

CHAPTER LVII.

CONDITION OF FRANCE AT THE END OF THE REIGN OF
LOUIS XV.

Spirit of Inquiry. — There had never been so earnest a desire for information of all sorts, or such boldness in venturing beyond the beaten tracks, as was exhibited in this century. Men had long consoled themselves for abuses by an epigram, and for crimes by a song. But now the public mind was becoming more serious, and consequently more formidable. In the presence of a royalty which took pleasure in degrading itself, of nobles "who seemed to be only the ghosts of their ancestors," and were unable any longer to produce generals, of a clergy among whom were no longer found either Bossuets or Fénelons, privileges were questioned, the titles of those powers formerly respected were investigated.

The principal work of royalty in modern society had been to establish territorial unity and governmental unity by the overthrow of feudalism. But conquered feudalism had left the land covered with ruins. Everywhere, in respect to both persons and things, there existed the most shocking inequalities and the strangest confusion.

Powers of the Government Ill-Defined. — The constitution not being a written one, everything depended upon customs. Royalty was, in theory, an absolute power; it was not always so in fact, for numerous interests, powers, traditions, and precedents formed an obstacle to it. No one's rights were defined. The ministers set violent hands upon justice when they would, as the parliaments did upon the law. A royal edict was valid only after having been registered by the parliaments, but the Council of State rendered *governmental decrees*, which dispensed with this formality. The clergy and the nobles had special tribunals; the Third Estate had public functions which it had bought, and, so far as the greater number of offices were concerned, the king was deprived of the right of calling the best and most capable men into the service of the State.

Bad Administrative Organization. — There were six ministers: the chancellor, head of the department of justice, but who had little more than a title when he was not also keeper of the seals; the comptroller-general of the finances, and the four secretaries of State, for the king's household, for war, for the navy, and for foreign affairs. These ministers presented a most singular confusion of functions. For instance, the governors and lieutenant-generals of provinces were not amenable to the minister of war, but the posts were amenable to him, and also Dauphiny and all the countries conquered since 1552. The minister of marine was at the same time minister of maritime commerce; he had under him the consulates, and the chamber of commerce at Marseilles, which of itself constituted a small ministry for the commerce of the Levant. The minister of foreign affairs regulated pensions, and administered the provinces of Guienne, Normandy, Champagne, Berry, etc. The minister of the king's household had charge of ecclesiastical affairs and *lettres de cachet*, of Languedoc, Paris, Provence, Brittany, Navarre, etc.; among the functions of the comptroller-general was the charge of bridges, hospitals, prisons, epidemics, domestic trade, and agriculture. Nevertheless unity appeared for a moment every fortnight in the *council of despatches*, at which the king and all the ministers were present, and in which important decisions were made. As for the administrative divisions, there were as many of them as there were difficult administrations. Their circumscriptions never agreed. One of the most deplorable principles of the administration was that of raising money by creating the most useless offices, which were of course permanently burdensome to the public.

Judicial Organization. — Thirteen parliaments and four provincial councils pronounced sovereign judgment in civil and criminal affairs; more than three hundred baillis' or seneschals' courts pronounced judgment in the first instance. The public prosecutor, unknown to the ancients, existed, but there was no justice of the peace, such as the Revolution instituted. The parliaments had very unequal jurisdictions. That of the Parliament of Paris covered two-fifths of France. Besides, there were military and commercial courts, and also seignorial, ecclesiastical, and municipal courts, and other courts of special jurisdiction. The chambers of accounts, the court of aids, and the court of

currencies judged all cases relative to taxes, currencies, and articles of gold and silver.

