

SECTION XII

The French Revolution was the establishment of a new order of society, founded on justice, not privilege. Such changes never take place without causing terrible suffering. *It is the law of humanity that all new life shall be born in pain.* — DURUY.

ATTEMPTED REFORMS—LOUIS XVI (1774–1793)— THE REVOLUTION (1789–1795)—THE REPUBLIC (1792–1795)

172. The Accession of Louis XVI; Critical Character of the Times. — Louis XV was succeeded by his grandson, Louis XVI, a young man of twenty, of blameless life, who, a few years before, had married the beautiful but frivolous Marie Antoinette, daughter of Maria Theresa of Austria.¹

Both meant well by the country, but neither had the qualities which the times required. The king was conscientious, but with no marked ability; and the queen was too much under the control of the Austrian influence, which France then both feared and hated. Both had a presentiment of impending trouble. When the courtiers, forsaking the corpse of Louis XV, rushed in a body across the palace to salute the new sovereigns, they fell on their knees together, and with streaming tears exclaimed, "O God, guide us, protect us; we are too young to reign!"

It soon became evident that they had reason for their fears. Outwardly everything at Versailles was splendid as ever; but, as Carlyle intimates, it was the splendor of the rainbow above

¹ See Paragraph 165.

Niagara, beneath which is destruction. A great change had passed over society and the court within a century. Once the king had been autocratic. That day had in a measure gone by. It was said that in the presence of Louis XIV no one dared speak; that under Louis XV the courtiers spoke in whispers; but that under Louis XVI they spoke out loud. There was a general feeling that a crisis of some kind was at hand.

The spirit of free inquiry aroused by the leading writers and thinkers of the period was one of the most striking and ominous signs of the times. Nothing was safe against their restless skeptical questioning; government, religion, social institutions, were all, as it were, put on trial. Every one believed that the old order of things could not last, and that reform was inevitable.

173. Turgot's Plans of Reform; the Tax System; Salt; Forced Labor; Necker. — The great difficulty was to determine where and how to begin. Each one shrank from laying the ax to the root of a tree that all agreed must come down. Louis XVI showed his sincere desire to right the wrongs of his age, by restoring the parliaments¹ his predecessor had abolished.

Soon afterward he gave Turgot² the control of the most important of all departments, that of finance. The young king could not have made a wiser appointment, for Turgot was an able and an honest man; what is more, he was a true friend of the people. With the coöperation of the crown, he set resolutely to work to relieve the national distress, and to try to put the revenue on a sound foundation. His motto was, "No bankruptcy; no increase of taxes; no loans."

Let us see some of the difficulties he had to deal with. In the first place, the government did not collect its taxes by its

¹ See Paragraph 168.

² Turgot (tür-go'): he was eminent as a statesman and financier. Benjamin Franklin, with whom he corresponded, had a high opinion of his ability and integrity. Voltaire called him the best minister France had ever had.

own officers, but sold the privilege to capitalists. These capitalists employed unscrupulous and brutal agents. They were instructed to collect not only the legal tax, but as much more as they could extort, the excess being the profit reaped by the capitalists. If in any case a peasant was found who actually could not pay, his neighbors had to pay for him.

This system had two bad results. First, the king got into the habit of raising large sums of money by selling several years' taxes in advance. Louis XV had long practiced this method. The consequence was, that when his grandson, Louis XVI, came to the throne, he found that he could not levy a tax even for the necessary and legitimate expense of the coming year, for the cash had already been raised and spent. The new king was thus practically left without a revenue.

Next, as we have already seen, every means had been devised by Louis XV to increase the amount raised from the people, to the exhaustion of the whole country. To-day the United States obtains a large part of its revenue by imposing heavy duties on most imported goods. In the eighteenth century France pursued the same policy. But, not content with erecting customhouses all along the foreign frontier and at the chief seaports, the government established them also on the boundaries of every province and county.

These custom regulations were enforced so strictly and minutely that a workman crossing the Rhone from one province to another had to pay duty on the meager dinner of bread and cheese which he carried in his pocket. So, too, a merchant passing down that river with goods was compelled to pay no less than thirty tolls within a distance of about three hundred miles.

