remind the crews of a decree which he had himself proposed to the Convention, that every officer should be adjudged a traitor who struck his colours to a superior force, until his ship was in danger of sinking before the crew could be saved. Admiral Howe sailed from St. Helen's, on the 2nd of May, with thirty-four sail of the line, of which eight

* "Wilberforce Correspondence," vol. i. p. 109. † James's "Naval History."

were detached to protect two convoys of merchant vessels clear of the Channel. The French fleet had also to look out for a convoy expected to be returning from the United States and the West India Islands. With twenty-six sail of the line, and five frigates, lord Howe cruised for many days off Ushant, in foggy weather. At last it was ascertained that the Brest fleet had left the harbour. It was not descried till the 28th of May. In the number of line of battle ships the French were equal to the English; in size, and in the weight of metal and the number of men, they were superior. On the evening of the 28th there was a partial engagement, in which the English 74, the Audacious, was so shattered, as to be obliged to separate, and make for Plymouth; and the Revolutionnaire, a French ship of 110 guns, was towed into Rochefort, both ships having been separated from their respective fleets. There was much firing between the English van and the French rear on the following day. On the 30th and 31st inst., a heavy fog prevented any decisive movement. On the morning of the 1st of June, the sky was bright; and the French were seen under easy sail, in order of battle. Then began one of the most desperate actions in our maritime records. The close fighting lasted little more than an hour; when the French admiral, who had been engaged with Howe's own ship, the Queen Charlotte, crowded off, followed by all who could carry sail, leaving half his dismasted fleet behind him. French historians, not satisfied with the tribute which the British admiral paid to the "customary resolution" of his enemy,* detail this battle with the grossest exaggerations; and adopt the falsehoods long since exploded. "The French had only twenty-six ships; whilst their enemies had thirty-six," says Thiers.† He glances, without contradicting it, at the narrative which Carlyle describes as "the fable of Le Vengeur," ‡ which fable Lamartine boldly repeats. Surrounded by three enemy's ships, the historian of the Girondins says, she still fought. The English kept clear of her as of a body whose last convulsions might be dangerous. The crew carried the pride of the flag even to suicide *en masse*; obstinately refusing all quarter, waiting whilst the water, from minute to minute, was increasing in the hold, until they gradually submerged; continuing to fire, till the last gun was covered with the waves; and then going down with the ship amidst cries of *Vive la République*. The fable was exposed in 1802 by Mr. W. S. Rose; but it having been repeated by English writers, admiral

* Howe's Despatch, June 2.

† "Histoire de la Révolution," tom. vi. p. 78—ed. 1846—Paris.

‡ Carlyle, in 2d edit.

Griffiths came forward in 1838, to declare that the whole story was a ridiculous piece of nonsense; that at the moment when the Vengeur sank the action had ceased some time; that a hundred and twenty-seven of her crew were prisoners on board the Culloden (of which ship admiral Griffiths was then fourth lieutenant), besides about a hundred in the Alfred, the Vengeur having been taken possession of by the boats of those ships, and the British ensign hoisted. "Seven ships," says lord Howe in his despatch, "remained in our possession; one of which, however, sank before the adequate assistance could be given to her crew; but many were saved." Lamartine tells us that "the victorious shipwreck of the Vengeur became one of the popular songs of the country." The whole story was an invention of Barère. "It may be regarded as Barère's master-piece; the largest, most inspiring piece of *blague* manufactured, for some centuries, by any man or nation."* The French lost their seven ships of the line; but their convoy from America arrived safely in port. The battle of the first of June was useful to us beyond its immediate results. It gave confidence to the nation. But it was a lesson to our rulers not to believe too implicitly that at sea we were so infinitely superior to any enemy; that inexperienced captains and impressed crews were invincible. Seven ships were taken; but the others that had been dismasted were suffered to escape. It was afterwards said, that if Nelson had been in the place of Howe the probability is that the French would not have saved a single ship. The biographer of Howe, Sir John Barrow, asks "what could lord Nelson or any other commander effect, if his whole plan was deranged by the bad qualities of his ships, and the inexperience and incapacity of many of their commanders?" The Parliament and the people were satisfied with the results of the first of June. Mr. Dundas especially pointed out "the national humanity" that had been evinced in saving the lives of drowning enemies; and he said, "Let any man contrast this conduct with the decree of another nation, the object of which was that no quarter should be shown." † Five days before the first of June, the National Convention, upon the motion of Barère, had thus resolved: "The National Convention decrees that no Englishman or Hanoverian shall be made prisoner."