Rigor of the Penal Code. — The civil law confirmed much injustice, but the penal law commanded tortures before trial, and lavished with frightful indifference mutilations, death, and the most atrocious punishments, without allowing the accused an advocate to plead for him, without permitting contentious pleadings, without even requiring of the judge that he should give any reason for his decision. The slow and complicated proceedings, carried on in darkness and silence, sought less for truth than for a victim, and, regarding the prisoner as a criminal in advance, sometimes punished the innocent. For the same crime the peasant was punished much more severely than the noble. In vain had Voltaire made his eloquent protest against these deplorable judicial errors resound throughout France and throughout Europe; in vain had Beccaria's book expounded the true principles of criminal legislation; Parliament refused every reform. The magistracy, honest and enlightened, was much better than the law; but the law was such that it exposed to error the most conscientious judge, and caused the accused, however innocent, to tremble. Relics of mediævalism survived; the right of asylum existed even in Paris, in the enclosure of the Temple, and as late as 1718 the Parliament of Bordeaux had condemned a man to death for sorcery. The king still frequently pronounced sentence of imprisonment or exile without trial, and often without limit, and many trials were stopped or called up by the grand council.

Expensiveness of Justice; Diversity of Laws. — The magistrates, registrars, and officers of justice were not paid by the king, or else were poorly paid; consequently they secured their pay from the litigants at prices set by themselves. The proceedings were innumerable and endless, and the litigants were delivered over to the "robbery of justice." These exactions cost those suitors 40,000,000, or even 60,000,000 annually. The jurisdiction of the Parliament of Paris extended in certain directions as far as one hundred and fifty leagues from the capital — another cause of ruin to litigants constrained to attend.

Instead of a single law there were three hundred and four different *customs*, so that it happened that what was justice in one province was injustice in another; and each parliament had special regulations.

Absence of Public Credit; Maladministration of Finances. — France had no credit system, and still less with regard to the government than with regard to individuals. The most solemn promises having been violated a hundred times, the treasury obtained advances only by giving a pledge, and even with this disgraceful condition, it furthermore paid a usurious interest of twenty per cent. upon the advances of the farmers-general. The accounts were not made up until ten, twelve, and even fifteen years after the years to which they belonged, and were so unintelligible that no one, not even the minister, knew exactly what the State owed or what it ought to receive. Besides, since the time of Francis I., the public treasury had been confounded with the private treasury of the prince, so that the king helped himself freely from the common fund. Louis XIV. took in this way, in one year, 180,000,000, which were expended mostly in payment for his pleasures or to his courtiers. In 1769, after six years of peace, the expenses exceeded the revenue by 100,000,000, and certain revenues were used up ten years in advance.

Injurious Collection of the Public Taxes. — The taxes presented the strangest confusion. The government did not realize all its receipts. The indirect taxes were rented to companies of farmers of the revenue and to sixty farmers-general, who, on the one hand, made the treasury pay them a usurious interest, and on the other understood how to increase their own receipts from the people. A certain tax levied under Louis XV. was given up to them for 23,000,000; they obtained from it 40,000,000. Scandalous fortunes were made by the farmers; however, they were obliged to divide with the courtiers, assuring them of pensions or portions proportionate to their good offices. Great lords and great ladies received these degrading presents; Louis XIV. himself held out his hand for them. These farmers of the revenue had at their service a code so complicated that the tax-payers could not understand it, and so rigorous that, for the single offence of frauds in regard to salt, there were constantly seventeen hundred or eighteen hundred persons in the prisons, and more than three hundred in the galleys. The treasury was not more indulgent.

Defects of the Military Organization. — The requirements for the effective force in times of peace called for 170,000 men, of whom 131,000 were infantry, 31,000 cavalry, and

8000 for the king's household; but the real effective force did not amount to 140,000 men. There were not less than 60,000 officers in the active service or on the retired list. Commissions were sold even in the special services, and the purchasers could, without having seen any service, become general officers. The Duke of Bouillon was colonel at eleven years of age, the Duke of Fronsac at seven. In spite of the reforms of Choiseul there was much waste in the army, and a bad system of enlistment spoiled its composition. The regular army was recruited by voluntary enlistments, the militia by lot which designated ten thousand men each year who were compelled to serve six years. But the drawing of lots for the militia was marked by the most scandalous abuses; and if the volunteers made good soldiers, the recruiting-officers often sent to the regiments the dregs of the great cities; consequently there were annually four thousand desertions to foreign countries.

