

A Residence in France During the Years 1792, 1793, 1794 and 1795, Part II., 1793 eBook

A Residence in France During the Years 1792, 1793, 1794 and 1795, Part II., 1793

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Produced by Mary Munarin and David Widger

A residence in France,
during the years
1792, 1793, 1794, and 1795;

Described in A series of letters
from an English lady;
With General And Incidental Remarks
On The French Character And Manners.

Prepared for the Press
By John Gifford, Esq.
Author of the History of France, Letter to Lord
Lauderdale, Letter to the Hon. T. Erskine, &c.

Second Edition.

Plus je vis l'Etranger plus j'aimai ma Patrie. —Du Belloy.

London: Printed for T. N. Longman, Paternoster Row. 1797.

1793

Amiens, January, 1793.

Vanity, I believe, my dear brother, is not so innoxious a quality as we are desirous of supposing. As it is the most general of all human failings, so is it regarded with the most indulgence: a latent consciousness averts the censure of the weak; and the wise, who flatter themselves with being exempt from it, plead in its favour, by ranking it as a foible too light for serious condemnation, or too inoffensive for punishment. Yet, if vanity be not an actual vice, it is certainly a potential one—it often leads us to seek reputation rather than virtue, to substitute appearances for realities, and to prefer the eulogiums of the world to the approbation of our own minds. When it takes possession of an uninformed or an ill-constituted mind, it becomes the source of a thousand errors, and a thousand absurdities. Hence, youth seeks a preeminence in vice, and age in folly; hence, many boast of errors they would not commit, or claim distinction by investing themselves with an imputation of excess in some popular absurdity—duels are courted by the daring, and vaunted by the coward—he who trembles at the idea of death and a future state when alone, proclaims himself an atheist or a free-thinker in public—the water-drinker, who suffers the penitence of a week for a supernumerary glass, recounts the wonders of his intemperance—and he who does not mount the gentlest animal without trepidation, plumes himself on breaking down horses, and his perils in the chace. In short, whatever order of mankind we contemplate, we shall perceive that the

portion of vanity allotted us by nature, when it is not corrected by a sound judgement, and rendered subservient to useful purposes, is sure either to degrade or mislead us.

I was led into this train of reflection by the conduct of our Anglo-Gallican legislator, Mr. Thomas Paine. He has lately composed a speech, which was translated and read in his presence, (doubtless to his great satisfaction,) in which he insists with much vehemence on the necessity of trying the King; and he even, with little credit to his humanity, gives intimations of presumed guilt. Yet I do not suspect Mr. Paine to be of a cruel or unmerciful nature; and, most

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probably, vanity alone has instigated him to a proceeding which, one would wish to believe, his heart disapproves. Tired of the part he was playing, and which, it must be confessed, was not calculated to flatter the censurer of Kings and the reformer of constitutions, he determined to sit no longer for whole hours in colloquy with his interpreter, or in mute contemplation, like the Chancellor in the Critic; and the speech to which I have alluded was composed. Knowing that lenient opinions would meet no applause from the tribunes, he inlists himself on the side of severity, accuses all the Princes in the world as the accomplices of Louis the Sixteenth, expresses his desire for an universal revolution, and, after previously assuring the Convention the King is guilty, recommends that they may instantly proceed to his trial. But, after all this tremendous eloquence, perhaps Mr. Paine had no malice in his heart: he may only be solicitous to preserve his reputation from decay, and to indulge his self-importance by assisting at the trial of a Monarch whom he may not wish to suffer.—I think, therefore, I am not wrong in asserting, that Vanity is a very mischievous counsellor.

The little distresses I formerly complained of, as arising from the paper currency, are nearly removed by a plentiful emission of small assignats, and we have now pompous assignments on the national domains for ten sols: we have, likewise, pieces coined from the church bells in circulation, but most of these disappear as soon as issued. You would scarcely imagine that this copper is deemed worthy to be hoarded; yet such is the people's aversion from the paper, and such their mistrust of the government, that not an housewife will part with one of these pieces while she has an assignat in her possession; and those who are rich enough to keep a few livres by them, amass and bury this copper treasure with the utmost solicitude and secrecy.

A tolerably accurate scale of the national confidence might be made, by marking the progress of these suspicious interments. Under the first Assembly, people began to hide their gold; during the reign of the second they took the same affectionate care of their silver; and, since the meeting of the Convention, they seem equally anxious to hide any metal they can get. If one were to describe the present age, one might, as far as regards France, call it, both literally and metaphorically, the Iron Age; for it is certain, the character of the times would justify the metaphoric application, and the disappearance of every other metal the literal one. As the French are fond of classic examples, I shall not be surprized to see an iron coinage, in imitation of Sparta, though they seem in the way of having one reason less for such a measure than the Spartans had, for they are already in a state to defy corruption; and if they were not, I think a war with England would secure the purity of their morals from being endangered by too much commercial intercourse.

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I cannot be displeased with the civil things you say of my letters, nor at your valuing them so much as to preserve them; though, I assure you, this fraternal gallantry is not necessary, on the account you intimate, nor will our countrymen suffer, in my opinion, by any comparisons I can make here. Your ideas of French gallantry are, indeed, very erroneous—it may differ in the manner from that practised in England, but is far from having any claim to superiority. Perhaps I cannot define the pretensions of the two nations in this respect better than by saying, that the gallantry of an Englishman is a sentiment—that of a Frenchman a system. The first, if a lady happen to be old or plain, or indifferent to him, is apt to limit his attentions to respect, or utility—now the latter never troubles himself with these distinctions: he is repulsed by no extremity of years, nor deformity of feature; he adores, with equal ardour, both young and old, nor is either often shocked by his visible preference of the other. I have seen a youthful beau kiss, with perfect devotion, a ball of cotton dropped from the hand of a lady who was knitting stockings for her grand-children. Another pays his court to a belle in her climacteric, by bringing *gimblettes* [A sort of gingerbread.] to the favourite lap-dog, or attending, with great assiduity, the egresses and regresses of her angola, who paces slowly out of the room ten times in an hour, while the door is held open by the complaisant Frenchman with a most respectful gravity.

Thus, you see, France is to the old what a masquerade is to the ugly—the one confounds the disparity of age as the other does that of person; but indiscriminate adoration is no compliment to youth, nor is a mask any privilege to beauty. We may therefore conclude, that though France may be the Elysium of old women, England is that of the young. When I first came into this country, it reminded me of an island I had read of in the Arabian Tales, where the ladies were not deemed in their bloom till they verged towards seventy; and I conceived the project of inviting all the belles, who had been half a century out of fashion in England, to cross the Channel, and begin a new career of admiration!— Yours, &c.

Amiens, 1793.

Dear Brother,

I have thought it hitherto a self evident proposition—that of all the principles which can be inculcated in the human mind, that of liberty is least susceptible of propagation by force. Yet a Council of Philosophers (disciples of Rousseau and Voltaire) have sent forth Dumouriez, at the head of an hundred thousand men, to instruct the people of Flanders in the doctrine of freedom. Such a missionary is indeed invincible, and the defenceless towns of the Low Countries have been converted and pillaged [By the civil agents of the executive power.] by a benevolent crusade of the philanthropic assertors of the rights of man. These warlike Propagandistes, however, do not always convince without experiencing resistance, and ignorance sometimes opposes, with great obstinacy, the progress of truth. The logic of Dumouriez did not enforce conviction at

Gemappe, but at the expence of fifteen thousand of his own army, and, doubtless, a proportionate number of the unconverted.

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Here let me forbear every expression tending to levity: the heart recoils at such a slaughter of human victims; and, if a momentary smile be excited by these Quixotisms, it is checked by horror at their consequences!—Humanity will lament such destruction; but it will likewise be indignant to learn, that, in the official account of this battle, the killed were estimated at three hundred, and the wounded at six!—But, if the people be sacrificed, they are not deceived. The disabled sufferers, who are returning to their homes in different parts of the republic, betray the turpitude of the government, and expose the fallacy of these bloodless victories of the gazettes. The pedants of the Convention are not unlearned in the history of the Praetorian Bands and the omnipotence of armies; and an offensive war is undertaken to give occupation to the soldiers, whose inactivity might produce reflection, or whose discontent might prove fatal to the new order of things.—Attempts are made to divert the public mind from the real misery experienced at home, by relations of useless conquests abroad; the substantial losses, which are the price of these imaginary benefits, are palliated or concealed; and the circumstances of an engagement is known but by individual communication, and when subsequent events have nearly effaced the remembrance of it.—By these artifices, and from motives at least not better, and, perhaps, worse than those I have mentioned, will population be diminished, and agriculture impeded: France will be involved in present distress, and consigned to future want; and the deluded people be punished in the miseries of their own country, because their unprincipled rulers have judged it expedient to carry war and devastation into another.

One of the distinguishing features in the French character is *sang froid*—scarcely a day passes that it does not force itself on one's observation. It is not confined to the thinking part of the people, who know that passion and irritability avail nothing; nor to those who, not thinking at all, are, of course, not moved by any thing: but is equally possessed by every rank and condition, whether you class them by their mental endowments, or their temporal possessions. They not only (as, it must be confessed, is too commonly the case in all countries,) bear the calamities of their friends with great philosophy, but are nearly as reasonable under the pressure of their own. The grief of a Frenchman, at least, partakes of his imputed national complaisance, and, far from intruding itself on society, is always ready to accept of consolation, and join in amusement. If you say your wife or relations are dead, they replay coldly, "*Il faut se consoler*:" or if they visit you in an illness, "*Il faut prendre patience*." Or tell them you are ruined, and their features then become something more attenuated, the shoulders something more elevated, and a more commiserating tone confesses, "*C'est bien mal beureux—Mai enfin que voulez vous?*" ["It's unlucky, but what can be said in such cases?"] and in the same instant they ill recount some good fortune at a card party, or expatiate on the excellence of a ragout.—Yet, to do them justice, they only offer for your comfort the same arguments they would have found efficacious in promoting their own.

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This disposition, which preserves the tranquillity of the rich, indurates the sense of wretchedness in the poor; it supplies the place of fortitude in the one, and that of patience in the other; and, while it enables both to endure their own particular distresses, it makes them submit quietly to a weight and excess of public evils, which any nation but their own would sink under, or resist. Amongst shopkeepers, servants, &c. without incurring personal odium, it has the effect of what would be deemed in England impenetrable assurance. It forces pertinaciously an article not wanted, and preserves the inflexibility of the features at a detected imposition: it inspires servants with arguments in defence of every misdemeanour in the whole domestic catalogue; it renders them insensible either of their negligences or the consequences of them; and endows them with a happy facility of contradicting with the most obsequious politeness.

A gentleman of our acquaintances dined at a table d'Hôte, where the company were annoyed by a very uncommon and offensive smell. On cutting up a fowl, they discovered the smell to have been occasioned by its being dressed with out any other preparation than that of depluming. They immediately sent for the host, and told him, that the fowl had been dressed without having been drawn: but, far from appearing disconcerted, as one might expect, he only replied, "*Cela se pourroit bien, Monsieur.*" ["'Tis very possible, Sir."] Now an English Boniface, even though he had already made his fortune, would have been mortified at such an incident, and all his eloquence would scarcely have produced an unfaltering apology.

Whether this national indifference originate in a physical or a moral cause, from an obtuseness in their corporeal formation or a perfection in their intellectual one, I do not pretend to decide; but whatever be the cause, the effect is enjoyed with great modesty. So little do the French pique themselves on this valuable stoicism, that they acknowledge being more subject to that human weakness called feeling, than any other people in the world. All their writers abound in pathetic exclamations, sentimental phrases, and allusions to "*la sensibilité Française*," as though they imagined it proverbial. You can scarcely hold a conversation with a Frenchman without hearing him detail, with an expression of feature not always analogous, many very affecting sentences. He is *desole, desespere, or afflige*—he has *le coeur trop sensible, le coeur serre, or le coeur navre*; [Afflicted—in despair—too feeling a heart—his heart is wrung or wounded.] and the well-placing of these dolorous assertions depends rather upon the judgement and eloquence of the speaker, than the seriousness of the case which gives rise to them. For instance, the despair and desolation of him who has lost his money, and of him whose head is ill drest, are of different degrees, but the expressions are usually the same. The

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debates of the Convention, the debates of the Jacobins, and all the public prints, are fraught with proofs of this appropriated susceptibility, and it is often attributed to persons and occasions where we should not much expect to find it. A quarrel between the legislators as to who was most concerned in promoting the massacres of September, is reconciled with a “sweet and enthusiastic excess of fraternal tenderness.” When the clubs dispute on the expediency of an insurrection, or the necessity of a more frequent employment of the guillotine, the debate terminates by overflowing of sensibility from all the members who have engaged in it!

At the assassinations in one of the prisons, when all the other miserable victims had perished, the mob discovered one Jonneau, a member of the Assembly, who had been confined for kicking another member named Grangeneuve.* As the massacrers probably had no orders on the subject, he was brought forth, from amidst heaps of murdered companions, and a messenger dispatched to the Assembly, (which during these scenes met as usual,) to enquire if they acknowledged Jonneau as a member. A decree was passed in the affirmative, and Jonneau brought by the assassins, with the decree fastened on his breast, in triumph to his colleagues, who, we are told, at this instance of respect for themselves, shed tears of tenderness and admiration at the conduct of monsters, the sight of whom should seem revolting to human nature.

* When the massacres began, the wife and friends of Jonneau petitioned Grangeneuve on their knees to consent to his enlargement; but Grangeneuve was implacable, and Jonneau continued in prison till released by the means above mentioned. It is observable, that at this dreadful moment the utmost strictness was observed, and every form literally enforced in granting the discharge of a prisoner. A suspension of all laws, human and divine, was allowed to the assassins, while those only that secured them their victims were rigidly adhered to.

Perhaps the real sang froid I have before noticed, and these pretensions to sensibility, are a natural consequence one or the other. It is the history of the beast's confession—we have only to be particularly deficient in any quality, to make us solicitous for the reputation of it; and after a long habit of deceiving others we finish by deceiving ourselves. He who feels no compassion for the distresses of his neighbour, knows that such indifference is not very estimable; he therefore studies to disguise the coldness of his heart by the exaggeration of his language, and supplies, by an affected excess of sentiment, the total absence of it.—The gods have not (as you know) made me poetical, nor do I often tax your patience with a simile, but I think this French sensibility is to genuine feeling, what their paste is to the diamond—it gratifies the vanity of the wearer, and deceives the eye of the superficial observer, but is of little use or value, and when tried by the fire of adversity quickly disappears.