If a farmer living in one county had grain to sell, and there was a great demand for it in the adjoining county, he could not hitch up his team and take a load there directly.

When he reached the boundary he was stopped, and must either pay an exorbitant duty or go back. In this way the people were forced to give not only the fair market price of a bushel of wheat, but as much more as the king saw fit to demand. Thus out of their necessity he maintained his luxury.

Again, from early times the government had levied a peculiarly vexatious and oppressive duty on salt.¹ Now, as salt is a necessary of life, and was particularly so when but little fresh meat or fish was eaten, this tax brought in a very large revenue. Not satisfied, however, with this, the government got a monopoly of the salt and fixed its own price on it. Every peasant was compelled to purchase a certain quantity whether he wanted it or not.

Agents were sent around to every man's cottage. They inspected his salt bin. If it looked to them too low, he had orders to buy more salt. He might plead that he had just salted his year's stock of provisions, and therefore did not require more; that explanation would not save him, for buy more he must.

On the other hand, he had, perhaps, economized in salt and had a good supply on hand. Then the agents not infrequently accused the poor man of having bought it of smugglers, — with whom the country was overrun, — and he had to choose between being prosecuted or buying as much salt as the agents thought fit, and at whatever price they pleased to set.

Next, if the government or any influential noble needed any work done, the peasants could be compelled to leave their farms and do it, without pay and without thanks even.² A man might be in the midst of haying or harvesting, when every moment was precious to him; but if the government called,

¹ Technically called the *gabelle* (gá-bě'l); see Paragraph 79.

² Called the *corvée* (kôr-vá'), meaning forced labor.

he must leave everything and go. He and his team might be taken a score of miles from home, to labor for the king for days or weeks, the laborer, meanwhile, finding food and shelter as best he could.

Finally, even the mechanic of that day had but little real liberty. He could not, it is true, be forced to labor like the peasant; but he was obliged to belong to a guild or corporation, which determined what he might or might not do, where he should reside, and what price he was to ask for his work. These corporations governed every trade, and they were under the supervision of royal inspectors who practically governed them. As these inspectors bought their offices of the king, it was for his interest to keep up these restrictions; for free work would make inspectors unnecessary, and so diminish the revenue of the crown.

Such were some of the abuses which Turgot undertook to remove, or at least to mitigate. His plan was to endeavor to equalize the burden in some degree, so that the nobles and clergy, who were exempt, might bear their part. But the latter raised a clamorous opposition which frightened the king. The poor and humble parish priests sided with the people, but they unfortunately had no influence with the government. Louis had not strength to withstand the pressure. The infamous "Famine Compact," or "grain ring,"¹ which still existed, joined in the outcry, and Turgot with his proposed reforms was dismissed.

But as money must be raised even if the old abuses were left untouched, the king next invited an eminent Swiss Protestant banker named Necker to come to his assistance. He contrived, by an ingenious system of small but wide-reaching economies, to diminish the government expenses, and through the influence of his name he secured loans which kept the king tolerably supplied with money.

¹ See Paragraph 169.

Still, matters were constantly growing worse, and the king, instead of devoting all his time to the country, spent most of it in hunting and in learning to tinker locks. For weeks he would be busy in a workman's dress, in a little shop he had fitted up for the purpose, filing keys and oiling bolts; while the queen, dressed as a country girl, was playing at butter and cheese making in a dairy which had been constructed for her at Versailles.

174. The American Revolution. — In the midst of Necker's experiments and of this royal trifling an event occurred which had most important results in France. That event was the Declaration of American Independence and the Revolutionary War. When the English took Quebec in 1759,¹ Count de Vergennes² predicted the eventual revolt of the colonies, as a result of the defeat of the French forces in America.

"England," said he, "will soon repent of having removed the only check that could keep her colonies in awe. They stand no longer in need of her protection. She will call on them to contribute towards supporting the burden they have helped to bring on her, *and they will answer by striking off all dependence.*"

This prophecy was now fulfilled; and France, burning for revenge against her old enemy, strongly sympathized with the United States. Benjamin Franklin was sent by Congress to beg aid from Louis XVI. He was welcomed in Paris with the wildest enthusiasm. Franklin hats, Franklin canes, Franklin stoves, became the fashion, and the picture of the New England philosopher and diplomatist was seen in the windows of all the printshops.