Ecclesiastical Administration. — The dioceses were very unequal: that of Rouen contained thirteen hundred and eighty-eight parishes; those of Toulon and Orange, twenty. The revenues were like the dioceses. The bishop of Strassburg had an income of five hundred thousand livres; the bishop of Gap, eight thousand. A large number of abbés had scarcely one thousand livres of revenue; that of Fécamp could expend one hundred and twenty thousand; that of St. Germain nearly three times as much. Many curacies were very rich; many vicars died of hunger. The king made appointments to all positions of any importance in the Church; the bishops, the chapters, and the lay lords appointed to the others. In a word, twelve thousand bishops, abbots, priors, and canons divided among them nearly a third of the revenues of the Church, more than 40,000,000 (present value 66,000,000): the remaining two-thirds sufficed for eight times as many priests and monks.

Differences of Condition between Persons and between Provinces. — The three orders of the State — clergy, nobility and plebeians — were distinguished by privileges or burdens which made of the French people three different nations, each having its hierarchy and its distinct classes. Thus, there was the greater and the lesser nobility, — the one living at court and upon the national budget, the other in the provinces and on its own meagre revenues; the upper and

lower clergy, — the former rich, the latter poor. Among the non-noble classes, fifty thousand families possessing hereditary offices of judicature formed a real aristocracy which did not mix with the financiers; the middle class scorned the artisan, and the peasant at the bottom of the ladder, in poverty and ignorance, bore angrily all the weight of a society which was crushing him. In the family itself there was inequality: the right of primogeniture left to the younger sons of noble houses only their swords or the Church, and to many daughters only the convent. Besides these three orders there were the serfs, the Protestants, who had no civil rights, and the Jews.

Some provinces, the *pays d'État*, such as Languedoc, Burgundy, Brittany, and Artois, still possessed a shadow of liberty in the management of their affairs; the others, *pays d'élection*, were under the absolute direction of the court; and the latter paid taxes that the former did not pay, or paid in a lesser proportion. Lorraine, the Trois-Évêchés and Alsace had no custom-houses between them and foreign lands. Others were surrounded by them on all sides. In 1789 there were still in existence in the South of France twelve hundred leagues of lines of internal custom-houses, and the same measure of salt could be bought in one place for six livres, and in another for sixty-two. The tax of the *twentieth* was less burdensome in Lorraine, Alsace, and Franche-Comté than in other provinces; Lorraine was not even subject to capitation tax; so that old France was burdened more heavily than the new France that she had conquered. And all this, without speaking of the privileges of localities, corporations, and persons.

Inequality with Regard to Public Functions. — Two classes of nobility divided between them all government positions. The "nobility of the sword" held all ranks of the army, the highest positions in the Church, and the chief offices of the court and of representation; the "nobility of the robe" held the offices of judicature and the offices of the higher administration. There remained for the plebeians only industry, commerce, and finance, by means of which, it is true, they could buy patents of nobility and become marquises, but they had to incur the taunts of those who had not thus risen to that rank, and the lasting scorn of those who had always possessed it.

Inequality of Taxation.—The nation paid at that time almost 900,000,000 livres.¹ The taxes were most unequally distributed. The clergy, who, besides the revenues of their immense property, received tithes of the productions of the land, paid little or nothing, but made "gratuitous donations." The nobility and the royal officers, except in some generalities, were not subject to the *taille*, or land tax; they were subject to the other direct taxes, *capitation* and the *twentieth* of the income, but a great number found means to gain entire or partial exemption. The common people, who possessed only a small portion of the soil of France, paid the whole *taille*, 91,000,000; the tithe, which was in one place the fortieth, and in another the fourth part of the gross product, and cost the agricultural portion of the inhabitants the sum of 133,000,000; the seigniorial dues, valued at 35,000,000 (without making any account of the many vexatious restrictions to which the peasants were subjected for the benefit of their lords), and the *corvées*, at 20,000,000. For the great roads, for example, of which many were constructed under Louis XV., the State undertook only the expense of laying them out and of the constructive designs; the materials and the labor were furnished by means of the *corvée*, or enforced services; so that these works, so profitable to the whole country, were executed at the expense and amidst the hatred of the people who lived along the route.