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You are not much obliged to me for this long letter, as I own I have scribbled rather for my own amusement than with a view to yours.— Contrary to our expectation, the trial of the King has begun; and, though I cannot properly be said to have any real interest in the affairs of this country, I take a very sincere one in the fate of its unfortunate Monarch—indeed our whole house has worn an appearance of dejection since the commencement of the business. Most people seem to expect it will terminate favourably, and, I believe, there are few who do not wish it. Even the Convention seem at present disposed to be merciful; and as they judge now, so may they be judged hereafter!

—Yours.

Amiens, January 1793.

I do all possible justice to the liberality of my countrymen, who are become such passionate admirers of the French; and I cannot but lament their having been so unfortunate in the choice of the aera from whence they date this new friendship. It is, however, a proof, that their regards are not much the effect of that kind of vanity which esteems objects in proportion as they are esteemed by the rest of the world; and the sincerity of an attachment cannot be better evinced than by its surviving irretrievable disgrace and universal abhorrence. Many will swell the triumph of a hero, or add a trophy to his tomb; but he who exhibits himself with a culprit at the gallows, or decorates the gibbet with a wreath, is a friend indeed.

If ever the character of a people were repugnant to amity, or inimical to connection, it is that of the French for the last three years.—*

* The editor of the *Courier de l'Egalite*, a most decided patriot, thus expresses himself on the injuries and insults received by the King from the Parisians, and their municipality, previous to his trial: "I know that Louis is guilty—but are we to double his punishment before it is pronounced by the law? Indeed one is tempted to say that, instead of being guided by the humanity and philosophy which dictated the revolution, we have taken lessons of barbarity from the most ferocious savages! Let us be virtuous if we would be republicans; if we go on as we do, we never shall, and must have recourse to a despot: for of two evils it is better to choose the least."

The editor, whose opinion of the present politics is thus expressed, is so truly a revolutionist, and so confidential a patriot, that, in August last, when almost all the journalists were murdered, his paper was the only one that, for some time, was allowed to reach the departments.

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In this short space they have formed a compendium of all the vices which have marked as many preceding ages:—the cruelty and treachery of the league—the sedition, levity, and intrigue of the *Fronde* [A name given to the party in opposition to the court during Cardinal Mazarin's ministry.—See the origin of it in the Memoirs of that period.] with the licentiousness and political corruption of more modern epochs. Whether you examine the conduct of the nation at large, or that of its chiefs and leaders, your feelings revolt at the one, and your integrity despises the other. You see the idols erected by Folly, degraded by Caprice;—the authority obtained by Intrigue, bartered by Profligacy;—and the perfidy and corruption of one side so balanced by the barbarity and levity of the other, that the mind, unable to decide on the preference of contending vices, is obliged to find repose, though with regret and disgust, in acknowledging the general depravity.

La Fayette, without very extraordinary pretensions, became the hero of the revolution. He dictated laws in the Assembly, and prescribed oaths to the Garde Nationale—and, more than once, insulted, by the triumph of ostentatious popularity, the humiliation and distress of a persecuted Sovereign. Yet when La Fayette made an effort to maintain the constitution to which he owed his fame and influence, he was abandoned with the same levity with which he had been adopted, and sunk, in an instant, from a dictator to a fugitive!

Neckar was an idol of another description. He had already departed for his own country, when he was hurried back precipitately, amidst universal acclamations. All were full of projects either of honour or recompence— one was for decreeing him a statue, another proposed him a pension, and a third hailed him the father of the country. But Mr. Neckar knew the French character, and very wisely declined these pompous offers; for before he could have received the first quarter of his pension, or the statue could have been modelled, he was glad to escape, probably not without some apprehensions for his head!

The reign of Mirabeau was something longer. He lived with popularity, was fortunate enough to die before his reputation was exhausted, was deposited in the Pantheon, apotheosised in form, and his bust placed as a companion to that of Brutus, the tutelary genius of the Assembly.—Here, one might have expected, he would have been quit for this world at least; but the fame of a patriot is not secured by his death, nor can the gods of the French be called immortal: the deification of Mirabeau is suspended, his memory put in sequestration, and a committee appointed to enquire, whether a profligate, expensive, and necessitous character was likely to be corruptible. The Convention, too, seem highly indignant that a man, remarkable only for vice and atrocity, should make no conscience of betraying those who were as bad as himself; and that, after having prostituted his talents

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from the moment he was conscious of them, he should not, when associated with such immaculate colleagues, become pure and disinterested. It is very probable that Mirabeau, whose only aim was power, might rather be willing to share it with the King, as Minister, than with so many competitors, and only as Prime Speechmaker to the Assembly: and as he had no reason for suspecting the patriotism of others to be more inflexible than his own, he might think it not impolitic to anticipate a little the common course of things, and betray his companions, before they had time to stipulate for felling him. He might, too, think himself more justified in disposing of them in the gross, because he did not thereby deprive them of their right of bargaining for themselves, and for each other in detail.—*

* La Porte, Steward of the Household, in a letter to Duquesnoy, [Not the brutal Dusquenoy hereafter mentioned.] dated February, 1791, informs him that Barrere, Chairman of the Committee of Domains, is in the best disposition possible.—A letter of Talon, (then minister,) with remarks in the margin by the King, says, that “Sixteen of the most violent members on the patriotic side may be brought over to the court, and that the expence will not exceed two millions of livres: that fifteen thousand will be sufficient for the first payment; and only a Yes or No from his Majesty will fix these members in his interest, and direct their future conduct.”—It likewise observes, that these two millions will cost the King nothing, as the affair is already arranged with the Liquidator-General.

Extract of a letter from Chambonas to the King, dated June 18, 1792:

“Sire,

“I inform your Majesty, that my agents are now in motion. I have just been converting an evil spirit. I cannot hope that I have made him good, but I believe I have neutralized him.—To-night we shall make a strong effort to gain Santerre, (Commandant of the Garde Nationale,) and I have ordered myself to be awakened to hear the result. I shall take care to humour the different interests as well as I can.—The Secretary of the Cordeliers club is now secured.—All these people are to be bought, but not one of them can be hired.—I have had with me one Mollet a physician. Perhaps your Majesty may have heard of him. He is an outrageous Jacobin, and very difficult, for he will receive nothing. He insists, previous to coming to any definitive treaty, on being named Physician to the Army. I have promised him, on condition that Paris is kept quiet for fifteen days. He is now gone to exert himself in our favour. He has great credit at the Caffe de Procope, where all the journalists and ‘enragis’ of the Fauxbourg St. Germain assemble. I hope he will keep his word.—The orator of the people, the noted Le Maire, a clerk at the Post-office, has promised tranquility for a week, and he is to be rewarded.”A new Gladiator has appeared

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lately on the scene, one Ronedie Breton, arrived from England. He has already been exciting the whole quarter of the Poisonnerie in favour of the Jacobins, but I shall have him laid siege to.—Petion is to come to-morrow for fifteen thousand livres, [This sum was probably only to propitiate the Mayor; and if Chambonas, as he proposed, refused farther payment, we may account for Petion's subsequent conduct.] on account of thirty thousand per month which he received under the administration of Dumouriez, for the secret service of the police.— I know not in virtue of what law this was done, and it will be the last he shall receive from me. Your Majesty will, I doubt not, understand me, and approve of what I suggest.

(Signed) "Chambonas."

Extract from the Papers found at the Thuilleries.

It is impossible to warrant the authenticity of these Papers; on their credibility, however, rests the whole proof of the most weighty charges brought against the King. So that it must be admitted, that either all the first patriots of the revolution, and many of those still in repute, are corrupt, or that the King was condemned on forged evidence.

The King might also be solicitous to purchase safety and peace at any rate; and it is unfortunate for himself and the country that he had not recourse to the only effectual means till it was too late. But all this rests on no better evidence than the papers found at the Thuilleries; and as something of this kind was necessary to nourish the exhausted fury of the populace, I can easily conceive that it was thought more prudent to sacrifice the dead, than the living; and the fame of Mirabeau being less valuable than the safety of those who survived him, there would be no great harm in attributing to him what he was very likely to have done.— The corruption of a notorious courtier would have made no impression: the King had already been overwhelmed with such accusations, and they had lost their effect: but to have seduced the virtuous Mirabeau, the very Confucius of the revolution, was a kind of profanation of the holy fire, well calculated to revive the languid rage, and extinguish the small remains of humanity yet left among the people.

It is sufficiently remarkable, that notwithstanding the court must have seen the necessity of gaining over the party now in power, no vestige of any attempt of this kind has been discovered; and every criminating negotiation is ascribed to the dead, the absent, or the insignificant. I do not, however, presume to decide in a case so very delicate; their panegyrists in England may adjust the claims of Mirabeau's integrity, and that of his accusers, at their leisure.

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Another patriot of “distinguished note,” and more peculiarly interesting to our countrymen, because he has laboured much for their conversion, is Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun.—He was in England some time as Plenipotentiary from the Jacobins, charged with establishing treaties between the clubs, publishing seditious manifestoes, contracting friendly alliances with discontented scribblers, and gaining over neutral or hostile newspapers.—But, besides his political and ecclesiastical occupations, and that of writing letters to the Constitutional Society, it seems this industrious Prelate had likewise a correspondence with the Agents of the Court, which, though he was too modest to surcharge his fame by publishing it, was, nevertheless, very profitable.

I am sorry his friends in England are mostly averse from episcopacy, otherwise they might have provided for him, as I imagine he will have no objection to relinquish his claims on the see of Autun. He is not under accusation, and, were he to return, he would not find the laws quite so ceremonious here as in England. After labouring with impunity for months together to promote an insurrection with you, a small private barter of his talents would here cost him his head; and I appeal to the Bishop's friends in England, whether there can be a proper degree of freedom in a country where a man is refused the privilege of disposing of himself to the best advantage.

To the eternal obloquy of France, I must conclude, in the list of those once popular, the ci-devant Duke of Orleans. But it was an unnatural popularity, unaided by a single talent, or a single virtue, supported only by the venal efforts of those who were almost his equals in vice, though not in wealth, and who found a grateful exercise for their abilities in at once profiting by the weak ambition of a bad man, and corrupting the public morals in his favour. The unrighteous compact is now dissolved; those whom he ruined himself to bribe have already forsaken him, and perhaps may endeavour to palliate the disgrace of having been called his friends, by becoming his persecutors.—Thus, many of the primitive patriots are dead, or fugitives, or abandoned, or treacherous; and I am not without fear lest the new race should prove as evanescent as the old.

The virtuous Rolland,* whose first resignation was so instrumental in dethroning the King, has now been obliged to resign a second time, charged with want of capacity, and suspected of malversation; and this virtue, which was so irreproachable, which it would have been so dangerous to dispute while it served the purposes of party, is become hypocrisy, and Rolland will be fortunate if he return to obscurity with only the loss of his gains and his reputation.

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* In the beginning of December, the Council-General of the municipality of Paris opened a register, and appointed a Committee to receive all accusations and complaints whatever against Rolland, who, in return, summoned them to deliver in their accounts to him as Minister of the interior, and accused them, at the same time, of the most scandalous speculations.

The credit of Brissot and the Philosophers is declining fast—the clubs are unpropitious, and no party long survives this formidable omen; so that, like Macbeth, they will have waded from one crime to another, only to obtain a short-lived dominion, at the expence of eternal infamy, and an unlamented fall.

Dumouriez is still a successful General, but he is denounced by one faction, insulted by another, insidiously praised by a third, and, if he should persevere in serving them, he has more disinterested rectitude than I suspect him of, or than they merit. This is another of that Jacobin ministry which proved so fatal to the King; and it is evident that, had he been permitted to entertain the same opinion of all these people as they now profess to have of each other, he would have been still living, and secure on his throne.

After so many mutual infidelities, it might be expected that one party would grow indifferent, and the other suspicious; but the French never despair: new hordes of patriots prepare to possess themselves of the places they are forcing the old ones to abandon, and the people, eager for change, are ready to receive them with the momentary and fallacious enthusiasm which ever precedes disgrace; while those who are thus intriguing for power and influence, are, perhaps, secretly devising how it may be made most subservient to their personal advantage.

Yet, perhaps, these amiable levities may not be displeasing to the Constitutional Society and the revolutionists of England; and, as the very faults of our friends are often endearing to us, they may extend their indulgence to the “humane” and “liberal” precepts of the Jacobins, and the massacres of September.—To confess the truth, I am not a little ashamed for my country when I see addresses from England to a Convention, the members of which have just been accusing each other of assassination and robbery, or, in the ardour of a debate, threatening, cuffing, and knocking each other down. Exclusive of their moral character, considered only as it appears from their reciprocal criminations, they have so little pretension to dignity, or even decency, that it seems a mockery to address them as the political representatives of a powerful nation deliberating upon important affairs.

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If a bearer of one of these congratulatory compliments were not apprized of the forms of the House, he would be rather astonished, at his introduction, to see one member in a menacing attitude, and another denying his veracity in terms perfectly explicit, though not very civil. Perhaps, in two minutes, the partizans of each opponent all rise and clamour, as if preparing for a combat—the President puts on his hat as the signal of a storm—the subordinate disputants are appeased—and the revilings of the principal ones renewed; till, after torrents of indecent language, the quarrel is terminated by a fraternal embrace.*—I think, after such a scene, an addresser must feel a little humiliated, and would return without finding his pride greatly increased by his mission.

* I do not make any assertions of this nature from conjecture or partial evidence. The journals of the time attest that the scenes I describe occur almost in every debate.—As a proof, I subjoin some extracts taken nearly at hazard: “January 7th, Convention Nationale, Presidence de Treilhard.—The debate was opened by an address from the department of Finisterre, expressing their wishes, and adding, that these were likewise the wishes of the nation at large—that Marat, Robespierre, Bazire, Chabot, Merlin, Danton, and their accomplices, might be expelled the Convention as caballers and intriguers paid by the tyrants at war with France.”The account of this debate is thus continued—“The almost daily troubles which arise in the Convention were on the point of being renewed, when a member, a friend to order, spoke as follows, and, it is remarked, was quietly listened to:

“Citizens,

“If three months of uninterrupted silence has given me any claim to your attention, I now ask it in the name of our afflicted country. Were I to continue silent any longer, I should render myself as culpable as those who never hold their tongues. I see we are all sensible of the painfulness of our situation. Every day dissatisfied with ourselves, we come to the debate with the intention of doing something, and every day we return without having done any thing. The people expect from us wise laws, and not storms and tumults. How are we to make these wise laws, and keep twenty-five millions of people quiet, when we, who are only seven hundred and fifty individuals, give an example of perpetual riot and disorder? What signifies our preaching the unity and indivisibility of the republic, when we cannot maintain peace and union amongst ourselves? What good can we expect to do amidst such scandalous disturbances, and while we spend our time in attending to informations, accusations, and inculpations, for the most part utterly unfounded? For my part, I see but one means of attaining any thing like dignity and tranquillity, and that is, by submitting ourselves to coercive regulations.”