In her zeal for the cause of America, France seemed for a time to forget her own misery, and, bankrupt though she was, she raised nine millions of francs as a gift to assist the armies of the new-born republic, besides furnishing about fifteen

¹ See Paragraph 166.

² Vergennes (vĕr-zhĕn').

millions more as a loan.¹ In addition to this, the Marquis de Lafayette, a young man of twenty, loaded a vessel with arms and munitions of war at his own expense, and sailed for America to offer his services to General Washington.²

Meanwhile Louis XVI hesitated at openly supporting the American Revolution, knowing that such action would at once involve him in a war with England. But such was Franklin's persuasive power that in 1778 the king signed a treaty of alliance with the commissioners of Congress, and thus France, first among the European powers, recognized the United States as an independent nation.

From that time a French fleet and French troops contributed toward carrying on the war, and in 1781 they rendered most important aid in gaining the decisive victory of Yorktown, which virtually ended the struggle. Two years later the Treaty of Versailles declared peace between all the countries engaged. France had the satisfaction of having helped to humble the power that had taken Canada from her, and that had prevented her from building up an American empire; but the war with Great Britain cost her fourteen hundred millions of francs, and her condition was daily growing more and more critical.

The French officers and soldiers who had fought under the American flag came back at least half republicans, if not actual revolutionists. Long before, they had read Rousseau's impassioned plea for political and social equality.³ That, however, was but theory. Now it was much more, for the United States had triumphed, and Rousseau's thought was embodied in that

¹ This help was not granted all at once, but extended over the whole period of the war.

² See The Leading Facts of American History in this series.

³ Rousseau "was the father of modern democracy, and without him our Declaration of Independence would have wanted some of those sentences in which the immemorial longings of the poor and the dreams of solitary enthusiasts were at last affirmed as axioms in the manifesto of a nation so that all the world might hear." — PROFESSOR JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, *North American Review*, July, 1867, "Rousseau."

Declaration of Independence which affirmed that "all men are created equal." Thus America gave Rousseau's philosophy that practical power which was soon to make itself felt in the history of France.

175. The Notables; Recall of Necker; the States-General summoned. — Meantime Necker had been dismissed, because, like Turgot, he had angered the nobility by exposing the fact that instead of being a help to the country, they were simply a drag upon it. Louis, not knowing what to do, finally called a meeting of the Notables.¹ They convened, talked, but did nothing.

Then the king reluctantly recalled Necker. He insisted that the States-General should be summoned. Louis remonstrated. The truth was that under the baneful influence of Marie Antoinette, he was becoming more arbitrary, and less willing to undertake any reform which should lessen his own power. He had already angered and alienated the Parliament of Paris,² by ordering them to register an edict, without even voting on it, by which he decreed two obnoxious measures. These were, first, the raising of an enormous loan; and secondly, the restoration of the Protestants to their civil rights.

Louis feared that a States-General³ would be more intractable even than the parliament; and that they would protest in an unmistakable way against his making his personal will the mainspring of government.

But the exigency gave him no choice, and with very bad grace Louis summoned the States-General. It met in the palace at Versailles in the spring of 1789. It was the first meeting since 1614.⁴ Heretofore the three orders — nobility, clergy, and Tiers État,⁵ or people — had usually sat apart. This had often enabled the kings of earlier periods to play off

¹ Notables: see Paragraph 98.

³ See Paragraph 71.

² See Paragraph 63.

⁴ See Paragraph 136.

⁵ See Paragraph 94.

one order against the other, and especially to defeat the Tiers État. This last-named body now outnumbered the other two combined.¹

176. The States-General becomes the National Assembly; Lafayette, Mirabeau, Robespierre, Guillotin. — The representatives of the people insisted that since the deliberations of the States-General concerned the welfare of the entire nation, they should therefore be held in common. For five weeks they received no answer to their invitation urging the first two orders to join them. At length the parish priests among the clergy decided to do so. Then the Tiers État took a bold step. They threw off the old name of States-General, and organized themselves as the National Assembly — a name which implied that in future no class division would be recognized in that body.