Servitude of Industry and Hindrances to Commerce.—Corporations, wardenships, and masterships hindered the progress of industry by limiting the number of patrons, and by allowing only those to work at a trade who had paid for the apprenticeship. Not he who desired to do so became a master, but he who could buy a mastership at a cost of three, four, and sometimes five thousand livres. And after having paid all that, he had not yet purchased the right to improve upon his industry, for an improvement was an infringement upon the rights of the corporation. The manufacturer of stuffs could not dye them, the dyer of thread had not the right to dye silk or wool, nor the hatter to sell hosiery. Bound by minute regulations, the manufacturers were liable

¹ France paid, in 1786, according to M. Bailly, inspector-general of finances, for the benefit of the king, 558,172,000 livres; for the benefit of the provinces, 41,448,000 livres; for the benefit of individuals, corporations, and communities, 280,395,000 livres: total, 880,015,000 livres.

to see their products destroyed by the police on account of an inadvertence or a modification in the work which would cause no injury to the buyer. There was now only one coinage,—that of the king; and since 1726 commerce was not hindered by changes of specie; but it was injured by the diversity of weights and measures, which differed in each city. The India Company had until 1770, by its commercial privileges, impeded the efforts of private merchants. It had just been abolished; but in domestic trade the merchant still had to fight against restrictions and injurious monopolies. For instance, at Rouen one company was appointed to provide the city with grain; another had the privilege of transporting wheat; a third, that of grinding them in the mills: the people were forbidden to supply themselves elsewhere. Grain was not even sold from one province to another; so that jobbers could at will create famine or plenty at certain places. Added to this, the internal custom-houses rendered commercial relations between the provinces as difficult as with foreign countries. In order to pass down the Saône and the Rhone from Gray to Arles, one had to stop and pay thirty times, so that on this route trade left in the hands of the toll-gatherers from twenty-five to thirty per cent of the value of the products transported. Nevertheless, the French colonies were so flourishing, and European industry so backward, that in spite of all this French commerce was prosperous.

Decline of Agriculture.—Nearly one-fifth of the land, having come permanently into the possession of the clergy, produced but little, because it was not subject to the action of personal interest; almost all the rest, cultivated by *métayers*, produced but little more. Lands in the possession of the peasants themselves were heavily burdened with rents. The number of heads of live-stock was small, four times less than at the present day; consequently the lands were impoverished for want of sufficient manuring. Few great proprietors farmed for themselves. "One could not count," said a writer of those times, "three hundred lords living upon their own estates." Vauban and Bois-Guilbert complained of the discredit attached to the position of a farmer. This contempt arose from the great poverty in which the peasants lived, ruined by taxation, the *corvées*, the restrictions put upon the trade in grain; and even more seriously by the seigniorial rights of maintaining warrens, dove-cots,

and of hunting, which were so many scourges for the fields of the poor. The fine roads constructed by Louis XIV. ran only between the great cities. The greater part of the present roadways in France do not go back more than eighty years, and in many provinces the roads under the royal care were impassable for eight months in the year.

Individual Liberty and Property Ill-Secured. — *Lettres de cachet* placed the one at the disposal of the ministers and their friends; the other was threatened by confiscation, by the arbitrary power with which the court was armed for the creation of fresh taxation, by a justice which was not always impartial, and by those "decrees of suspension" which exempted the great from paying their debts.

Malessherbes, president of the Court of Aids, said to the king, in those remonstrances still so celebrated: "So long as *lettres de cachet* are in force, Sire, no citizen can be sure that his liberty may not be sacrificed to revenge, for no one is great enough to be securely sheltered from the hatred of a minister, nor so small as to be beneath the notice of a clerk of the farmers-general."