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Here follow some proposals, tending to establish a little decency in their proceedings for the future; but the account from whence this extract is taken proceeds to remark, that this invitation to peace was no sooner finished, than a new scene of disturbance took place, to the great loss of their time, and the scandal of all good citizens. One should imagine, that if ever the Convention could think it necessary to assume an appearance of dignity, or at least of seriousness and order, it would be in giving their judgement relative to the King. Yet, in determining how a series of questions should be discussed, on the arrangement of which his fate seems much to have depended, the solemnity of the occasion appears to have had no weight. It was proposed to begin by that of the appeal to the people. This was so violently combated, that the Convention would hear neither party, and were a long time without debating at all. Petion mounted the tribune, and attempted to restore order; but the noise was too great for him to be heard. He at length, however, obtained silence enough to make a motion. Again the murmurs recommenced. Rabaud de St. Etienne made another attempt, but was equally unsuccessful. Those that were of an opposite opinion refused to hear him, and both parties rose up and rushed together to the middle of the Hall. The most dreadful tumult took place, and the President, with great difficulty, procured a calm. Again the storm began, and a member told them, that if they voted in the affirmative, those on the left side (Robespierre, &c.) would not wait the result, but have the King assassinated. "Yes! Yes! (resounded from all parts) the Scelerats of Paris will murder him!" —Another violent disorder ensuing, it was thought no decree could be passed, and, at length, amidst this scene of riot and confusion, the order of questions was arranged, and in such a manner as to decide the fate of the King.—It was determined, that the question of his guilt should precede that of the appeal to the people. Had the order of the questions been changed, the King might have been saved, for many would have voted for the appeal in the first instance who did not dare do it when they found the majority resolved to pronounce him guilty.

It is very remarkable, that, on the same day on which the friends of liberty and equality of Manchester signalized themselves by a most patriotic compliment to the Convention, beginning with "*Francais, vous etes libres,*" ["Frenchmen, you are free."] they were, at that very moment, employed in discussing a petition from numbers of Parisians who had been thrown into prison without knowing either their crime or their accusers, and were still detained under the same arbitrary circumstances.—The law of the constitution is, that every person arrested shall be interrogated within twenty-four hours; but as these imprisonments were the work of the republican Ministers, the Convention seemed to think it indelicate to interpose,

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and these citizens of a country whose freedom is so much envied by the Manchester Society, will most likely remain in durance as long as their confinement shall be convenient to those who have placed them there.—A short time after, Villette, who is a news-writer and deputy, was cited to appear before the municipality of Paris, under the charge of having inserted in his paper “equivocal phrases and anti-civic expressions, tending to diminish the confidence due to the municipality.”—Villette, as being a member of the Convention, obtained redress; but had he been only a journalist, the liberty of the press would not have rescued him.—On the same day, complaint was made in the Assembly, that one man had been arrested instead of another, and confined for some weeks, and it was agreed unanimously, (a thing that does not often occur,) that the powers exercised by the Committee of Inspection [Surveillance.—See Debates, December.] were incompatible with liberty.

The patriots of Belfast were not more fortunate in the adaption of their civilities—they addressed the Convention, in a strain of great piety, to congratulate them on the success of their arms in the “cause of civil and religious liberty.”*

* At this time the municipalities were empowered to search all houses by night or day; but their visites domiciliaires, as they are called, being made chiefly in the night, a decree has since ordained that they shall take place only during the day. Perhaps an Englishman may think the latter quite sufficient, considering that France is the freest country in the world, and, above all, a republic.

The harangue was interrupted by the *mal-a-propos* entrance of two deputies, who complained of having been beaten, almost hanged, and half drowned, by the people of Chartres, for belonging, as they were told, to an assembly of atheistical persecutors of religion; and this Convention, whom the Society of Belfast admire for propagating “religious liberty” in other countries, were in a few days humbly petitioned, from various departments, not to destroy it in their own. I cannot, indeed, suppose they have really such a design; but the contempt with which they treat religion has occasioned an alarm, and given the French an idea of their piety very different from that so kindly conceived by the patriots of Belfast.

I entrust this to our friend Mrs. _____, who is leaving France in a few days; and as we are now on the eve of a war, it will be the last letter you will receive, except a few lines occasionally on our private affairs, or to inform you of my health. As we cannot, in the state Mrs. D_____ is in, think of returning to England at present, we must trust ourselves to the hospitality of the French for at least a few weeks, and I certainly will not abuse it, by sending any remarks on their political affairs out

of the country. But as I know you interest yourself much in the subject, and read with partiality my attempts to amuse you, I will continue to

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throw my observations on paper as regularly as I have been accustomed to do, and I hope, ere long, to be the bearer of the packets myself. I here also renew my injunction, that no part of my correspondence that relates to French politics be communicated to any one, not even my mother. What I have written has been merely to gratify your own curiosity, and I should be extremely mortified if my opinions were repeated even in the little circle of our private acquaintance. I deem myself perfectly justifiable in imparting my reflections to you, but I have a sort of delicacy that revolts at the thought of being, in the remotest degree, accessary to conveying intelligence from a country in which I reside, and which is so peculiarly situated as France is at this moment. My feelings, my humanity, are averse from those who govern, but I should regret to be the means of injuring them. You cannot mistake my intentions, and I conclude by seriously reminding you of the promise I exacted previous to any political discussion.—Adieu.

Amiens, February 15, 1793.

I did not, as I promised, write immediately on my return from Chantilly; the person by whom I intended to send my letter having already set out for England, and the rule I have observed for the last three months of entrusting nothing to the post but what relates to our family affairs, is now more than ever necessary. I have before requested, and I must now insist, that you make no allusion to any political matter whatever, nor even mention the name of any political person. Do not imagine that you are qualified to judge of what is prudent, or what may be written with safety—I repeat, no one in England can form an idea of the suspicion that pervades every part of the French government.

I cannot venture to answer decisively your question respecting the King—indeed the subject is so painful to me, that I have hitherto avoided reverting to it. There certainly was, as you observe, some sudden alteration in the dispositions of the Assembly between the end of the trial and the final judgement. The causes were most probably various, and must be sought for in the worst vices of our nature—cruelty, avarice, and cowardice. Many, I doubt not, were guided only by the natural malignity of their hearts; many acted from fear, and expected to purchase impunity for former compliances with the court by this popular expiation; a large number are also supposed to have been paid by the Duke of Orleans—whether for the gratification of malice or ambition, time must develop.—But, whatever were the motives, the result was an iniquitous combination of the worst of a set of men, before selected from all that was bad in the nation, to profane the name of justice—to sacrifice an unfortunate, but not a guilty Prince—and to fix an indelible stain on the country.

Among those who gave their opinion at large, you will observe Paine: and, as I intimated in a former letter, it seems he was at that time rather allured by the vanity of making a speech that should be applauded, than by any real desire of injuring the King. Such vanity, however, is not pardonable: a man has a right to ruin himself, or to make himself ridiculous; but when his vanity becomes baneful to others, as it has all the effect, so does it merit the punishment, of vice.

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Of all the rest, Condorcet has most powerfully disgusted me. The avowed wickedness of Thuriot or Marat inspires one with horror; but this cold philosophic hypocrite excites contempt as well as detestation. He seems to have wavered between a desire to preserve the reputation of humanity, which he has affected, and that of gratifying the real depravity of his mind. Would one have expected, that a speech full of benevolent systems, mild sentiments, and aversion from the effusion of human blood, was to end in a vote for, and recommendation of, the immediate execution of his sovereign?—But such a conduct is worthy of him, who has repaid the benefits of his patron and friend [The Duke de la Rochefaucault.] by a persecution which ended in his murder.

You will have seen, that the King made some trifling requests to be granted after his decease, and that the Convention ordered him to be told, that the nation, “always great, always just,” accorded them in part. Yet this just and magnanimous people refused him a preparation of only three days, and allowed him but a few hours—suffered his remains to be treated with the most scandalous indecency—and debated seriously, whether or no the Queen should receive some little tokens of affection he had left for her.

The King’s enemies had so far succeeded in depreciating his personal courage, that even his friends were apprehensive he might not sustain his last moments with dignity. The event proves how much injustice has been done him in this respect, as well as in many others. His behaviour was that of a man who derived his fortitude from religion—it was that of pious resignation, not ostentatious courage; it was marked by none of those instances of levity and indifference which, at such a time, are rather symptoms of distraction than resolution; he exhibited the composure of an innocent mind, and the seriousness that became the occasion; he seemed to be occupied in preparing for death, but not to fear it.—I doubt not but the time will come, when those who have sacrificed him may envy the last moments of Louis the Sixteenth!

That the King was not guilty of the principal charges brought against him, has been proved indubitably—not altogether by the assertions of those who favour him, but by the confession of his enemies. He was, for example, accused of planning the insurrection of the tenth of August; yet not a day passes that both parties in the Convention are not disputing the priority of their efforts to dethrone him, and to erect a republic; and they date their machinations long before the period on which they attribute the first aggression to the King.—Mr. Sourdat, and several other writers, have very ably demonstrated the falsehood of these charges; but the circulation of such pamphlets was dangerous—of course, secret and limited; while those which tended to deceive and prejudice the people were dispersed with profusion, at the expence of the government.*

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* Postscript of the *Courier de l'Egalite*, Sept. 29:

"The present minister (Rolland) takes every possible means in his power to enlighten and inform the people in whatever concerns their real interests. For this purpose he has caused to be printed and distributed, in abundance, the accounts and papers relative to the events of the tenth of August. We have yet at our office a small number of these publications, which we have distributed to our subscribers, and we still give them to any of our fellow-citizens who have opportunities of circulating them."

I have seen one of these written in coarse language, and replete with vulgar abuse, purposely calculated for the lower classes in the country, who are more open to gross impositions than those of the same rank in towns; yet I have no doubt, in my own mind, that all these artifices would have proved unavailing, had the decision been left to the nation at large: but they were intimidated, if not convinced; and the mandate of the Convention, which forbids this sovereign people to exercise their judgement, was obeyed with as much submission, and perhaps more reluctance, than an edict of Louis the fourteenth.*

* The King appealed, by his counsel, to the People; but the convention, by a decree, declared his appeal of no validity, and forbade all persons to pay attention to it, under the severest penalties.

The French seem to have no energy but to destroy, and to resist nothing but gentleness or infancy. They bend under a firm or oppressive administration, but become restless and turbulent under a mild Prince or a minority.

The fate of this unfortunate Monarch has made me reflect, with great seriousness, on the conduct of our opposition-writers in England. The literary banditti who now govern France began their operations by ridiculing the King's private character—from ridicule they proceeded to calumny, and from calumny to treason; and perhaps the first libel that degraded him in the eyes of his subjects opened the path from the palace to the scaffold.—I do not mean to attribute the same pernicious intentions to the authors on your side the Channel, as I believe them, for the most part, to be only mercenary, and that they would write panegyrics as soon as satires, were they equally profitable. I know too, that there is no danger of their producing revolutions in England—we do not suffer our principles to be corrupted by a man because he has the art of rhyming nothings into consequence, nor suffer another to overturn the government because he is an orator. Yet, though these men may not be very mischievous, they are very reprehensible; and, in a moment like the present, contempt and neglect should supply the place of that punishment against which our liberty of the press secures them.

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It is not for a person no better informed than myself to pronounce on systems of government—still less do I affect to have more enlarged notions than the generality of mankind; but I may, without risking those imputations, venture to say, I have no childish or irrational deference for the persons of Kings. I know they are not, by nature, better than other men, and a neglected or vicious education may often render them worse. This does not, however, make me less respect the office. I respect it as the means chosen by the people to preserve internal peace and order—to banish corruption and petty tyrants ["And fly from petty tyrants to the throne."—Goldsmith]—and give vigour to the execution of the laws.

Regarded in this point of view, I cannot but lament the mode which has lately prevailed of endeavouring to alienate the consideration due to our King's public character, by personal ridicule. If an individual were attacked in this manner, his house beset with spies, his conversation with his family listened to, and the most trifling actions of his life recorded, it would be deemed unfair and illiberal, and he who should practice such meanness would be thought worthy of no punishment more respectful than what might be inflicted by an oaken censor, or an admonitory heel.—But it will be said, a King is not an individual, and that such a habit, or such an amusement, is beneath the dignity of his character. Yet would it be but consistent in those who labour to prove, by the public acts of Kings, that they are less than men, not to exact, that, in their private lives, they should be more.—The great prototype of modern satyrists, Junius, does not allow that any credit should be given a Monarch for his domestic virtues; is he then to be reduced to an individual, only to scrutinize his foibles, and is his station to serve only as the medium of their publicity? Are these literary miners to penetrate the recesses of private life, only to bring to light the dross? Do they analyse only to discover poisons? Such employments may be congenial to their natures, but have little claim to public remuneration. The merit of a detractor is not much superior to that of a flatterer; nor is a Prince more likely to be amended by imputed follies, than by undeserved panegyrics. If any man wished to represent his King advantageously, it could not be done better than by remarking, that, after all the watchings of assiduous necessity, and the laborious researches of interested curiosity, it appears, that his private life affords no other subjects of ridicule than, that he is temperate, domestic, and oeconomical, and, as is natural to an active mind, wishes to be informed of whatever happens not to be familiar to him. It were to be desired that some of these accusations were applicable to those who are so much scandalized at them: but they are not littlenesses—the littleness is in him who condescends to report them; and I have often wondered that men of genius should make a traffic of gleaning from the refuse of anti-chambers, and retailing the anecdotes of pages and footmen!

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You will perceive the kind of publications I allude to; and I hope the situation of France, and the fate of its Monarch, may suggest to the authors a more worthy employ of their talents, than that of degrading the executive power in the eyes of the people.

Amiens, Feb. 25, 1793.

I told you, I believe, in a former letter, that the people of Amiens were all aristocrats: they have, nevertheless, two extremely popular qualifications—I mean filth and incivility. I am, however, far from imputing either of them to the revolution. This grossness of behavior has long existed under the palliating description of "*la franchise Picarde*," ["Picardy frankness."] and the floors and stairs of many houses will attest their preeminence in filth to be of a date much anterior to the revolution.—If you purchase to the amount of an hundred livres, there are many shopkeepers who will not send your purchases home; and if the articles they show you do not answer your purpose, they are mostly sullen, and often rude. No appearance of fatigue or infirmity suggests to them the idea of offering you a seat; they contradict you with impertinence, address you with freedom, and conclude with cheating you if they can. It was certainly on this account that Sterne would not agree to die at the inn at Amiens. He might, with equal justice, have objected to any other house; and I am sure if he thought them an unpleasant people to die amongst, he would have found them still worse to live with.—My observation as to the civility of aristocrats does not hold good here—indeed I only meant that those who ever had any, and were aristocrats, still preserved it.

