as the other had rendered it the master of the government; and permitted it to prepare the new constitution by destroying the old one.

The march of the revolution had been very rapid, and in a very short time had produced most important results. Had it not been opposed, it would have been less prompt and less complete. Each refusal became for it the occasion of new successes; it overthrew intrigue, resisted authority, triumphed over force, and, at the moment at which we have arrived, the whole edifice of absolute monarchy had been shaken by the mismanagement of its supporters. The 17th of June had annihilated the three orders, and changed the states-general into the assembly of the nation; the 23d of June had been the termination of the moral influence of the crown—the 14th of July that of its material power; the assembly had inherited the one, and the people the other; finally, the 4th of August was the completion of this first revolution. The epoch which we have described is conspicuously detached from the others; within its short period, the seat of power was displaced, and all the preliminary changes were effected. The epoch which follows is that in which the new régime is discussed and established, and in which the assembly, after having been destructive, becomes constituent.

LETTER XVII.

View of the State of Parties in France—The Constituent Assembly—The Clergy and Noblesse—The Party of Orleans—Constitutional Labours; Declaration of Rights; Permanence and Unity of the legislative Body; royal Sanction; external Agitation; Insurrection of the 5th and 6th October, 1789—The King removes his Residence to Paris.

In pursuance of our plan, and in narrating the series of events, my dear son, which, at this tremendous crisis, followed one another in rapid succession, in the French metropolis, I am aware that I have imposed a tax upon your feelings, that will make it necessary for you to summon all your resolution, and brace up the energies of your mind to accompany me in the farther detail.

The popular excesses to which I have already called your attention, inflicted great calamities on the capital: but commotions of another description early followed the revolution, partly arising from the general causes already stated, and partly from others of more limited and local operation.

The peasantry of the provinces, buried for many ages in the darkness of servitude, saw, indistinctly and confusedly, in the first dawn of liberty, the boundaries of their duties and their rights. It cannot surprise us that they should little understand that freedom which had been so long remote from their views. The name conveyed to their ear a right to reject all restraint, to gratify every resentment, and to attack all property. Ruffians mingled with the deluded peasants, in the hope of booty, and inflamed their ignorance and prejudice, by forged acts of the king and the assembly, authorizing their licentiousness. From these circumstances arose many calamities in the provinces. The country houses of many gentlemen were burned, and some obnoxious persons were assassinated. Perhaps the peasants had oppressions to avenge—those silent grinding oppressions which form almost the only intercourse of the rich with the indigent, which, though less flagrant than those of government, are perhaps productive of more intolerable and diffusive misery.

But whatever was the demerit of these excesses, it is unfair to impute them to the national assembly or the leaders of the revolution. In what manner were they to repress them? If they exerted against them their own authority with vigour, they must have provoked a civil war. If they invigorated the police and tribunals of the deposed government, besides incurring the hazard of the same calamity, they put arms into the hands of their enemies. Placed in this dilemma, there was nothing left for them but to wait a slow remedy from the returning serenity of the public mind, and the progress of the new government towards consistency and vigour.

A degree of influence exerted by the people, far more than would be tolerated by a firm government, or could exist in a state of tranquillity, must be expected in a crisis of a revolution which the people have brought about. They have too recent experience of their own strength to abstain at once from exerting it. Their political antipathies have been agitated by too fierce a storm to regain in a moment that serenity which would expect with patient acquiescence the decrees of their representatives. From an inflamed multitude, who had felt themselves irresistible, and whose fancy annexed to the decision of every political question the fate of their freedom, an undue interposition in the proceedings of the legislature was to have been expected. The passions which prompt it are vehement; the arguments which prove its impropriety are remote and refined. Too much, therefore, of this interposition, was, at such a conjuncture, inevitable. It is, without doubt, a great evil; but it is irremediable. The submission of the people, in a period of tranquillity, degenerates into a lifeless and torpid negligence of public affairs; and the fervour which the moment of revolution inspires, necessarily produces the opposite extreme. That the conduct of the populace of Paris, therefore, should not have been the most circumspect and decorous respecting the deliberations of the assembly, at this tremendous crisis of their country's fate—that it should be frequently irregular and tumultuous, was, in the nature of things, inevitable.

In offering these remarks to your consideration, you must understand me as doing it with a view to account, not to apologize, for the disgraceful scenes and shocking atrocities which, in the sequel, you will have to contemplate: and, requesting you to keep in mind the distinction which has been now made, I shall resume the narrative.

The national assembly, composed of the *élite* of the nation, was full of intelligence, honest purposes, and views for the public welfare; it was not, however, free from parties and disagreements: let us see what were the divisions of views and interests that prevailed among them.

The court had in the assembly a party, that of the privileged, which for some time maintained silence, and took only a retarding part in the discussions. This party was composed of those who, on the dispute of the orders, declared against the reunion. In spite of their momentary agreements with the commons in the late circumstances, the aristocratic classes had interests contrary to those of the national party. Thus the noblesse and the high clergy were in constant opposition with it, except on certain days, when personal feelings were silenced in the general enthusiasm. These non-contents of the revolution, who could neither prevent it by their sacrifices, nor arrest it by their adherence, systematically resisted all its reforms. Their principal organs were two men, no way distinguished by their birth or dignities, but who had the superiority of talent. The abbé Maury and Cazalès might be said to represent the clergy and the noblesse.

These two orators of the privileged order, according to the intentions of their party, which did not believe in the permanence of the changes, sought less to defend themselves than to protest; and, in all their discussions, their object was not to instruct, but to embarrass, the assembly. Each of them, in the part he acted, manifested the peculiarities of his genius and character. Maury made long harangues; Cazalès had vivid sallies. The former preserved, on the tribune, the habits of the preacher and academician; he discoursed on legislative matters without comprehending them, never seizing on the true point of a question, nor even the most advantageous for his party; displaying boldness, erudition, address, a brilliant and sustained facility, but never a profound conviction, a settled judgment, a genuine eloquence. The abbé Maury spoke as soldiers fight. No one knew how to contradict more frequently, or more perseveringly than he did; no one could better supply the place of good reasons by citations and sophisms, and of the excursions of genius by the forms of oratory. He had no lack of talent; but he wanted truth, its vivifying principle. Cazalès was in all respects the very opposite of Maury. His genius was prompt and unerring; his elocution was as easy, but more animated; there was a frankness in all his movements. His rea-