The system of terror, of the theory of which this odious decree was the exponent, was approaching its termination. Fortunately for the honour of the French soldiers the decree was for them only a theory. No respect was paid to the order of the Convention. The army of France in Holland must have been ashamed of

* Carlyle, in 2d edit.

† "Parliamentary History," June 13.

their government, when the duke of York, in his general orders of the 7th of June, announced this decree to the troops under him, reminding them that "mercy to the vanquished is the brightest gem in a soldier's character," and exhorting them "not to suffer their resentment to lead them to any precipitate act of cruelty, which may sully the reputation they have acquired in the world." He truly said, "in all the wars which from the earliest times have existed between the English and French nations, they have been accustomed to consider each other in the light of generous as well as brave enemies."* The system of terror was coming to an end. But in France it was not a theory as long as Robespierre was the real ruler of the unhappy country. In the months of June and July fifteen hundred and seven persons were condemned by the Revolutionary Tribunal, and were carted every day to the guillotine—every day, with the exception during these two months of five *décadi*, the *décadi* being the public holiday substituted for Sunday. In July, the *décadi* fell on the 8th; and the suspension for twenty-four hours of the work of blood was compensated by the execution of sixty-seven on the 7th, and sixty on the 9th. The work went on, although the Convention had deposed the Goddess of Reason and decreed "the existence of the Supreme Being." Robespierre, on the first *décadi* of June, the 8th, officiated as High Priest to this newly discovered Divinity of the Revolution. On that wonderful fête day, the sound of cannon summoned the people to the garden of the Tuileries. Beautiful processions of mothers with bouquets of roses, maidens with baskets of flowers, and of citizens with branches of oak, spoke of joy and love, such as should celebrate the festival of the Author of Nature! A mound has been raised, on which as many members of the Convention stand as can be crowded round four pasteboard mawkins, of hideous aspect, representing Atheism, Egotism, Discord, Ambition. Robespierre, in a sky-blue coat, takes a torch from the hand of David the painter, who prepared this Mystery, and he sets fire to the turpentine-anointed images. As they blaze and crumble into ashes a figure slowly rises out of the trap-door of the mound. It is the statue of Wisdom. Unhappily the face of Wisdom "appeared entirely blackened by the flame, which was regarded as a sinister omen."† Other processions succeeded; and the people sang a hymn to the Eternal, composed for the occasion; and there were discoursings and embracings most touching to hear and see. "The instrument of punishment had disappeared under a covering of rich

* "Annual Register," 1794—State Papers, p. 163.

† Louis Blanc, tom. x. p. 457.

hangings."* Two days after this festival, which was to be the herald of gladness for all the earth, it was decreed in the Convention that the Revolutionary Tribunal should be divided into four Tribunals, so as to do its work more expeditiously. The rich hangings were taken down. The "instrument of punishment" shows its face again without any false shame. The *Tricoteuses* again sit upon its steps; and the passing red-caps speak out the name of their faithful servant, with a gratitude that scorns the euphemism of modern republicans.

Robespierre, after this miserable extravaganza of the festival of the Supreme Being had been performed, kept aloof from the Convention and from the Committee of Public Safety. In his House of Lords, the Jacobin Club, he placed his chief reliance to carry him through the dangers that were gathering around him. During this term of his absence from the immediate direction of affairs, the guillotine was working at its most furious rate; and it has been surmised that he was therefore not directly responsible for the executions of that horrible period. His two ferocious colleagues, Couthon and St. Just, were in full activity, and were in constant communication with him. The triumvirate worked together, and happily they fell together. Other members of the Committee of Public Safety began to tremble for their own lives. Rumours were afloat that lists of the proscribed had been seen whose destruction was to prepare the way for the rule of a supreme Dictator, when he had dealt with the Convention *en coupe réglée*—as a forest marked out in patches to be cut down in succession. On the 26th of July Robespierre entered the hall of the Convention. The speech which he delivered from the tribune, calling, in the old terms, for vengeance upon traitors, was received with no applause; and a motion that the speech should be printed having been passed, was after a violent debate rescinded. It is decidedly a crisis. Robespierre in the evening seeks the solace of his Jacobin Club, where there is no mutiny; and his myrmidons shout for revolt against Convention and Committee of Public Safety. That night, members of the Convention begin to fear that they shall meet no more. But they do meet. Insurrection has not yet organized itself. St. Just begins to read a Report, Robespierre standing by. He is interrupted by many voices. Tallien draws a dagger, exclaiming "If the Convention dare not strike the tyrant, I dare." Loud rise the shouts of fury against the tyrant—against the Triumvirs. The President rings his bell in vain, whilst Robespierre cries, "Will you hear me, President of Assassins?" "Decree of Accusation"

* Louis Blanc, tom. x. p. 454.