Amiens has always been a commercial town, inhabited by very few of the higher noblesse; and the mere gentry of a French province are not very much calculated to give a tone of softness and respect to those who imitate them. You may, perhaps, be surprized that I should express myself with little consideration for a class which, in England, is so highly respectable: there gentlemen of merely independent circumstances are not often distinguishable in their manners from those of superior fortune or rank. But, in France, it is different: the inferior noblesse are stiff, ceremonious, and ostentatious; while the higher ranks were always polite to strangers, and affable to their dependents. When you visit some of the former, you go through as many ceremonies as though you were to be invested with an order, and rise up and sit down so many times, that you return more fatigued than you would from a cricket match; while with the latter you are just as much at your ease as is consistent with good breeding and propriety, and a whole circle is never put in commotion at the entrance and exit of every individual who makes part of it. Any one not prepared for these formalities, and who, for the first time, saw an assembly of twenty people all rising from their seats at the entrance of a single

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beau, would suppose they were preparing for a dance, and that the new comer was a musician. For my part I always find it an oeconomy of strength (when the locality makes it practicable) to take possession of a window, and continue standing in readiness until the hour of visiting is over, and calm is established by the arrangement of the card tables.—The revolution has not annihilated the difference of rank; though it has effected the abolition of titles; and I counsel all who have remains of the gout or inflexible joints, not to frequent the houses of ladies whose husbands have been ennobled only by their offices, of those whose genealogies are modern, or of the collaterals of ancient families, whose claims are so far removed as to be doubtful. The society of all these is very exigent, and to be avoided by the infirm or indolent.

I send you with this a little collection of airs which I think you will find very agreeable. The French music has not, perhaps, all the reputation it is entitled to. Rousseau has declared it to be nothing but doleful psalmodes; Gray calls a French concert “Une tintamarre de diable:” and the prejudices inspired by these great names are not easily obliterated. We submit our judgement to theirs, even when our taste is refractory.—The French composers seem to excel in marches, in lively airs that abound in striking passages calculated for the popular taste, and yet more particularly in those simple melodies they call romances: they are often in a very charming and singular style, without being either so delicate or affecting as the Italian. They have an expression of plaintive tenderness, which makes one tranquil rather than melancholy; and which, though it be more soothing than interesting, is very delightful.—Yours, &c.

Amiens, 1793.

I have been to-day to take a last view of the convents: they are now advertised for sale, and will probably soon be demolished. You know my opinion is not, on the whole, favourable to these institutions, and that I thought the decree which extinguishes them, but which secured to the religious already profest the undisturbed possession of their habitations during life, was both politic and humane. Yet I could not see the present state of these buildings without pain—they are now inhabited by volunteers, who are passing a novitiate of intemperance and idleness, previous to their reception in the army; and those who recollect the peace and order that once reigned within the walls of a monastery, cannot but be stricken with the contrast. I felt both for the expelled and present possessors, and, perhaps, gave a mental preference to the superstition which founded such establishments, over the persecution that destroys them.

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The resigned and pious votaries, who once supposed themselves secure from all the vicissitudes of fortune, and whose union seemed dissoluble only by the common lot of mortality, are now many of them dispersed, wandering, friendless, and miserable. The religion which they cherished as a comfort, and practised as a duty, is now pursued as a crime; and it is not yet certain that they will not have to choose between an abjuration of their principles, and the relinquishment of the means of existence.—The military occupiers offered nothing very alleviating to such unpleasant reflections; and I beheld with as much regret the collection of these scattered individuals, as the separation of those whose habitations they fill. They are most of them extremely young, taken from villages and the service of agriculture, and are going to risk their lives in a cause detested perhaps by more than three parts of the nation, and only to secure impunity to its oppressors.

It has usually been a maxim in all civilized states, that when the general welfare necessitates some act of partial injustice, it shall be done with the utmost consideration for the sufferer, and that the required sacrifice of moral to political expediency shall be palliated, as much as the circumstances will admit, by the manner of carrying it into execution. But the French legislators, in this respect, as in most others, truly original, disdain all imitation, and are rarely guided by such confined motives. With them, private rights are frequently violated, only to facilitate the means of public oppressions—and cruel and iniquitous decrees are rendered still more so by the mode of enforcing them.

I have met with no person who could conceive the necessity of expelling the female religious from their convents. It was, however, done, and that with a mixture of meanness and barbarity which at once excites contempt and detestation. The ostensible reasons were, that these communities afforded an asylum to the superstitious, and that by their entire suppression, a sale of the houses would enable the nation to afford the religious a more liberal support than had been assigned them by the Constituent Assembly. But they are shallow politicians who expect to destroy superstition by persecuting those who practise it: and so far from adding, as the decree insinuates, to the pensions of the nuns, they have now subjected them to an oath which, to those at least whose consciences are timid, will act as a prohibition to their receiving what they were before entitled to.

The real intention of the legislature in thus entirely dispersing the female religious, besides the general hatred of every thing connected with religion, is, to possess itself of an additional resource in the buildings and effects, and, as is imagined by some, to procure numerous and convenient state prisons. But, I believe, the latter is only an aristocratic apprehension, suggested by the appropriation of the

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convents to this use in a few places, where the ancient prisons are full.— Whatever purpose it is intended to answer, it has been effected in a way disgraceful to any national body, except such a body as the Convention; and, though it be easy to perceive the cruelty of such a measure, yet as, perhaps, its injustice may not strike you so forcibly as if you had had the same opportunities of investigating it as I have, I will endeavour to explain, as well as I can, the circumstances that render it so peculiarly aggravated.

I need not remind you, that no order is of very modern foundation, nor that the present century has, in a great degree, exploded the fashion of compounding for sins by endowing religious institutions. Thus, necessarily, by the great change which has taken place in the expence of living, many establishments that were poorly endowed must have become unable to support themselves, but for the efforts of those who were attached to them. It is true, that the rent of land has increased as its produce became more valuable; but every one knows that the lands dependent on religious houses have always been let on such moderate terms, as by no means to bear a proportion to the necessities they were intended to supply; and as the monastic vows have long ceased to be the frequent choice of the rich, little increase has been made to the original stock by the accession of new votaries:—yet, under all these disadvantages, many societies have been able to rebuild their houses, embellish their churches, purchase plate, &c. &c. The love of their order, that spirit of oeconomy for which they are remarkable, and a persevering industry, had their usual effects, and not only banished poverty, but became a source of wealth. An indefatigable labour at such works as could be profitably disposed of, the education of children, and the admission of boarders, were the means of enriching a number of convents, whose proper revenues would not have afforded them even a subsistence.

But the fruits of active toil or voluntary privation, have been confounded with those of expiatory bequest and mistaken devotion, and have alike become the prey of a rapacious and unfeeling government. Many communities are driven from habitations built absolutely with the produce of their own labour. In some places they were refused even their beds and linen; and the stock of wood, corn, &c. provided out of the savings of their pensions, (understood to be at their own disposal,) have been seized, and sold, without making them the smallest compensation.

Thus deprived of every thing, they are sent into the world with a prohibition either to live several of them together, wear their habits,* or practise their religion; yet their pensions** are too small for them to live upon, except in society, or to pay the usual expence of boarding: many of them have no other means of procuring secular dresses, and still more will imagine themselves criminal in abstaining from the mode of worship they have been taught to think salutary.

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* Two religious, who boarded with a lady I had occasion to see sometimes, told me, that they had been strictly enjoined not to dress like each other in any way.

** The pensions are from about seventeen to twenty-five pounds sterling per annum.—At the time I am writing, the necessities of life are increased in price nearly two-fifths of what they bore formerly, and are daily becoming dearer. The Convention are not always insensible to this—the pay of the foot soldier is more than doubled.

It is also to be remembered, that women of small fortune in France often embraced the monastic life as a frugal retirement, and, by sinking the whole they were possessed of in this way, they expected to secure a certain provision, and to place themselves beyond the reach of future vicissitudes: yet, though the sums paid on these occasions can be easily ascertained, no indemnity has been made; and many will be obliged to violate their principles, in order to receive a trifling pension, perhaps much less than the interest of their money would have produced without loss of the principal.

But the views of these legislating philosophers are too sublimely extensive to take in the wrongs or sufferings of contemporary individuals; and not being able to disguise, even to themselves, that they create much misery at present, they promise incalculable advantages to those who shall happen to be alive some centuries hence! Most of these poor nuns are, however, of an age to preclude them from the hope of enjoying this Millennium; and they would have been content en attendant these glorious times, not to be deprived of the necessities of life, or marked out as objects of persecution.

The private distresses occasioned by the dissolution of the convents are not the only consequences to be regretted—for a time, at least, the loss must certainly be a public one. There will now be no means of instruction for females, nor any refuge for those who are without friends or relations: thousands of orphans must be thrown unprotected on the world, and guardians, or single men, left with the care of children, have no way to dispose of them properly. I do not contend that the education of a convent is the best possible: yet are there many advantages attending it; and I believe it will readily be granted, that an education not quite perfect is better than no education at all. It would not be very difficult to prove, that the systems of education, both in England and France, are extremely defective; and if the characters of women are generally better formed in one than the other, it is not owing to the superiority of boarding-schools over convents, but to the difference of our national manners, which tend to produce qualities not necessary, or not valued, in France.

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The most distinguished female excellencies in England are an attachment to domestic life, an attention to its oeconomies, and a cultivated understanding. Here, any thing like house-wifery is not expected but from the lower classes, and reading or information is confined chiefly to professed wits. Yet the qualities so much esteemed in England are not the effect of education: few domestic accomplishments, and little useful knowledge, are acquired at a boarding-school; but finally the national character asserts its empire, and the female who has gone through a course of frivolities from six to sixteen, who has been taught that the first “human principle” should be to give an elegant tournure to her person, after a few years’ dissipation, becomes a good wife and mother, and a rational companion.

In France, young women are kept in great seclusion: religion and oeconomy form a principal part of conventual acquirements, and the natural vanity of the sex is left to develop itself without the aid of authority, or instillation by precept—yet, when released from this sober tuition, manners take the ascendant here as in England, and a woman commences at her marriage the aera of coquetry, idleness, freedom, and rouge.—We may therefore, I think, venture to conclude, that the education of a boarding-school is better calculated for the rich, that of a convent for the middle classes and the poor; and, consequently, that the suppression of this last in France will principally affect those to whom it was most beneficial, and to whom the want of it will be most dangerous.

A committee of wise men are now forming a plan of public instruction, which is to excel every thing ever adopted in any age or country; and we may therefore hope that the defects which have hitherto prevailed, both in theirs and our own, will be remedied. All we have to apprehend is, that, amidst so many wise heads, more than one wise plan may be produced, and a difficulty of choice keep the rising generation in a sort of abeyance, so that they must remain sterile, or may become vitiated, while it is determining in what manner they shall be cultivated.

It is almost a phrase to say, the resources of France are wonderful, and this is no less true than generally admitted. Whatever be the want or loss, it is no sooner known than supplied, and the imagination of the legislature seems to become fertile in proportion to the exigence of the moment.—I was in some pain at the disgrace of Mirabeau, lest this new kind of retrospective judgement should depopulate the Pantheon of the few divinities that remained; more especially when I considered that Voltaire, notwithstanding his merits as an enemy to revelation, had been already accused of aristocracy, and even Rousseau himself might not be found impeccable. His Contrat Social might not, perhaps, in the eyes of a committee of philosophical Rhadmanthus’s, atone for his occasional admiration of christianity: and thus some crime, either of church or state, disfranchise the whole race of immortals, and their fame scarcely outlast the dispute about their earthly remains.*

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* Alluding to the disputes between the Convention and the person who claimed the exclusive right to the remains of Rousseau.

My concern, on this account, was the more justifiable, because the great fallibility which prevailed among the patriots, and the very delicate state of the reputation of those who retained their political existence, afforded no hope that they could ever fill the vacancies in the Pantheon.—But my fears were very superfluous—France will never want subjects for an apotheosis, and if one divinity be dethroned, “another and another still succeeds,” all equally worthy as long as they continue in fashion.—The phrenzy of despair has supplied a successor to Mirabeau, in Le Pelletier. [De St. Fargeau.] The latter had hitherto been little heard of, but his death offered an occasion for exciting the people too favourable to be neglected: his patriotism and his virtues immediately increased in a ratio to the use which might be made of them;* a dying speech proper for the purpose was composed, and it was decreed unanimously, that he should be installed in all the rights, privileges, and immortalities of the degraded Riquetti.—

* At the first intelligence of his death, a member of the Convention, who was with him, and had not yet had time to study a speech, confessed his last words to have been, “J’ai froid.”—“I am cold.” This, however, would have made no figure on the banners of a funeral procession; and Le Pelletier was made to die, like the hero of a tragedy, uttering blank verse.

The funeral that preceded these divine awards was a farce, which tended more to provoke a massacre of the living, than to honour the dead; and the Convention, who vowed to sacrifice their animosities on his tomb, do so little credit to the conciliating influence of St. Fargeau’s virtues, that they now dispute with more acrimony than ever.

The departments, who begin to be extremely submissive to Paris, thought it incumbent on them to imitate this ceremony; but as it was rather an act of fear than of patriotism, it was performed here with so much oeconomy, and so little inclination, that the whole was cold and paltry. —An altar was erected on the great market-place, and so little were the people affected by the catastrophe of a patriot whom they were informed had sacrificed* his life in their cause, that the only part of the business which seemed to interest them was the extravagant gestures of a woman in a dirty white dress, hired to act the part of a “pleureuse,” or mourner, and whose sorrow appeared to divert them infinitely.—

* There is every reason to believe that Le Pelletier was not singled out for his patriotism. —It is said, and with much appearance of probability, that he had promised PARIS, with whom he had been intimate, not to vote for the death of the King; and, on his breaking his word, PARIS, who seems to have not been perfectly in his senses, assassinated him.—PARIS had been

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in the Garde du Corps, and, like most of his brethren, was strongly attached to the King's person. Rage and despair prompted him to the commission of an act, which can never be excused, however the perpetrator may imagine himself the mere instrument of Divine vengeance.—Notwithstanding the most vigilant research, he escaped for some time, and wandered as far as Forges d'Eaux, a little town in Normandy. At the inn where he lodged, the extravagance of his manner giving suspicions that he was insane, the municipality were applied to, to secure him. An officer entered his room while he was in bed, and intimated the purpose he was come for. PARIS affected to comply, and, turning, drew a pistol from under the clothes, and shot himself.—Among the papers found upon him were some affecting lines, expressive of his contempt for life, and adding, that the influence of his example was not to be dreaded, since he left none behind him that deserved the name of Frenchmen!—*"Qu'on n'inquiete personne! personne n'a ete mon complice dans la mort heureuse de Scelerat St. Fargeau. Si Je ne l'eusse pas rencontre sous ma main, Je purgeois la France du regicide, du parricide, du patricide D'Orleans. Qu'on n'inquiete personne. Tous les Francois sont des laches auxquelles Je dis—*

"Peuple, dont les forfaits jettent partout l'effroi,
"Avec calme et plaisir J'abandonne la vie
"Ce n'est que par la mort qu'on peut fuir l'infamie,
"Qu'imprime sur nos fronts le sang de notre Roi."