The nobles, with the upper clergy, protested against this action, and the king closed the hall against the new organization. They met, however, in the tennis court of the palace, where they bound themselves by oath not to dissolve until they had framed a written constitution for the government of the country. In accordance with that determination they not long after gave themselves the name of the National Constituent Assembly.²

A hundred and fifty years before, Louis XIV had boastfully declared, "*I am the State.*"³ Now, after this long silence, the people made reply, affirming, "*We are the State.*" Seeing the resolute stand of the assembly, Necker advised the king to request the nobility and upper clergy to join the Tiers État. The hall was again opened, and for the first time in the history of France, lords, bishops, and commoners met on a footing of

¹ Namely, 584 Tiers État to 291 clergy and 270 nobles. About half the Tiers État were lawyers, while 208 of the clergy were parish priests strongly sympathizing with the people. The upper clergy were conservative, and voted with the nobles.

² Henceforth the body is generally called the Constituent Assembly.

³ See Paragraph 144.

legislative equality. The old distinctions were done away, and in future the voting was to be by individuals, not orders,¹ and the vote of one member was to be worth as much as that of another.

Three members of that assembly were soon to take a conspicuous part in affairs. They were the Marquis de Lafayette, Count Mirabeau,² and a lawyer named Robespierre.³

There was also a fourth member destined to attain unenviable fame. This was a certain Dr. Guillotin⁴ who had perfected a machine for decapitating criminals. His object was to reduce all capital punishment to a democratic level, and also to render it as speedy and painless as possible. He urged the assembly to adopt his machine. They were skeptical of its merits. He assured them that it would "take off a head in a twinkling," and that the victim would feel nothing save "a sensation of refreshing coolness."

At this declaration the hall resounded with loud laughter; but good Dr. Guillotin's machine was subsequently adopted, and in the end, not a few members who voted for it, tested its merits with their own necks.

177. Organization of the National Guard; Taking of the Bastille. — The king became alarmed at the democratic utterances of the assembly, and collected a body of troops at Versailles, many being Swiss or German. The citizens of Paris, believing that Louis intended to overawe the assembly, produced arms and organized a body of militia under the command of Lafayette. He gave them the name of the National

¹ See Paragraph 72 and note.

² Mirabeau (me-rā-bō'): the nobles of Provence having rejected Mirabeau as a representative, he was elected by the people and represented the Tiers État. Lafayette represented the nobility, but was urgent for reform.

³ Robespierre (ro-bēs-pe-ēr') was a representative of the people, and was a radical democrat.

⁴ Guillotin (ge-yo-tān'): before the adoption of his machine (the guillotine), aristocratic criminals only had been beheaded; common malefactors were hung. The doctor wished to treat all alike. He was elected representative by the Tiers État.

Guard: their duty was to defend the representatives of the people.

While these preparations were in progress, a rumor spread that the commander of the Bastille, that old military fortress and prison in the heart of Paris, had received orders to turn his guns on the city. At this report the excitement became ungovernable. From thousands of throats the cry went up, "To the Bastille! Down with the Bastille!" Moved by one impulse, a frenzied mob rushed toward that stronghold, which was to Paris what the Tower was to London.

The attack was led by veteran army soldiers. The commander of the fortress had only a feeble garrison and could not hold out. After five hours of fighting, he capitulated. The mob expected to find the dungeons crowded with political prisoners, as they formerly had been. They found only seven prisoners; five of these were ordinary criminals and two were lunatics, probably sent there for safe-keeping. The truth is that the Bastille had long since ceased to be the "Cave of Horrors" which popular imagination still supposed it to be.¹

The defenders of the building were taken prisoners and brutally murdered. Then the crowd, with the victims' heads stuck on pikes, paraded the streets in triumph. This was the 14th of July; that very night the destruction of the building was begun, and did not cease so long as one stone stood upon another.²

The news was speedily carried to the king at Versailles. Roused from his sleep, Louis said to the messenger, "Why, this is a revolt." "No, sire," was the reply; "it is a *Revolution*."