Liberty of Conscience refused; Censorship of the Press. — The most severe regulations still remained in force against dissenters. In 1746 two hundred Protestants were condemned to the galleys or to confinement on account of their religious worship, by the Parliament of Grenoble alone; in 1762 the Parliament of Toulouse caused a pastor who had ministered in Languedoc to be hanged. The same magistrates broke on the wheel the Protestant Calas, accused of having killed his son, who, it was said, had desired to become a Catholic, and who in reality had committed suicide. Censorship was still in existence. There were in fact several censorships, that of the king, that of the Parliament, and that of the Sorbonne. The condemned book was sold at a higher price, and was circulated none the less; sometimes even under the protection of the ministers themselves. The law declared the penalties of branding, the galley, and death, against the authors or pedlars of writings hostile to religion or the State; some silly persons allowed themselves to be taken up; more frequently the administration shut its eyes; and this mixture of excessive severity and blind tolerance only increased public curiosity. Men took pains to inform themselves of the suppressions, in order to know what books they ought to read. This age was indeed the period in

which Abbé Galiani defined eloquence to be "the art of saying everything without going to the Bastille." Fréret was sent there for a dissertation on the Franks; Leprévost de Beaumont, secretary of the clergy, remained there twenty-one years, until 1789, for having denounced the "famine compact" to the Parliament.

General Misery. — Everything gives evidence of the frightful misery of the people. The peasants of Normandy lived in great part upon oats, and dressed in skins; in Beauce, the granary of Paris, the farmers begged during a part of the year; they were often obliged to make bread of ferns. In a large number of the provinces the use of meat was unknown. "For three-fourths of the population of France," says a writer about 1760, "the consumption of meat does not amount to more than a monthly average of a pound per head." Vauban estimated that there were in France not more than ten thousand families in comfortable circumstances. The amount of articles of food was two or three times less than now.

"One sees," said La Bruyère, "certain ferocious animals, male and female, scattered over the country, black, livid, and burned by the sun, attached to the land which they dig and work upon with incomprehensible obstinacy. They have an articulate voice, and when they rise on their feet they exhibit a human face; and in fact they are men. At night they retire to their dens, where they live upon black bread, water, and roots. They spare other men the trouble of sowing, cultivating, and gathering articles of food." The moralist is here a faithful historian.

Insufficiency of Schools, Charities, Hospitals, etc. — The rich could give their sons an excellent education; some of the children of the lower classes succeeded also, thanks to their characters and to circumstances, in being admitted among the chosen ones. But the instruction of the poor in the small schools was insufficient, and the general ignorance was a strong contrast to the refined education of the nobility. Hospitals were not lacking; Christian charity had multiplied them; but poor-relief was very limited, and bands of beggars were constantly seen going through the country districts and frightening the people of the towns. France had then about eight hundred civil hospitals, whose inmates numbered one hundred and ten thousand individuals, but the mortality among them was frightful. In the Hôtel

Dieu of Paris, the richest hospital in France, those sick of all kinds of diseases, not excepting contagious ones, were placed promiscuously in the same rooms, sometimes as many as five and six in the same bed.

Morals. — Never, since the period of the Roman Empire, had morality fallen so low; and this corruption was general. The scandals at the Trianon were repeated at Windsor, at Potsdam, and at the palace of the Hermitage. The nobility and a portion of the rich middle class rivalled the court.

To show the entire overthrow of moral ideas a single instance will suffice. One of the most estimable men of his time, the Marquis of Argenson, was not afraid to write, "marriage, that monstrous obligation, which will surely go out of fashion." He wished that this obligation should become "like a lease-contract which could be entered into in October and given up in January, free unions being much more favorable to the race." Marshal Saxe, the Duke of Richelieu, a thousand others, indeed every one among the higher classes, held the same opinion, or acted upon it.

Disparity between Ideas and Institutions. — The Middle Age, dead in the political world, was still alive in the social world. Hence an intense discord between the constituent elements of society. The ideas, the general manners of the day, were indeed those of the eighteenth century; but the customs and many of the institutions were still those of the thirteenth. From the moment when this difference was felt a revolution was near at hand, for new ideas necessarily call for new institutions.