"Let no man be molested on my account: I had no accomplice in the fortunate death of the miscreant St. Fargeau. If he had not fallen in my way, I should have purged France of the regicide, parricide, patricide D'Orleans. Let no man be molested. All the French are cowards, to whom I say—'People, whose crimes inspire universal horror, I quit life with tranquility and pleasure. By death alone can we fly from that infamy which the blood of our King has marked upon our foreheads!'"—This paper was entitled "My Brevet of Honour."

It will ever be so where the people are not left to consult their own feelings. The mandate that orders them to assemble may be obeyed, but "that which passeth show" is not to be enforced. It is a limit prescribed by Nature herself to authority, and such is the aversion of the human mind from dictature and restraint, that here an official rejoicing is often more serious than these political exactions of regret levied in favour of the dead.—Yours, &c. &c.

March 23, 1793.

The partizans of the French in England alledge, that the revolution, by giving them a government founded on principles of moderation and rectitude, will be advantageous to all Europe, and more especially to Great Britain, which has so often suffered by wars, the fruit of their intrigues.—This reasoning would be unanswerable could the character

of the people be changed with the form of their government: but, I believe, whoever examines its administration, whether as it relates to foreign powers or internal policy, will find that the same spirit of intrigue, fraud, deception, and want of faith, which dictated in the cabinet of Mazarine or Louvois, has been transfused, with the addition of meanness and ignorance,* into a Constitutional Ministry, or the Republican Executive Council.

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* The Executive Council is composed of men who, if ever they were well-intentioned, must be totally unfit for the government of an extensive republic. Monge, the Minister of the Marine, is a professor of geometry; Garat, Minister of Justice, a gazette writer; Le Brun, Minister of Foreign Affairs, ditto; and Pache, Minister of the Interior, a private tutor. —Whoever reads the debates of the Convention will find few indications of real talents, and much pedantry and ignorance. For example, Anacharsis Cloots, who is a member of the Committee of Public Instruction, and who one should, of course, expect not to be more ignorant than his colleagues, has lately advised them to distress the enemy by invading Scotland, which he calls the granary of England.

France had not yet determined on the articles of her future political creed, when agents were dispatched to make proselytes in England, and, in proportion as she assumed a more popular form of government, all the qualities which have ever marked her as the disturber of mankind seem to have acquired new force. Every where the ambassadors of the republic are accused of attempts to excite revolt and discontent, and England* is now forced into a war because she could not be persuaded to an insurrection.

* For some time previous to the war, all the French prints and even members of the Convention, in their debates, announced England to be on the point of an insurrection. The intrigues of Chauvelin, their ambassador, to verify this prediction, are well known. Brissot, Le Brun, &c. who have since been executed, were particularly charged by the adverse party with provoking the war with England. Robespierre, and those who succeeded, were not so desirous of involving us in a foreign war, and their humane efforts were directed merely to excite a civil one.—The third article of accusation against Rolland is, having sent twelve millions of livres to England, to assist in procuring a declaration of war.

Perhaps it may be said, that the French have taken this part only for their own security, and to procure adherents to the common cause; but this is all I contend for—that the politics of the old government actuate the new, and that they have not, in abolishing courts and royalty, abolished the perfidious system of endeavouring to benefit themselves, by creating distress and dissention among their neighbours.—Louvois supplied the Protestants in the Low Countries with money, while he persecuted them in France. The agents of the republic, more oeconomical, yet directed by the same motives, eke out corruption by precepts of sedition, and arm the leaders of revolt with the rights of man; but, forgetting the maxim that charity should begin at home, in their zeal for the freedom of other countries, they leave no portion of it for their own!

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Louis the Fourteenth over-ran Holland and the Palatinate to plant the white flag, and lay the inhabitants under contribution—the republic send an army to plant the tree of liberty, levy a *don patriotique*, [Patriotic gift.] and place garrisons in the towns, in order to preserve their freedom.—Kings have violated treaties from the desire of conquest —these virtuous republicans do it from the desire of plunder; and, previous to opening the Scheldt, the invasion of Holland, was proposed as a means of paying the expences of the war. I have never heard that even the most ambitious Potentates ever pretended to extend their subjugation beyond the persons and property of the conquered; but these militant dogmatists claim an empire even over opinions, and insist that no people can be free or happy unless they regulate their ideas of freedom and happiness by the variable standard of the Jacobin club. Far from being of Hudibras's philosophy,* they seem to think the mind as tangible as the body, and that, with the assistance of an army, they may as soon lay one “by the heels” as the other.

* “Quoth he, one half of man, his mind,
“Is, sui juris, unconfin'd,
“And ne'er can be laid by the heels,
“Whate'er the other moiety feels.”

Hudibras.

Now this I conceive to be the worst of all tyrannies, nor have I seen it exceeded on the French theatre, though, within the last year, the imagination of their poets has been peculiarly ingenious and inventive on this subject.—It is absurd to suppose this vain and overbearing disposition will cease when the French government is settled. The intrigues of the popular party began in England the very moment they attained power, and long before there was any reason to suspect that the English would deviate from their plan of neutrality. If, then, the French cannot restrain this mischievous spirit while their own affairs are sufficient to occupy their utmost attention, it is natural to conclude, that, should they once become established, leisure and peace will make them dangerous to the tranquillity of all Europe. Other governments may be improved by time, but republics always degenerate; and if that which is in its original state of perfection exhibit already the maturity of vice, one cannot, without being more credulous than reasonable, hope any thing better for the future than what we have experienced from the past.—It is, indeed, unnecessary to detain you longer on this subject. You must, ere now, be perfectly convinced how far the revolutionary systems of France are favourable to the peace and happiness of other countries. I will only add a few details which may assist you in judging of what advantage they have been to the French themselves, and whether, in changing the form of their government, they have amended its principles; or if, in “conquering liberty,” (as they express it,) they have really become free.

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The situation of France has altered much within the last two months: the seat of power is less fluctuating and the exercise of it more absolute— arbitrary measures are no longer incidental, but systematic—and a regular connection of dependent tyranny is established, beginning with the Jacobin clubs, and ending with the committees of the sections. A simple decree for instance, has put all the men in the republic, (unmarried and without children,) from eighteen to forty-five at the requisition of the Minister of War. A levy of three hundred thousand is to take place immediately: each department is responsible for the whole of a certain number to the Convention, the districts are answerable for their quota to the departments, the municipalities to the district, and the diligence of the whole is animated by itinerant members of the legislature, entrusted with the disposal of an armed force. The latter circumstance may seem to you incredible; yet is it nevertheless true, that most of the departments are under the jurisdiction of these sovereigns, whose authority is nearly unlimited. We have, at this moment, two Deputies in the town, who arrest and imprison at their pleasure. One-and-twenty inhabitants of Amiens were seized a few nights ago, without any specific charge having been exhibited against them, and are still in confinement. The gates of the town are shut, and no one is permitted to pass or repass without an order from the municipality; and the observance of this is exacted even of those who reside in the suburbs. Farmers and country people, who are on horseback, are obliged to have the features and complexion of their horses minuted on the passport with their own. Every person whom it is found convenient to call suspicious, is deprived of his arms; and private houses are disturbed during the night, (in opposition to a positive law,) under pretext of searching for refractory priests.—These regulations are not peculiar to this department, and you must understand them as conveying a general idea of what passes in every part of France.—I have yet to add, that letters are opened with impunity—that immense sums of assignats are created at the will of the Convention—that no one is excused mounting guard in person—and that all housekeepers, and even lodgers, are burthened with the quartering of troops, sometimes as many as eight or ten, for weeks together.

You may now, I think, form a tolerable idea of the liberty that has accrued to the French from the revolution, the dethronement of the King, and the establishment of a republic. But, though the French suffer this despotism without daring to murmur openly, many a significant shrug and doleful whisper pass in secret, and this political discontent has even its appropriate language, which, though not very explicit, is perfectly understood. —Thus when you hear one man say to another, *"Ah, mon Dieu, on est bien malheureux dans ce moment ici;"* or, *"Nous sommes dans une*

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position tres critique—Je voudrais bien voir la fin de tout cela;" ["God knows, we are very miserable at present—we are in a very critical situation—I should like to see an end of all this."] you may be sure he languishes for the restoration of the monarchy, and hopes with equal fervor, that he may live to see the Convention hanged. In these sort of conferences, however, evaporates all their courage. They own their country is undone, that they are governed by a set of brigands, go home and hide any set of valuables they have not already secreted, and receive with obsequious complaisance the next visite domiciliaire.

The mass of the people, with as little energy, have more obstinacy, and are, of course, not quite so tractable. But, though they grumble and procrastinate, they do not resist; and their delays and demurs usually terminate in implicit submission.

The Deputy-commissioners, whom I have mentioned above, have been at Amiens some time, in order to promote the levying of recruits. On Sundays and holidays they summoned the inhabitants to attend at the cathedral, where they harangued them on the subject, called for vengeance on the coalesced despots, expatiated on the love of glory, and insisted on the pleasure of dying for one's country: while the people listened with vacant attention, amused themselves with the paintings, or adjourned in small committees to discuss the hardship of being obliged to fight without inclination.—Thus time elapsed, the military orations produced no effect, and no troops were raised: no one would enlist voluntarily, and all refused to settle it by lot, because, as they wisely observed, the lot must fall on somebody. Yet, notwithstanding the objection, the matter was at length decided by this last method. The decision had no sooner taken place, than another difficulty ensued—those who escaped acknowledged it was the best way that could be devised; but those who were destined to the frontiers refused to go. Various altercations, and excuses, and references, were the consequence; yet, after all this murmuring and evasion, the presence of the Commissioners and a few dragoons have arranged the business very pacifically; many are already gone, and the rest will (if the dragoons continue here) soon follow.

This, I assure you, is a just statement of the account between the Convention and the People: every thing is effected by fear—nothing by attachment; and the one is obeyed only because the other want courage to resist.—Yours, &c.

Rouen, March 31, 1793.

Rouen, like most of the great towns in France, is what is called decidedly aristocratic; that is, the rich are discontented because they are without security, and the poor because they want bread. But these complaints are not peculiar to large places; the causes of them equally exist in the smallest village, and the only difference which fixes the imputation of aristocracy on one more than the other, is, daring to murmur, or submitting in silence.

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I must here remark to you, that the term aristocrate has much varied from its former signification. A year ago, aristocrate implied one who was an advocate for the privileges of the nobility, and a partizan of the ancient government—at present a man is an aristocrate for entertaining exactly the same principles which at that time constituted a patriot; and, I believe, the computation is moderate, when I say, that more than three parts of the nation are aristocrates. The rich, who apprehend a violation of their property, are aristocrates—the merchants, who regret the stagnation of commerce, and distrust the credit of the assignats, are aristocrates—the small retailers, who are pillaged for not selling cheaper than they buy, and who find these outrages rather encouraged than repressed, are aristocrates—and even the poor, who murmur at the price of bread, and the numerous levies for the army, are, occasionally, aristocrates.

Besides all these, there are likewise various classes of moral aristocrates—such as the humane, who are averse from massacres and oppression—those who regret the loss of civil liberty—the devout, who tremble at the contempt for religion—the vain, who are mortified at the national degradation—and authors, who sigh for the freedom of the press.—When you consider this multiplicity of symptomatic indications, you will not be surprized that such numbers are pronounced in a state of disease; but our republican physicians will soon generalize these various species of aristocracy under the single description of all who have any thing to lose, and every one will be deemed plethoric who is not in a consumption. The people themselves who observe, though they do not reason, begin to have an idea that property exposes the safety of the owner and that the legislature is less inexorable when guilt is unproductive, than when the conviction of a criminal comprehends the forfeiture of an estate.—A poor tradesman was lamenting to me yesterday, that he had neglected an offer of going to live in England; and when I told him I thought he was very fortunate in having done so, as he would have been declared an emigrant, he replied, laughing, "*Moi emigre qui n'ai pas un sol*:" ["I am emigrant, who am not worth a halfpenny!"]—No, no; they don't make emigrants of those who are worth nothing. And this was not said with any intended irreverence to the Convention, but with the simplicity which really conceived the wealth of the emigrants to be the cause of the severity exercised against them.

The commercial and political evils attending a vast circulation of assignats have been often discussed, but I have never yet known the matter considered in what is, perhaps, its most serious point of view—I mean its influence on the habits and morals of the people. Wherever I go, especially in large towns like this, the mischief is evident, and, I fear, irremediable. That oeconomy, which was one of the most valuable

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characteristics of the French, is now comparatively disregarded. The people who receive what they earn in a currency they hold in contempt, are more anxious to spend than to save; and those who formerly hoarded six liards or twelve sols pieces with great care, would think it folly to hoard an assignat, whatever its nominal value. Hence the lower class of females dissipate their wages on useless finery; men frequent public-houses, and game for larger sums than before; little shopkeepers, instead of amassing their profits, become more luxurious in their table: public places are always full; and those who used, in a dress becoming their station, to occupy the “parquet” or “parterre,” now, decorated with paste, pins, gauze, and galloon, fill the boxes:—and all this destructive prodigality is excused to others and themselves *“par ce que ce n’est que du papier.”* [Because it is only paper.]—It is vain to persuade them to oeconomize what they think a few weeks may render valueless; and such is the evil of a circulation so totally discredited, that profusion assumes the merit of precaution, extravagance the plea of necessity, and those who were not lavish by habit become so through their eagerness to part with their paper. The buried gold and silver will again be brought forth, and the merchant and the politician forget the mischief of the assignats. But what can compensate for the injury done to the people? What is to restore their ancient frugality, or banish their acquired wants? It is not to be expected that the return of specie will diminish the inclination for luxury, or that the human mind can be regulated by the national finance; on the contrary, it is rather to be feared, that habits of expence which owe their introduction to the paper will remain when the paper is annihilated; that, though money may become more scarce, the propensities of which it supplies the indulgence will not be less forcible, and that those who have no other resources for their accustomed gratifications will but too often find one in the sacrifice of their integrity.—Thus, the corruption of manners will be succeeded by the corruption of morals, and the dishonesty of one sex, with the licentiousness of the other, produce consequences much worse than any imagined by the abstracted calculations of the politician, or the selfish ones of the merchant. Age will be often without solace, sickness without alleviation, and infancy without support; because some would not amass for themselves, nor others for their children, the profits of their labour in a representative sign of uncertain value.