178. Causes of the Revolution; Comparison of the Conditions of England and France. — It was in truth the beginning of such

¹ See Funck-Brentano's *Legends et Archives de la Bastille*, p. 264.

² In 1790 Lafayette sent the "main key" of this "fortress of despotism" to Washington. It is still preserved at Mount Vernon.

a revolution as Europe had never seen, and would pray never to witness again. Henceforth the Fourteenth of July, 1789, was to be in French history what the Fourth of July, 1776, is in the history of the United States.

The Revolution was the explosion resulting from centuries of repression, misgovernment, and tyranny. Its four chief causes were:

I. The long-continued and exhausting wars of Louis XIV and Louis XV, followed by Louis XVI's contest with England in behalf of America, which had piled up a debt of six thousand five hundred millions of francs (\$1,300,000,000).¹

II. The fact that the "blood tax" springing from this colossal war debt, and from the wasteful habits of the king and court, fell on the common people; while, on the contrary, the nobility and higher clergy, who owned the land, were almost wholly exempt, so that instead of sharing the poor man's burdens they actually increased them.

III. Again, for nearly two hundred years France had not been permitted to hold a States-General;² so that for more than six generations the nation had not only had no voice whatever in the direction of the government, but could not during that time so much as protest even against the abuses of the crown on the one hand or of the local tyranny of the nobles on the other.³

IV. A final cause was the decay of religious belief and the simultaneous growth of a vigorous skeptical literature, proclaiming principles of independence, liberty, and equality,⁴ — principles which were now powerfully enforced by the example of the constitutional freedom enjoyed by England, and still more by the republican institutions of America.

¹ France finally disposed of this tremendous burden of debt by the simple but effectual expedient of repudiation.

² See Paragraph 71.

³ In the army, only nobles could be officers. In the Church, none but nobles, as a rule, could secure a position above that of parish priest. The trades were in the hands of corporations and under the control of the crown. No one could enter them without permission and payment. Many of the peasantry were still serfs and virtually slaves.

⁴ See Paragraph 170.

If we compare England and France with respect to these grievances, we shall be struck with the contrast. In England there had been two revolutions, — that of 1642 and that of 1688. Both were contests between the Stuart kings and Parliament. Both were chiefly political. The first revolution took the form of a civil war, which lasted for several years, and ended in the temporary overthrow of the monarchy. The second struggle was over in a few months, without costing a drop of blood. It resulted in the establishment of a constitutional monarchy based on the will of the people.

In France, on the other hand, the Revolution was mainly social. It was a desperate battle between the mass of the inhabitants and the privileged classes, with the king at their head; and, although there were political questions involved in the struggle, they were prominent only in the beginning. It has been said of the French outbreak, as compared with the English, that it was more than a revolution, — it was a dissolution. There is truth in the expression; for when the movement, begun in 1789, ended, everything — government, Church, and society — was dissolved.

Here are four chief points of difference in the two nations:

I. In England, at the close of the eighteenth century (*i.e.*, 1789), the power of the king was strictly limited by custom and the constitution.¹ In France, on the contrary, there had never been any very clearly defined and effectual check on the power of the crown; and for a very long time there had been none at all.

II. In England, the nobility, including the higher clergy, embraced only the members of the House of Lords. The whole number probably did not exceed five hundred. Legally, they had no important privileges above the common people; and,

¹ The English Constitution consists (so far as written) of the Great Charter, the Petition of Right, the Act of Habeas Corpus, and finally the Bill of Rights, with its supplement, the Act of Settlement.

like them, they paid taxes and supported the state. In France the nobility, with the clergy, numbered probably not far from two hundred thousand.¹ They enjoyed important privileges denied to the people; they were supported in idleness by the unpaid labor of the peasantry, and they practically paid no taxes.

III. Again, England possessed a Parliament, or National Assembly, in which, from the close of the thirteenth century, the people were in some degree represented in the House of Commons.

For centuries the commons had exercised a salutary power in the government. No law could be constitutionally enacted without their voice. No tax could be levied without their consent. Every man had the right to trial by jury.