Vauban, Bois-Guillebert, Fénelon, D'Argenson, Machault, Choiseul. — These ruinous abuses, these injurious inequalities, this great disorder and poverty, provoked criticism. Vauban and Bois-Guillebert had demanded reforms from an economic point of view; Fénelon, from a political one. During the Regency the liberty and even license of the mind corresponded to that of morals. A little later a future minister, the Marquis of Argenson, in his *Considérations sur le Gouvernement de la France*, written before 1739, demanded local decentralization, municipal and cantonal councils, freedom of trade at home and abroad, and the election of the royal officers by ballot, and boldly declared that "two things were chiefly to be desired for the good of the State; one, that all citizens should be equal, the other that each should be the son of his own works." This was one of the articles

of faith of the Revolution, uttered in advance. Another minister, Machault, proposed to replace the *taille*, which was paid by the common people alone, by a land tax, to which the privileged classes, nobles and priests, should be subjected. Choiseul also spoke of reforms; convents seemed to him, as well as to Colbert, too numerous, and he considered, as did the States of Pontoise in 1561, that the suppression of the immunity from taxes granted to the Church for its immense domains would assist in a remarkable degree to re-establish the shattered finances of the State.

Increasing Agitation of Ideas. — The noblest powers of the French mind seemed turned towards investigations of the public welfare. The caprices of society were no longer held up to view in a spirit of ridicule, but for the purpose of reforming society itself. Literature became a weapon which all, the imprudent as well as the wise, tried to wield, and which, striking without intermission, was the cause of terrible and irremediable wounds. A strange consequence of this was, that those who had most to suffer from this invasion of politics by men of letters were those who applauded it most. This frivolous, sensual, egoistic society of the eighteenth century carried on, even amid its vices, the cult of ideas. Never were the salons so animated, courtesy so exquisite, conversation so brilliant. Talent there took the place of birth, and the nobility chivalrously invited the fire of that burning polemic which the sons of the bourgeois directed against them.

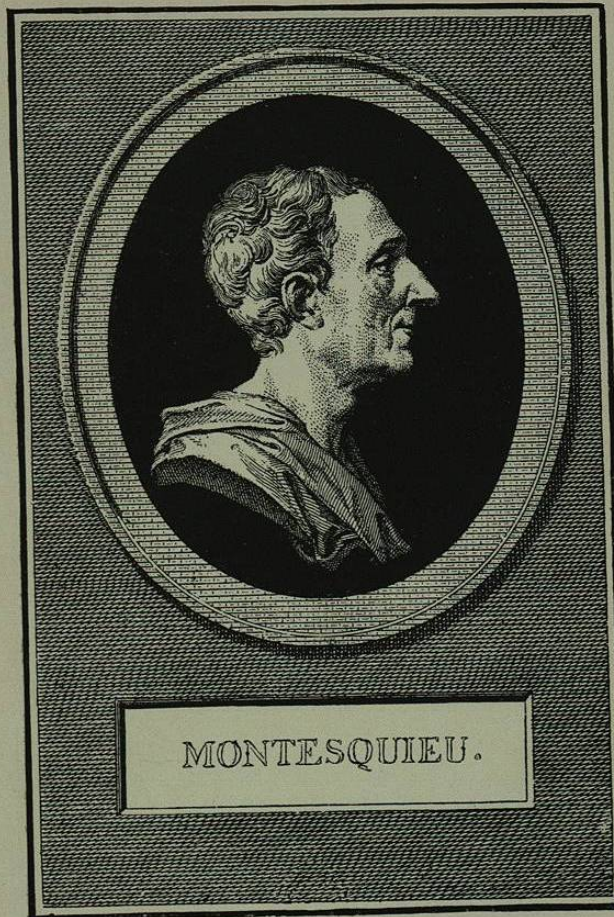
Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. — Three men are at the head of the movement, — Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. The first, whose real name was Arouet, was born at Paris in 1694, the son of a notary. He saw only the unhappy years of the Great King; and was one of the most enthusiastic of those who took part in the reaction against the religious habits of the last reign. At the age of twenty-one he was sent to the Bastille for a satire upon Louis XIV. which he had not written. His tragedy of *Œdipe*, full of threatening verses (1718), and his *Henriade*, an apology for religious toleration (1723), gave him immediate celebrity. A Chevalier de Rohan-Chabot revenged himself by the hands of his lackeys for some sarcastic words of Voltaire. Voltaire demanded reparation. The nobleman, by a second cowardly act, obtained from the minister an order to confine in the Bastille the impertinent plebeian who dared to call out a