I do not pretend to assert that these are the natural effects of a paper circulation—doubtless, when supported by high credit, and an extensive commerce, it must have many advantages; but this was not the case in France—the measure was adopted in a moment of revolution, and when the credit of the country, never very considerable, was precarious and degraded—It did not flow from the exuberance

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of commerce, but the artifices of party—it never presumed, for a moment, on the confidence of the people—its reception was forced, and its emission too profuse not to be alarming.—I know it may be answered, that the assignats do not depend upon an imaginary appreciation, but really represent a large mass of national wealth, particularly in the domains of the clergy: yet, perhaps, it is this very circumstance which has tended most to discredit them. Had their credit rested only on the solvency of the nation, though they had not been greatly coveted, still they would have been less distributed; people would not have apprehended their abolition on a change of government, nor that the systems adopted by one party might be reversed by another. Indeed we may add, that an experiment of this kind does not begin auspiciously when grounded on confiscation and seizures, which it is probable more than half the French considered as sacrilege and robbery; nor could they be very anxious to possess a species of wealth which they made it a motive of conscience to hope would never be of any value.—But if the original creation of assignats were objectionable, the subsequent creations cannot but augment the evil. I have already described to you the effects visible at present, and those to be apprehended in future—others may result from the new inundation, [1200 millions—50 millions sterling.] which it is not possible to conjecture; but if the mischiefs should be real, in proportion as a part of the wealth which this paper is said to represent is imaginary, their extent cannot easily be exaggerated. Perhaps you will be of this opinion, when you recollect that one of the funds which form the security of this vast sum is the gratitude of the Flemings for their liberty; and if this reimbursement be to be made according to the specimen the French army have experienced in their retreat, I doubt much of the convention will be disposed to advance any farther claims on it; for, it seems, the inhabitants of the Low Countries have been so little sensible of the benefits bestowed on them, that even the peasants seize on any weapons nearest hand, and drub and pursue the retrograding armies as they would wild beasts; and though, as Dumouriez observes in one of his dispatches, our revolution is intended to favour the country people, "*c'est cependant les gens de campagne qui s'arment contre nous, et le tocsin sonne de toutes parts;*" ["It is, however, the country people who take up arms against us, and the alarm is sounded from all quarters."] so that the French will, in fact, have created a public debt of so singular a nature, that every one will avoid as much as possible making any demand of the capital.

I have already been more diffuse than I intended on the subject of finance; but I beg you to observe, that I do not affect to calculate, or speculate, and that I reason only from facts which are daily within my notice, and which, as tending to operate on the morals of the people, are naturally included in the plan I proposed to myself.

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I have been here but a few days, and intend returning to-morrow. I left Mrs. D_____ very little better, and the disaffection of Dumouriez, which I just now learn, may oblige us to remove to some place not on the route to Paris.—Every one looks alert and important, and a physiognomist may perceive that regret is not the prevailing sentiment—

“We now begin to speak in tropes,
“And, by our fears, express our hopes.”

The Jacobins are said to be apprehensive, which augurs well; for, certainly, next to the happiness of good people, one desires the punishment of the bad.

Amiens, April 7, 1793.

If the sentiments of the people towards their present government had been problematical before, the visible effect of Dumouriez' conduct would afford an ample solution of the problem. That indifference about public affairs which the prospect of an established despotism had begun to create has vanished—all is hope and expectation—the doors of those who retail the newspapers are assailed by people too impatient to read them— each with his gazette in his hand listens eagerly to the verbal circulation, and then holds a secret conference with his neighbour, and calculates how long it may be before Dumouriez can reach Paris. A fortnight ago the name of Dumouriez was not uttered but in a tone of harshness and contempt, and, if ever it excited any thing like complacency, it was when he announced defeats and losses. Now he is spoken of with a significant modulation of voice, it is discovered that he has great talents, and his popularity with the army is descanted upon with a mysterious air of suppressed satisfaction.—Those who were extremely apprehensive lest part of the General's troops should be driven this way by the successes of the enemy, seem to talk with perfect composure of their taking the same route to attack the capital; while others, who would have been unwilling to receive either Dumouriez or his army as peaceful fugitives, will be “nothing loath” to admit them as conquerors. From all I can learn, these dispositions are very general, and, indeed, the actual tyranny is so great, and the perspective so alarming, that any means of deliverance must be acceptable. But whatever may be the event, though I cannot be personally interested, if I thought Dumouriez really proposed to establish a good government, humanity would render one anxious for his success; for it is not to be disguised, that France is at this moment (as the General himself expressed it) under the joint dominion of “*imbecilles*” and “*brigands*.” [Ideots and robbers.]

It is possible, that at this moment the whole army is disaffected, and that the fortified towns are prepared to surrender. It is also certain, that Brittany is in revolt, and that many other departments are little short of it; yet you will not very easily conceive what

may have occupied the Convention during part of this important crisis—nothing less than inventing a dress for their Commissioners! But, as Sterne says, “it is the spirit of the nation;” and I recollect no circumstance during the whole progress of the revolution (however serious) that has not been mixed with frivolities of this kind.

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I know not what effect this new costume may produce on the rebels or the enemy, but I confess it appears to me more ludicrous than formidable, especially when a representative happens to be of the shape and features of the one we have here. Saladin, Deputy for this department, and an advocate of the town of Amiens, has already invested himself with this armour of inviolability; “strange figure in such strange habiliments,” that one is tempted to forget that Baratraria and the government of Sancho are the creation of fancy. Imagine to yourself a short fat man, of sallow complexion and small eyes, with a sash of white, red, and blue round his waist, a black belt with a sword suspended across his shoulders, and a round hat turned up before, with three feathers of the national colours: “even such a man” is our representative, and exercises a more despotic authority than most Princes in Europe.—He is accompanied by another Deputy, who was what is called Pere de la Oratoire before the revolution—that is, in a station nearly approaching to that of an under-master at our public schools; only that the seminaries to which these were attached being very numerous, those employed in them were little considered. They wore the habit, and were subject to the same restrictions, as the Clergy, but were at liberty to quit the profession and marry, if they chose.—I have been more particular in describing this class of men, because they have every where taken an active and successful part in perverting and misleading the people: they are in the clubs, or the municipalities, in the Convention, and in all elective administrations, and have been in most places remarkable for their sedition and violence.

Several reasons may be assigned for the influence and conduct of men whose situation and habits, on a first view, seem to oppose both. In the first ardour of reform it was determined, that all the ancient modes of education should be abolished; small temporary pensions were allotted to the Professors of Colleges, and their admission to the exercise of similar functions in the intended new system was left to future decision. From this time the disbanded oratorians, who knew it would be vain to resist popular authority, endeavoured to share in it; or, at least, by becoming zealous partizans of the revolution, to establish their claims to any offices or emoluments which might be substituted for those they had been deprived of. They enrolled themselves with the Jacobins, courted the populace, and, by the talent of pronouncing Roman names with emphasis, and the study of rhetorical attitudes, they became important to associates who were ignorant, or necessary to those who were designing.

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The little information generally possessed by the middle classes of life in France, is also another cause of the comparative importance of those whose professions had, in this respect, raised them something above the common level. People of condition, liberally educated, have unfortunately abandoned public affairs for some time; so that the incapacity of some, and the pride or despondency of others, have, in a manner, left the nation to the guidance of pedants, incendiaries, and adventurers. Perhaps also the animosity with which the description of men I allude to pursued every thing attached to the ancient government, may, in some degree, have proceeded from a desire of revenge and retaliation. They were not, it must be confessed, treated formerly with the regard due to persons whose profession was in itself useful and respectable; and the wounds of vanity are not easily cured, nor the vindictiveness of little minds easily satisfied.

From the conduct and popular influence of these Peres de l'Oratoire, some truths may be deduced not altogether useless even to a country not liable to such violent reforms. It affords an example of the danger arising from those sudden and arbitrary innovations, which, by depriving any part of the community of their usual means of living, and substituting no other, tempt them to indemnify themselves by preying, in different ways, on their fellow-citizens.—The daring and ignorant often become depredators of private property; while those who have more talents, and less courage, endeavour to succeed by the artifices which conciliate public favour. I am not certain whether the latter are not to be most dreaded of the two, for those who make a trade of the confidence of the people seldom fail to corrupt them—they find it more profitable to flatter their passions than to enlighten their understandings; and a demagogue of this kind, who obtains an office by exciting one popular insurrection, will make no scruple of maintaining himself in it by another. An inference may likewise be drawn of the great necessity of cultivating such a degree of useful knowledge in the middle order of society, as may not only prevent their being deceived by interested adventurers themselves, but enable them to instruct the people in their true interests, and rescue them from becoming the instruments, and finally the victims, of fraud and imposture.—The insult and oppression which the nobility frequently experience from those who have been promoted by the revolution, will, I trust, be a useful lesson in future to the great, who may be inclined to arrogate too much from adventitious distinctions, to forget that the earth we tread upon may one day overwhelm us, and that the meanest of mankind may do us an injury which it is not in the power even of the most exalted to shield us from.

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The inquisition begins to grow so strict, that I have thought it necessary to-day to bury a translation of Burke.—In times of ignorance and barbarity, it was criminal to read the bible, and our English author is prohibited for a similar reason—that is, to conceal from the people the errors of those who direct them: and, indeed, Mr. Burke has written some truths, which it is of much more importance for the Convention to conceal, than it could be to the Catholic priests to monopolize the divine writings.—As far as it was possible, Mr. Burke has shown himself a prophet: if he has not been completely so, it was because he had a benevolent heart, and is the native of a free country. By the one, he was prevented from imagining the cruelties which the French have committed; by the other, the extreme despotism which they endure.

April 20, 1793.

Before these halcyon days of freedom, the supremacy of Paris was little felt in the provinces, except in dictating a new fashion in dress, an improvement in the art of cookery, or the invention of a minuet. At present our imitations of the capital are something more serious; and if our obedience be not quite so voluntary, it is much more implicit. Instead of receiving fashions from the Court, we take them now from the *dames des balles*, [Market-women.] and the municipality; and it must be allowed, that the imaginations of our new sovereigns much exceed those of the old in force and originality.

The mode of pillaging the shops, for instance, was first devised by the Parisian ladies, and has lately been adopted with great success in the departments; the *visite domiciliaire*, also, which I look upon as a most ingenious effort of fancy, is an emanation from the commune of Paris, and has had an universal run.—But it would be vain to attempt enumerating all the obligations of this kind which we owe to the indulgence of that virtuous city: our last importation, however, is of so singular a nature, that, were we not daily assured all the liberty in the world centers in Paris, I should be doubtful as to its tendency. It has lately been decreed, that every house in the republic shall have fixed on the outside of the door, in legible characters, the name, age, birth-place, and profession of its inhabitants. Not the poorest cottager, nor those who are too old or too young for action, nor even unmarried ladies, are exempt from thus proclaiming the abstract of their history to passers-by. —The reigning party judge very wisely, that all those who are not already their enemies may become so, and that those who are unable to take a part themselves may excite others: but, whatever may be the intention of this measure, it is impossible to conceive any thing which could better serve the purposes of an arbitrary government; it places every individual in the republic within the immediate reach of informers and spies—it points out those who are of an age to serve in the army—those who have sought refuge in one department from the persecutions of another—and, in short, whether a victim is pursued by the denunciation of private malice, or political suspicion, it renders escape almost impracticable.

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We have had two domiciliary visits within the last fortnight—one to search for arms, the other under pretext of ascertaining the number of troops each house is capable of lodging. But this was only the pretext, because the municipalities always quarter troops as they think proper, without considering whether you have room or not; and the real object of this inquisition was to observe if the inhabitants answered to the lists placed on the doors.--Mrs. D_____ was ill in bed, but you must not imagine such a circumstance deterred these gallant republicans from entering her room with an armed force, to calculate how many soldiers might be lodged in the bedchamber of a sick female! The French, indeed, had never, in my remembrance, any pretensions to delicacy, or even decency, and they are certainly not improved in these respects by the revolution.

It is curious in walking the streets, to observe the devices of the several classes of aristocracy; for it is not to be disguised, that since the hope from Dumouriez has vanished, though the disgust of the people may be increased, their terror is also greater than ever, and the departments near Paris have no resource but silent submission. Every one, therefore, obeys the letter of the decrees with the diligence of fear, while they elude the spirit of them with all the ingenuity of hatred. The rich, for example, who cannot entirely divest themselves of their remaining hauteur, exhibit a sullen compliance on a small piece of paper, written in a small hand, and placed at the very extreme of the height allowed by the law. Some fix their bills so as to be half covered by a shutter; others fasten them only with wafers, so that the wind detaching one or two corners, makes it impossible to read the rest.*

* This contrivance became so common, that an article was obliged to be added to the decree, importing, that whenever the papers were damaged or effaced by the weather, or deranged by the wind, the inhabitants should replace them, under a penalty.

Many who have courts or passages to their houses, put their names on the half of a gate which they leave open, so that the writing is not perceptible but to those who enter. But those who are most afraid, or most decidedly aristocrats, subjoin to their registers, "All good republicans:" or, "*Vive la republique, une et indivisible.*" ["The republic, one and indivisible for ever!"] Some likewise, who are in public offices, or shopkeepers who are very timid, and afraid of pillage, or are ripe for a counter-revolution, have a sheet half the size of the door, decorated with red caps, tri-coloured ribbons, and flaming sentences ending in "Death or Liberty!"

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If, however, the French government confined itself to these petty acts of despotism, I would endeavour to be reconciled to it; but I really begin to have serious apprehensions, not so much for our safety as our tranquillity, and if I considered only myself, I should not hesitate to return to England. Mrs. D_____ is too ill to travel far at present, and her dread of crossing the sea makes her less disposed to think our situation here hazardous or ineligible. Mr. D_____, too, who, without being a republican or a partizan of the present system, has always been a friend to the first revolution, is unwilling to believe the Convention so bad as there is every reason to suppose it. I therefore let my judgement yield to my friendship, and, as I cannot prevail on them to depart, the danger which may attend our remaining is an additional reason for my not quitting them.