In France, as we have seen, the States-General² gave little power to the people; even that little had for nearly two hundred years been unused, and trial by jury had long ceased to exist.

IV. Finally, in England, feudal oppression and privilege no longer existed. The entire laboring class was free. In France, on the contrary, feudal privilege and oppression still existed; and thousands of peasants were bound as serfs to the soil, and were practically slaves.³

¹ The French nobility (*noblesse*) included all the nobles with their descendants. In England, nobility, strictly speaking, is confined to the father. All of his children, in the eyes of the law, are commoners; and it is only at the father's death that his eldest son receives a legal title of rank, — though by courtesy he usually has one before. (See *The Leading Facts of English History* in this series.) The French nobles (not including the clergy) were to the English as 150,000 to 500.

² See Paragraphs 71, 94.

³ The total number of serfs in France at the close of the eighteenth century is estimated by Rambaud at one hundred and fifty thousand. A large part of these seem to have been in the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. Most peasants who were nominally free still continued to pay some kind of feudal dues. Usually they were obliged to grind their grain in the lord's mill, and make their wine at his press, giving him toll in both cases. On the other hand, the lord of the manor administered justice, and had the exclusive right of hunting, fishing, and keeping rabbits and doves, which ate the peasant's corn, and often destroyed

179. Division of the Revolutionary Period; Effect of the Taking of the Bastille; Declaration of Rights; the Constitution.—The revolutionary period may be divided into two parts, covering in all nearly six years:¹ (1) from the taking of the Bastille to the beginning of the Reign of Terror (1789–1793); (2) from the beginning of the Reign of Terror to the establishment of the Directory (1793–1795).

The taking of the Bastille not only convinced the people of their power, but it excited similar insurrections throughout the country. The peasantry arose and attacked the castles and monasteries. Their object was to burn these buildings, and to destroy by fire the charters and deeds by which they themselves were held in bondage. In some cases they did not stop with destruction, but murdered the masters of the castles and the abbots of the monasteries.

This uprising so alarmed the nobility that at a meeting of the Constituent Assembly (August 4) they offered to give up their feudal claims and privileges. This proposition was greeted with the wildest enthusiasm. The assembly voted a solemn service of thanksgiving in the churches; and as the king had sanctioned the measure, they ordered that his statue should be erected on the site of the Bastille. On it was to be carved the high-sounding inscription, "To the Restorer of the Liberty of France."

But the seemingly magnanimous offer meant little, for the nobility required compensation for the claims they offered to

a great part of his scanty crops. About a third of the land was owned by small farmers; some of it was freehold property; but in many instances the occupant was expected to pay some kind of annual rent, if nothing more than a pair of chickens, to the former lord.

¹ The first period of the Revolution, especially from 1789–1791, seems to have been largely "the work of the intelligent middle classes," who were chiefly represented in the commons of the States-General. The second period appears to have been, in the main, the work of "the ignorant multitude" or the mob. See on this point Professor Gordy's Political History of the United States (revised edition), Vol. I, Chapter XIV, and H. M. Stephens' French Revolution.

relinquish; and as the proposed statue was never erected, the whole affair seemed to end in words, not deeds. None the less the night of August 4 will remain famous, for the movement which began then did not stop till it had done its complete work.

A fortnight afterward Lafayette rose in the assembly and moved the adoption of a Declaration of the Rights of Man, which he had modeled on the American Declaration of Independence. The manifesto, after discussion and modification, was accepted; and the assembly next began the work of drafting a constitution in accordance with it,—a task that they did not wholly finish until two years later.

This constitution established:

1. A limited monarchy, similar to that of England, the sovereign to be called "King of the French," or people's king, instead of retaining his old feudal title of "King of France," which implied that he owned the realm.

2. The power of legislation and taxation was taken from the crown and vested in representatives chosen by the nation, though the king was allowed a qualified right of veto.

3. The privileges of the nobility, with their hereditary titles, were swept away; and all citizens were declared equal before the law.