great lord. Released soon after, but on condition that he should go to some foreign country, Voltaire went to England "to learn to think." He remained there three years, and studied Locke, Newton, Shakespeare, with an ardent devotion to liberty of thought and speech, even more than to political liberty. His next writings showed what he had brought thence.

Voltaire attacked the Church with stubborn animosity, and his most constant efforts were directed against the spiritual power which hindered thought, much more than against the civil power which only hindered action. With a view to this war, he made alliance with sovereigns and placed himself under their protection. He was in correspondence with the great Catherine of Russia; he sojourned at the court of Frederick II. His country seemed to him to be wherever he could think freely. He ended by establishing himself on the frontier of France, at Ferney, near Geneva. Thence were sent abroad, on every wind, light poems, epistles, tragedies, romances, works of history, science, and philosophy, which in a few days were known all over Europe.

In good and in evil, Voltaire represented the society of his time. The disorder of morals was to him a matter of indifference. But, growing old with the age, he took up as it did a more serious method of thought. Social evils became his personal enemy, and the love of justice his most ardent passion. He aided and defended the victims of deplorable judicial errors; he denounced incessantly the numerous defects of legislation, jurisprudence, and public administration. He held for fifty years the intellectual government of Europe, and he has justly merited the hatred of those who believe that the world ought to remain stationary, and the admiration of those who regard society as under an obligation to work unceasingly for its moral and material amelioration.

President Montesquieu (1689-1755), a calmer and graver spirit, though he wrote the *Lettres Persanes*, an apparently light but really profound and terrible satire (1721), spent twenty years in composing a single book, *L'Esprit des Loix*; but it was an immortal monument which he reared. Montesquieu seeks for and gives the reason for civil and political laws; he expounds the nature of governments; and if he does not condemn any of them, if changes of them dis-



(SAINT-AUBIN.)

turb him but little, on the whole it is English liberty which he upholds for the admiration of France.

Rousseau, the son of a clockmaker of Geneva (1712-1778), when well advanced in a life full of faults, miseries, and inconsistencies, composed his first *Discours contre les sciences et les arts*. It was a declaration of war against civilization; his second book on *L'Origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, was another against the entire social order. In *Emile*, he laid out a chimerical plan of education; in the *Contrat Social*, he asserted the principle of national sovereignty and universal suffrage, proclaiming great truths and great errors with singular eloquence. Rousseau gave the frivolous society of his age a vigorous shock which brought it back to natural feeling; in his *Nouvelle Héloïse* he opened its eyes to real nature and true passion; he created the poetry upon which the nineteenth century has subsisted.

The political influence of these three men can be traced in the three great epochs of the Revolution; that of Voltaire in the universal enthusiasm of 1789, that of Montesquieu in the efforts of the constitutionalists of the National Assembly, that of Rousseau in the thought, if not in the acts, of the savage dreamers of the Convention.

Near to these great writers stood Buffon, the great naturalist; and Diderot and D'Alembert, who founded the *Encyclopédie*, that immense survey of human attainments, set forth in a manner often threatening to social order, always hostile to religion. Helvétius, Baron Holbach, Lamettrie, and the abbé Raynal went still further.

But a separate place is needed for the Chancellor D'Aguesseau, for the moralist Vauvenargues, for the abbé de Condillac, the powerful analyst; for his brother, the abbé Mably, the bold publicist; and for the Marquis of Condorcet, who, afterwards condemned with the Girondists, composed, while awaiting death, his *Esquisse des progrès de l'esprit humain*.