The national perfidy which has always distinguished France among the other countries of Europe, seems now not to be more a diplomatic principle, than a rule of domestic government. It is so extended and generalized, that an individual is as much liable to be deceived and betrayed by confiding in a decree, as a foreign power would be by relying on the faith of a treaty.—An hundred and twenty priests, above sixty years of age, who had not taken the oaths, but who were allowed to remain by the same law that banished those who were younger, have been lately arrested, and are confined together in a house which was once a college. The people did not behold this act of cruelty with indifference, but, awed by an armed force, and the presence of the Commissioners of the Convention, they could only follow the priests to their prison with silent regret and internal horror. They, however, venture even now to mark their attachment, by taking all opportunities of seeing them, and supplying them with necessaries, which it is not very difficult to do, as they are guarded by the Bourgeois, who are generally inclined to favour them. I asked a woman to-day if she still contrived to have access to the priests, and she replied, *"Ah, oui, il y a encore de la facilite, par ce que l'on ne trouve pas des gardes ici qui ne sont pas pour eux."**

* "Yes, yes, we still contrive it, because there are no guards to be found here who don't befriend them."

Thus, even the most minute and best organized tyranny may be eluded; and, indeed, if all the agents of this government acted in the spirit of its decrees, it would be insupportable even to a native of Turkey or Japan. But if some have still a remnant of humanity left, there are a sufficient number who execute the laws as unfeelingly as they are conceived.

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When these poor priests were to be removed from their several houses, it was found necessary to dislodge the Bishop of Amiens, who had for some time occupied the place fixed on for their reception. The Bishop had notice given him at twelve o'clock in the day to relinquish his lodging before evening; yet the Bishop of Amiens is a constitutional Prelate, and had, before the revolution, the cure of a large parish at Paris; nor was it without much persuasion that he accepted the see of Amiens. In the severe winter of 1789 he disposed of his plate and library, (the latter of which was said to be one of the best private collections in Paris,) to purchase bread for the poor. "But Time hath a wallet on his back, wherein he puts alms for oblivion;" and the charities of the Bishop could not shield him from the contempt and insult which pursue his profession.

I have been much distressed within the last few days on account of my friend Madame de B____. I subjoining a translation of a letter I have just received from her, as it will convey to you hereafter a tolerable specimen of French liberty.

"Maison de Arret, at ____.

"I did not write to you, my dear friend, at the time I promised, and you will perceive, by the date of this, that I have had too good an excuse for my negligence. I have been here almost a week, and my spirits are still so much disordered, that I can with difficulty recollect myself enough to relate the circumstances of our unfortunate situation; but as it is possible you might become acquainted with them by some other means, I rather determined to send you a few lines, than suffer you to be alarmed by false or exaggerated reports." About two o'clock on Monday morning last our servants were called up, and, on their opening the door, the house was immediately filled with armed men, some of whom began searching the rooms, while others came to our bedchamber, and informed us we were arrested by order of the department, and that we must rise and accompany them to prison. It is not easy to describe the effect of such a mandate on people who, having nothing to reproach themselves with, could not be prepared for it.—As soon as we were a little recovered from our first terrors, we endeavoured to obey, and begged they would indulge us by retiring a few moments till I had put my clothes on; but neither my embarrassment, nor the screams of the child—neither decency nor humanity, could prevail. They would not even permit my maid to enter the room; and, amidst this scene of disorder, I was obliged to dress myself and the terrified infant. When this unpleasant task was finished, a general examination of our house and papers took place, and lasted until six in the evening: nothing, however, tending in the remotest degree to criminate us was found, but we were nevertheless conducted to prison, and God knows how long we are likely to remain here. The denunciation against us being secret, and

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not being able to learn either our crime or our accusers, it is difficult for us to take any measures for our enlargement. We cannot defend ourselves against a charge of which we are ignorant, nor combat the validity of a witness, who is not only allowed to remain secret, but is paid perhaps for his information.*

* At this time informers were paid from fifty to an hundred livres for each accusation.

“We most probably owe our misfortune to some discarded servant or personal enemy, for I believe you are convinced we have not merited it either by our discourse or our actions: if we had, the charge would have been specific; but we have reason to imagine it is nothing more than the indeterminate and general charge of being aristocrates. I did not see my mother or sister all the day we were arrested, nor till the evening of the next: the one was engaged perhaps with “Rosine and the Angola”, who were indisposed, and the other would not forego her usual card-party. Many of our friends likewise have forbore to approach us, lest their apparent interest in our fate should involve themselves; and really the alarm is so general, that I can, without much effort, forgive them.” “You will be pleased to learn, that the greatest civilities I have received in this unpleasant situation, have been from some of your countrymen, who are our fellow-prisoners: they are only poor sailors, but they are truly kind and attentive, and do us various little services that render us more comfortable than we otherwise should be; for we have no servants here, having deemed it prudent to leave them to take care of our property. The second night we were here, these good creatures, who lodge in the next room, were rather merry, and awoke the child; but as they found, by its cries, that their gaiety had occasioned me some trouble, I have observed ever since that they walk softly, and avoid making the least noise, after the little prisoner is gone to rest. I believe they are pleased with me because I speak their language, and they are still more delighted with your young favourite, who is so well amused, that he begins to forget the gloom of the place, which at first terrified him extremely.” “One of our companions is a nonjuring priest, who has been imprisoned under circumstances which make me almost ashamed of my country.—After having escaped from a neighbouring department, he procured himself a lodging in this town, and for some time lived very peaceably, till a woman, who suspected his profession, became extremely importunate with him to confess her. The poor man, for several days, refused, telling her, that he did not consider himself as a priest, nor wished to be known as such, nor to infringe the law which excluded him. The woman, however, still continued to persecute him, alledging, that her conscience was distressed, and that her peace depended on her being able to confess “in the right way.” At length he suffered himself to be prevailed upon—the woman received an hundred livres for informing against him, and, perhaps, the priest will be condemned to the Guillotine.*

* He was executed some time after.

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"I will make no reflection on this act, nor on the system of paying informers—your heart will already have anticipated all I could say. I will only add, that if you determine to remain in France, you must observe a degree of circumspection which you may not hitherto have thought necessary. Do not depend on your innocence, nor even trust to common precautions—every day furnishes examples that both are unavailing.—Adieu. —My husband offers you his respects, and your little friend embraces you sincerely. As soon as any change in our favour takes place, I will communicate it to you; but you had better not venture to write—I entrust this to Louison's mother, who is going through Amiens, as it would be unsafe to send it by the post. —Again adieu.—Yours, "Adelaide de ____."

Amiens, 1793.

It is observable, that we examine less scrupulously the pretensions of a nation to any particular excellence, than we do those of an individual. The reason of this is, probably, that our self-love is as much gratified by admitting the one, as in rejecting the other. When we allow the claims of a whole people, we are flattered with the idea of being above narrow prejudices, and of possessing an enlarged and liberal mind; but if a single individual arrogate to himself any exclusive superiority, our own pride immediately becomes opposed to his, and we seem but to vindicate our judgement in degrading such presumption.

I can conceive no other causes for our having so long acquiesced in the claims of the French to pre-eminent good breeding, in an age when, I believe, no person acquainted with both nations can discover any thing to justify them. If indeed politeness consisted in the repetition of a certain routine of phrases, unconnected with the mind or action, I might be obliged to decide against our country; but while decency makes a part of good manners, or feeling is preferable to a mechanical jargon, I am inclined to think the English have a merit more than they have hitherto ascribed to themselves. Do not suppose, however, that I am going to descant on the old imputations of "French flattery," and "French insincerity;" for I am far from concluding that civil behaviour gives one a right to expect kind offices, or that a man is false because he pays a compliment, and refuses a service: I only wish to infer, that an impertinence is not less an impertinence because it is accompanied by a certain set of words, and that a people, who are indelicate to excess, cannot properly be denominated "a polite people."

A French man or woman, with no other apology than "*permettez moi*," ["Give me leave."] will take a book out of your hand, look over any thing you are reading, and ask you a thousand questions relative to your most private concerns—they will enter your room, even your bedchamber, without knocking, place themselves between you and the fire, or take hold of your clothes to guess what they cost; and

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they deem these acts of rudeness sufficiently qualified by "*Je demande bien de pardons.*" ["I ask you a thousand pardons."]—They are fully convinced that the English all eat with their knives, and I have often heard this discussed with much self-complacency by those who usually shared the labours of the repast between a fork and their fingers. Our custom also of using water-glasses after dinner is an object of particular censure; yet whoever dines at a French table must frequently observe, that many of the guests might benefit by such ablutions, and their napkins always testify that some previous application would be by no means superfluous. Nothing is more common than to hear physical derangements, disorders, and their remedies, expatiated upon by the parties concerned amidst a room full of people, and that with so much minuteness of description, that a foreigner, without being very fastidious, is on some occasions apt to feel very unpleasant sympathies. There are scarcely any of the ceremonies of a lady's toilette more a mystery to one sex than the other, and men and their wives, who scarcely eat at the same table, are in this respect grossly familiar. The conversation in most societies partakes of this indecency, and the manners of an English female are in danger of becoming contaminated, while she is only endeavouring to suffer without pain the customs of those she has been taught to consider as models of politeness.

Whether you examine the French in their houses or in public, you are every where stricken with the same want of delicacy, propriety, and cleanliness. The streets are mostly so filthy, that it is perilous to approach the walls. The insides of the churches are often disgusting, in spite of the advertisements that are placed in them to request the forbearance of phthifical persons: the service does not prevent those who attend from going to and fro with the same irreverence as if the church were empty; and, in the most solemn part of the mass, a woman is suffered to importune you for a liard, as the price of the chair you sit on. At the theatres an actor or actress frequently coughs and expectorates on the stage, in a manner one should think highly unpardonable before one's most intimate friends in England, though this habit is very common to all the French. The inns abound with filth of every kind, and though the owners of them are generally civil enough, their notions of what is decent are so very different from ours, that an English traveller is not soon reconciled to them. In short, it would be impossible to enumerate all that in my opinion excludes the French from the character of a well-bred people.—Swift, who seems to have been gratified by the contemplation of physical impurity, might have done the subject justice; but I confess I am not displeased to feel that, after my long and frequent residences in France, I am still unqualified. So little are these people susceptible of delicacy, propriety, and decency, that they do not even use the words in the sense we do, nor have they any others expressive of the same meaning.

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But if they be deficient in the external forms of politeness, they are infinitely more so in that politeness which may be called mental. The simple and unerring rule of never preferring one's self, is to them more difficult of comprehension than the most difficult problem in Euclid: in small things as well as great, their own interest, their own gratification, is their leading principle; and the cold flexibility which enables them to clothe this selfish system in "fair forms," is what they call politeness.

My ideas on this subject are not recent, but they occurred to me with additional force on the perusal of Mad. de B____'s letter. The behaviour of some of the poorest and least informed class of our countrymen forms a striking contrast with that of the people who arrested her, and even her own friends: the unaffected attention of the one, and the brutality and neglect of the other, are, perhaps, more just examples of English and French manners than you may have hitherto imagined. I do not, however, pretend to say that the latter are all gross and brutal, but I am myself convinced that, generally speaking, they are an unfeeling people.

I beg you to remember, that when I speak of the dispositions and character of the French, my opinions are the result of general observation, and are applicable to all ranks; but when my remarks are on habits and manners, they describe only those classes which are properly called the nation. The higher noblesse, and those attached to courts, so nearly resemble each other in all countries, that they are necessarily excepted in these delineations, which are intended to mark the distinguishing features of a people at large: for, assuredly, when the French assert, and their neighbours repeat, that they are a polite nation, it is not meant that those who have important offices or dignified appellations are polite: they found their claims on their superiority as a people, and it is in this light I consider them. My examples are chiefly drawn, not from the very inferior, nor from the most eminent ranks; neither from the retailer of a shop, nor the claimant of a *tabouret*,* or *les grandes ou petites entrees*; but from the gentry, those of easy fortunes, merchants, &c.—in fact, from people of that degree which it would be fair to cite as what may be called genteel society in England.

* The *tabouret* was a stool allowed to the Ladies of the Court particularly distinguished by rank or favour, when in presence of the Royal Family.—"Les entrees" gave a familiar access to the King and Queen.

This cessation of intercourse with our country dispirits me, and, as it will probably continue some time, I shall amuse myself by noting more particularly the little occurrences which may not reach your public prints, but which tend more than great events to mark both the spirit of the government and that of the people.—Perhaps you may be ignorant that the prohibition of the English mails was not the consequence of a decree of the Convention, but a simple order of its commissioners; and I have some

reason to think that even they acted at the instigation of an individual who harbours a mean and pitiful dislike to England and its inhabitants.—Yours, &c.

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May 18, 1793.

Near six weeks ago a decree was passed by the Convention, obliging all strangers, who had not purchased national property, or who did not exercise some profession, to give security to the amount of half their supposed fortune, and under these conditions they were to receive a certificate, allowing them to reside, and were promised the protection of the laws. The administrators of the departments, who perceive that they become odious by executing the decrees of the Convention, begin to relax much of their diligence, and it is not till long after a law is promulgated, and their personal fear operates as a stimulant, that they seriously enforce obedience to these mandates. This morning, however, we were summoned by the Committee of our section (or ward) in order to comply with the terms of the decree, and had I been directed only by my own judgement, I should have given the preference to an immediate return to England; but Mrs. D_____ is yet ill, and Mr. D_____ is disposed to continue. In vain have I quoted “how fickle France was branded ‘midst the nations of the earth for perfidy and breach of public faith;” in vain have I reasoned upon the injustice of a government that first allured strangers to remain by insidious offers of protection, and now subjects them to conditions which many may find it difficult to subscribe to: Mr. D_____ wishes to see our situation in the most favourable point of view: he argues upon the moral impossibility of our being liable to any inconvenience, and persists in believing that one government may act with treachery towards another, yet, distinguishing between falsehood and meanness, maintain its faith with individuals—in short, we have concluded a sort of treaty, by which we are bound, under the forfeiture of a large sum, to behave peaceably and submit to the laws. The government, in return, empowers us to reside, and promises protection and hospitality.

It is to be observed, that the spirit of this regulation depends upon those it affects producing six witnesses of their “*civisme*,”* yet so little interest do the people take on these occasions, that our witnesses were neighbours we had scarcely ever seen, and even one was a man who happened to be casually passing by.

* Though the meaning of this word is obvious, we have no one that is exactly synonymous to it. The Convention intend by it an attachment to their government: but the people do not trouble themselves about the meaning of words—they measure their unwilling obedience by the letter.

These Committees, which form the last link of a chain of despotism, are composed of low tradesmen and day-labourers, with an attorney, or some person that can read and write, at their head, as President. Priests and nobles, with all that are related, or anywise attached, to them, are excluded by the law; and it is understood that true sans-culottes only should be admitted.