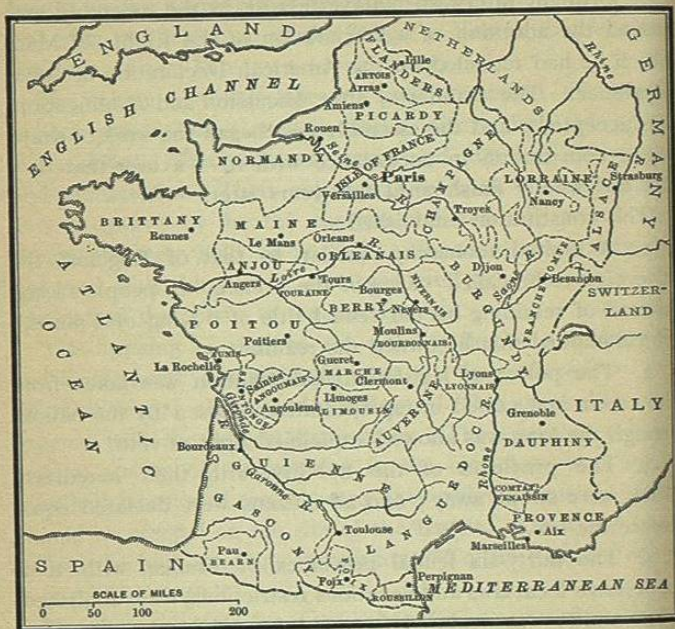
4. The thirty-six feudal provinces of France, with their oppressive local laws and vexatious restrictions, were abolished. The country was declared free, and formed into eighty-three departments, as nearly of a size as practicable. These departments were declared to possess equal political rights, and each was to be represented in the National Assembly.¹

5. The right of the eldest son to the exclusive inheritance of landed property was done away with, and every estate was henceforth to be divided equally among all the children.

¹ Compare map of the provinces, page 238, with that of the departments (frontispiece). Notice that the departments, now eighty-six in number, are named from their position (*e.g.*, "Nord," North) or geographical features (*e.g.*, Pyrenees).

6. Liberty of worship and full civil rights were granted to Protestants and Jews in common with Catholics.

7. The press was declared free, and all restrictions on interior trade and commerce were abolished.



France in Provinces

8. Great reforms were made in the criminal code. Arbitrary imprisonment by royal warrant and torture were both abolished. Heresy and witchcraft were struck from the list of penal offences, capital punishment was very much limited, and trial by jury was provided for in criminal cases.

180. **The Attack on Versailles; the "Joyous Entry"; Flight of the Nobles.**—While the assembly was engaged in

constitution making, matters were fast growing critical in Paris. Bad harvests had caused great distress throughout the country. There was scarcity of bread in the capital, and, to render the condition worse, thousands of desperate tramps had come into the city, eager for riot and pillage.

While the multitude were suffering, news reached Paris that the king had given a banquet to the officers of a regiment of soldiers at Versailles, and that they had trampled the colors of the National Guard—the people's colors—under their feet.¹

These tidings set the city in a blaze. A great rabble, led by several thousand ragged and dirty women, set out on foot for Versailles. It rained hard the latter part of the day, and when the mob reached the palace, they were wet to the skin, hungry, and tired. Lafayette followed with the National Guard to keep order. Nothing of consequence was done that day; but early the next morning the mob burst into the building, killing the Swiss guards, and sweeping all before them. For the first time in their history the apartments of the magnificent edifice erected by Louis XIV were filled, not with bowing and smiling courtiers, but with a yelling mob of starving people. They clamored for the blood of "the Austrian woman," as they called the queen; for she, they said, was the "Madame Deficit" who kept them poor.

Lafayette succeeded in saving her life; but she, with the dauphin, the king, and the rest of the royal family, was forced to go back with the rabble to Paris. Fifty cartloads of grain, taken from the royal stores, preceded them; and the multitude shouted, as they went, "We shall not die of hunger now; for we have got the baker, and the baker's wife, and the baker's little boy." That sad, compulsory journey of royalty to the capital was popularly called the "Joyous Entry"

¹ The people's flag was the tricolor,—red, white, and blue. At the banquet the colors were represented by a cockade.