The Economists.—In the seventeenth century a nation was considered the richer the less she bought and the more she sold. Quesnay showed that the precious metals are the sign of wealth, not wealth itself, which he considered originated in agriculture. Gournay claimed industry as its source; Adam Smith, who lived a long time in France, labor.

Thus the mind of man attempted to solve the most difficult problems which relate to human society. And all of

them, philosophers as well as economists, sought for the solution on the side of liberty. From the school of Quesnay emanated the celebrated axiom, "Laissez faire, laissez passer," or, as D'Argenson put it, "Don't govern too much."

Arts.—Art had degenerated into prettiness. Charming works were produced; the hôtels of the rich were decorated with spirit and coquettish elegance; but neither a great statue nor a great picture was produced. And as Versailles was deserted for boudoirs, the architects reduced their plans to the modest proportions of a society which no longer assumed the grand air of the preceding age.

Nevertheless, Ange Gabriel reared the two charming colonnades of the Place de la Concorde, the École Militaire, the opera-hall of Versailles, and the château of Compiègne; Soufflot erected the Panthéon. The sculptors left few works. The painters have greater reputation, particularly Watteau (1721), although he represented only a conventional art, with his shepherdesses of the opera; Carle Vanloo, whose "Æneas carrying Anchises" is much praised; J. Vernet, celebrated for his marine paintings; Boucher, whom his contemporaries dared to call the French Raphael.

Sciences.—The more austere sciences were paving the way for their accession and empire by commencing the great works of investigation. But great discoveries and great men, with the exception of Buffon, do not belong to the reign of Louis XV. There were Réaumur, who constructed the thermometer called by his name; Clairaut and D'Alembert, who developed mathematical analysis; the botanists Adanson and Bernard de Jussieu; the astronomer Lacaille; the geometers Bouguer, La Condamine, and Maupertuis.

Increasing Power of Public Opinion.—All this mental work had succeeded in creating in France a new power,—public opinion, to whose influence the government began to be subjected. It was desired that the administration should no longer be a frightful labyrinth in which the wisest were bewildered; that the public finances should cease to be given over to plunder; that each person should have some security for his personal liberty and fortune; that the criminal code should be less bloody and the civil code more equitable. Religious toleration was demanded; and law founded on principles of natural and rational right; and the unity of weights and measures; and taxation payable

by all; and emancipation from labor and free admissibility to public offices; the most active solicitude for all popular interests; in a word, equality in the presence of the law, and liberty regulated by right.

These demands were so earnest, so general, that the necessity of acceding to them was plain to all intelligent minds. Never did a terrible movement have more prophets to sound the alarm. At home and abroad the same opinion was expressed; by Lord Chesterfield on the one hand, and by Kant on the other. "All the signs I have ever encountered in history as forerunners of great revolutions," said the former, "at present exist in France, and are every day increasing." As the century advanced and the shame of the government increased, as after Rossbach came the *Parc-aux-Cerfs* and the "famine compact," the voice of protest, at first merely satirical, became stern and formidable. The reign which had begun with the *Lettres Persanes*, ended with the *Contrat Social*.

In the second half of the eighteenth century all the governments of Europe, aroused and excited by French ideas, recognized the necessity of making many reforms. Kings and ministers set to work,—Pombal in Portugal; Ferdinand VI., Charles III., and Aranda in Spain; Tanucci at Naples; the grand duke Leopold in Tuscany; Joseph II. in Austria; Frederick II. in Prussia: they reformed the laws, destroyed privileges and abuses, and exacted important sacrifices from the nobility and clergy, while at the same time increasing their own power. They dug canals, multiplied highways, encouraged industry, commerce, and agriculture; they tried to increase the national wealth and the prosperity of the people, and some of them succeeded in doing so, though it was for the purpose of increasing their own revenues. Everywhere justice and toleration were talked of, and philanthropy became a fashion; but all this did not hinder diplomacy from recurring at need to the most Machiavellic proceedings. The governments, indeed, made reforms, but never thought of reforming themselves. In France, also, during the first part of the reign of Louis XVI., reforms were attempted, and it was only after they had proved abortive that the Revolution broke out.