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With all these precautions, the indifference and hatred of the people to their government are so general, that, perhaps, there are few places where this regulation is executed so as to answer the purposes of the jealous tyranny that conceived it. The members of these Committees seem to exact no farther compliances than such as are absolutely necessary to the mere form of the proceeding, and to secure themselves from the imputation of disobedience; and are very little concerned whether the real design of the legislature be accomplished or not. This negligence, or ill-will, which prevails in various instances, tempers, in some degree, the effect of that restless suspicion which is the usual concomitant of an uncertain, but arbitrary, power. The affections or prejudices that surround a throne, by ensuring the safety of the Monarch, engage him to clemency, and the laws of a mild government are, for the most part, enforced with exactness; but a new and precarious authority, which neither imposes on the understanding nor interests the heart, which is supported only by a palpable and unadorned tyranny, is in its nature severe, and it becomes the common cause of the people to counteract the measures of a despotism which they are unable to resist.—This (as I have before had occasion to observe) renders the condition of the French less insupportable, but it is by no means sufficient to banish the fears of a stranger who has been accustomed to look for security, not from a relaxation or disregard of the laws, but from their efficacy; not from the characters of those who execute them, but from the rectitude with which they are formed.—What would you think in England, if you were obliged to contemplate with dread the three branches of your legislature, and depend for the protection of your person and property on soldiers and constables? Yet such is nearly the state we are in; and indeed a system of injustice and barbarism gains ground so fast, that almost any apprehension is justified.—The Tribunal Revolutionnaire has already condemned a servant maid for her political opinions; and one of the Judges of this tribunal lately introduced a man to the Jacobins, with high panegyrics, because, as he alledged, he had greatly contributed to the condemnation of a criminal. The same Judge likewise apologized for having as yet sent but a small number to the Guillotine, and promises, that, on the first appearance of a “Brissotin” before him, he will show him no mercy.

When the minister of public justice thus avows himself the agent of a party, a government, however recent its formation, must be far advanced in depravity; and the corruption of those who are the interpreters of the law has usually been the last effort of expiring power.

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My friends, *Mons.* And *Mad.* de B____, are released from their confinement; not as you might expect, by proving their innocence, but by the efforts of an individual, who had more weight than their accuser: and, far from obtaining satisfaction for the injury they have received, they are obliged to accept as a favour the liberty they were deprived of by malice and injustice. They will, most probably, never be acquainted with the nature of the charges brought against them; and their accuser will escape with impunity, and, perhaps, meet with reward.

All the French papers are filled with descriptions of the enthusiasm with which the young men “start to arms” [*Offian.*] at the voice of their country; yet it is very certain, that this enthusiasm is of so subtle and aerial a form as to be perceivable only to those who are interested in discovering it. In some places these enthusiastic warriors continue to hide themselves—from others they are escorted to the place of their destination by nearly an equal number of dragoons; and no one, I believe, who can procure money to pay a substitute, is disposed to go himself. This is sufficiently proved by the sums demanded by those who engage as substitutes: last year from three to five hundred livres was given; at present no one will take less than eight hundred or a thousand, besides being furnished with clothes, &c. The only real volunteers are the sons of aristocrats, and the relations of emigrants, who, sacrificing their principles to their fears, hope, by enlisting in the army, to protect their estates and families: those likewise who have lucrative employments, and are afraid of losing them, affect great zeal, and expect to purchase impunity for civil peculation at home, by the military services of their children abroad.

This, I assure you, is the real state of that enthusiasm which occasions such an expence of eloquence to our gazette-writers; but these fallacious accounts are not like the ephemeral deceits of your party prints in England, the effect of which is destroyed in a few hours by an opposite assertion. None here are bold enough to contradict what their sovereigns would have believed; and a town or district, driven almost to revolt by the present system of recruiting, consents very willingly to be described as marching to the frontiers with martial ardour, and burning to combat les esclaves des tyrans! By these artifices, one department is misled with regard to the dispositions of another, and if they do not excite to emulation, they, at least, repress by fear; and, probably, many are reduced to submission, who would resist, were they not doubtful of the support and union of their neighbours. Every possible precaution is taken to prevent any connections between the different departments—people who are not known cannot obtain passports without the recommendation of two housekeepers—you must give an account of the business you go upon, of the carriage you mean to travel in, whether it

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has two wheels or four: all of which must be specified in your passport: and you cannot send your baggage from one town to another without the risk of having it searched. All these things are so disgusting and troublesome, that I begin to be quite of a different opinion from Brutus, and should certainly prefer being a slave among a free people, than thus be tormented with the recollection that I am a native of England in a land of slavery. Whatever liberty the French might have acquired by their first revolution, it is now much like Sir John Cutler's worsted stockings, so torn, and worn, and disguised by patchings and mendings, that the original texture is not discoverable.—Yours, &c.

June 3, 1793.

We have been three days without receiving newspapers; but we learn from the reports of the courier, that the Brissotins are overthrown, that many of them have been arrested, and several escaped to raise adherents in the departments. I, however, doubt much if their success will be very general: the people have little preference between Brissot and Marat, Condorcet and Robespierre, and are not greatly solicitous about the names or even principles of those who govern them—they are not yet accustomed to take that lively interest in public events which is the effect of a popular constitution. In England every thing is a subject of debate and contest, but here they wait in silence the result of any political measure or party dispute; and, without entering into the merits of the cause, adopt whatever is successful. While the King was yet alive, the news of Paris was eagerly sought after, and every disorder of the metropolis created much alarm: but one would almost suppose that even curiosity had ceased at his death, for I have observed no subsequent event (except the defection of Dumouriez) make any very serious impression. We hear, therefore, with great composure, the present triumph of the more violent republicans, and suffer without impatience this interregnum of news, which is to continue until the Convention shall have determined in what manner the intelligence of their proceedings shall be related to the departments.

The great solicitude of the people is now rather about their physical existence than their political one—provisions are become enormously dear, and bread very scarce: our servants often wait two hours at the baker's, and then return without bread for breakfast. I hope, however, the scarcity is rather artificial than real. It is generally supposed to be occasioned by the unwillingness of the farmers to sell their corn for paper. Some measures have been adopted with an intention of remedying this evil, though the origin of it is beyond the reach of decree. It originates in that distrust of government which reconciles one part of the community to starving the other, under the idea of self-preservation. While every individual persists in establishing it as a maxim, that any thing is better than assignats, we must expect that all things will be difficult to procure, and will, of course, bear a high price. I fear, all the empiricism of the legislature cannot produce a nostrum for this want of faith. Dragoons and penal laws only "linger, and linger it out;" the disease is incurable.

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My friends, *Mons.* and *Mad. de B_____*, by way of consolation for their imprisonment, now find themselves on the list of emigrants, though they have never been a single day absent from their own province, or from places of residence where they are well known. But that they may not murmur at this injustice, the municipality have accompanied their names with those of others who have not even been absent from the town, and of one gentleman in particular, who I believe may have been seen on the ramparts every day for these seven years.—This may appear to you only very absurd, and you may imagine the consequences easily obviated; yet these mistakes are the effect of private malice, and subject the persons affected by them to an infinity of expence and trouble. They are obliged, in order to avert the confiscation of their property, to appear, in every part of the republic where they have possessions, with attestations of their constant residence in France, and perhaps suffer a thousand mortifications from the official ignorance and brutality of the persons to whom they apply. No remedy lies against the authors of these vexations, and the sufferer who is prudent fears even to complain.

I have, in a former letter, noticed the great number of beggars that swarm at Arras: they are not less numerous at Amiens, though of a different description—they are neither so disgusting, nor so wretched, but are much more importunate and insolent—they plead neither sickness nor infirmity, and are, for the most part, able and healthy. How so many people should beg by profession in a large manufacturing town, it is difficult to conceive; but, whatever may be the cause, I am tempted to believe the effect has some influence on the manners of the inhabitants of Amiens. I have seen no town in France so remarkable for a rude and unfeeling behaviour, and it is not fanciful to conjecture that the multitude of poor may tend in part to occasion it. The constant view of a sort of misery that excites little compassion, of an intrusive necessity which one is more desirous to repulse than to relieve, cannot but render the heart callous, and the manners harsh. The avarice of commerce, which is here unaccompanied by its liberality, is glad to confound real distress with voluntary and idle indigence, till, in time, an absence of feeling becomes part of the character; and the constant habit of petulant refusals, or of acceding more from fatigue than benevolence, has perhaps a similar effect on the voice, gesture, and external.

This place has been so often visited by those who describe better than myself, that I have thought it unnecessary to mention public buildings, or any thing equally obvious to the traveller or the resident. The beauty and elegance of the cathedral have been celebrated for ages, and I only remind you of it to indulge my national vanity in the reflection that one of the most splendid monuments of Gothic architecture in France is the work of our English ancestors.

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The edifice is in perfect preservation, and the hand of power has not yet ventured to appropriate the plate or ornaments; but this forbearance will most probably give way to temptation and impunity. The Convention will respect ancient prejudices no longer than they suppose the people have courage to defend them, and the latter seem so entirely subdued, that, however they may murmur, I do not think any serious resistance is to be expected from them, even in behalf of the relics of St. Firmin. [St. Firmin, the patron of Amiens, where he is, in many of the streets, represented with his head in his hand.]—The bust of Henry the Fourth, which was a present from the Monarch himself, is banished the town-house, where it was formerly placed, though, I hope, some royalist has taken possession of it, and deposited it in safety till better times. This once popular Prince is now associated with Nero and Caligula, and it is “leze nation” to speak of him to a thorough republican.—I know not if the French had before the revolution reached the acme of perfection, but they have certainly been retrograding very fast since. Every thing that used to create fondness and veneration is despised, and things are esteemed only in proportion as they are worthless. Perhaps the bust of Robespierre may one day replace that of Henry the Fourth, and, to speak in the style of an eastern epistle, “what can I say more?”

Should you ever travel this way with Gray in your hand, you will look for the Ursuline convent, and regret the paintings he mentions: but you may recollect, for your consolation, that they are merely pretty, and remarkable only for being the work of one of the nuns.—Gray, who seems to have had that enthusiastic respect for religious orders common to young minds, admired them on this account; and numbers of English travellers have, I dare say, prepossessed by such an authority, experienced the same disappointment I myself felt on visiting the Ursuline church. Many of the chapels belonging to these communities were very showy and much decorated with gilding and sculpture: some of them are sold for a mere trifle, but the greatest part are filled with corn and forage, and on the door is inscribed “Magazin des armees.” The change is almost incredible to those who remember, that less than four years ago the Catholic religion was strictly practised, and the violation of these sanctuaries deemed sacrilegious. Our great historian [Gibbon] might well say “the influence of superstition is fluctuating and precarious;” though, in the present instance, it has rather been restrained than subdued; and the people, who have not been convinced, but intimidated, secretly lament these innovations, and perhaps reproach themselves conscientiously with their submission.—Yours.

June 20, 1793.

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Mercier, in his *Tableau de Paris*, notices, on several occasions, the little public spirit existing among his countrymen—it is also observable, that many of the laws and customs presume on this deficiency, and the name of republicans has by no means altered that cautious disposition which makes the French consider either misfortunes or benefits only as their personal interest is affected by them.—I am just returned from a visit to Abbeville, where we were much alarmed on Sunday by a fire at the Paraclete convent. The tocsin rang great part of the day, and the principal street of the town was in danger of being destroyed. In such circumstances, you will suppose, that people of all ranks eagerly crowded to offer their service, and endeavour to stop the progress of so terrible a calamity. By no means—the gates of the town were shut to prevent its entire evacuation, many hid themselves in garrets and cellars, and dragoons patrolled the streets, and even entered the houses, to force the inhabitants to assist in procuring water; while the consternation, usually the effect of such accidents, was only owing to the fear of being obliged to aid the sufferers.—This employment of military coercion for what humanity alone should dictate, is not ascribable to the principles of the present government—it was the same before the revolution, (except that the agents of the ancient system were not so brutal and despotic as the soldiers of the republic,) and compulsion was always deemed necessary where there was no stimulant but the general interest.

In England, at any alarm of the fort, all distinction of ranks is forgotten, and every one is solicitous to contribute as much as he is able to the safety of his fellow-citizens; and, so far from an armed force being requisite to procure assistance, the greatest difficulty is to repress the too-officious zeal of the croud.—I do not pretend to account for this national disparity, but I fear what a French gentleman once said to me of the Parisians is applicable to the general character, "*Ils sont tous egoistes*," ["They are all selfish!"] and they would not do a benevolent action at the risk of soiling a coat or tearing a ruffle.

Distrust of the assignats, and scarcity of bread, have occasioned a law to oblige the farmers, in every part of the republic, to sell their corn at a certain price, infinitely lower than what they have exacted for some months past. The consequence of this was, that, on the succeeding market days, no corn came to market, and detachments of dragoons are obliged to scour the country to preserve us from a famine. If it did not convey an idea both of the despotism and want with which the nation is afflicted, one should be amused by the ludicrous figures of the farmers, who enter the town preceded by soldiers, and reposing with doleful visages on their sacks of wheat. Sometimes you see a couple of dragoons leading in triumph an old woman and an ass, who follow with lingering steps their military conductors; and the very ass seems to sympathize with his mistress on the disaster of selling her corn at a reduced price, and for paper, when she had hoped to hoard it till a counter-revolution should bring back gold and silver.

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The farmers are now, perhaps, the greatest aristocrats in the country; but as both their patriotism and their aristocracy have been a mere calculation of interest, the severity exercised on their avarice is not much to be regretted. The original fault is, however, in an usurped government, which inspires no confidence, and which, to supply an administration lavish beyond all example, has been obliged to issue such an immense quantity of paper as nearly destroys its credit. In political, as in moral, vices, the first always necessitates a second, and these must still be sustained by others; until, at length, the very sense of right and wrong becomes impaired, and the latter is not only preferred from habit, but from choice.

Thus the arbitrary emission of paper has been necessarily followed by still more arbitrary decrees to support it. For instance—the people have been obliged to sell their corn at a stated price, which has again been the source of various and general vexations. The farmers, irritated by this measure, concealed their grain, or sold it privately, rather than bring it to market.—Hence, some were supplied with bread, and others absolutely in want of it. This was remedied by the interference of the military, and a general search for corn has taken place in all houses without exception, in order to discover if any was secreted; even our bedchambers were examined on this occasion: but we begin to be so accustomed to the *visite domiciliaire*, that we find ourselves suddenly surrounded by the *Garde Nationale*, without being greatly alarmed. —I know not how your English patriots, who are so enamoured of French liberty, yet thunder with the whole force of their eloquence against the ingress of an exciseman to a tobacco warehouse, would reconcile this domestic inquisition; for the municipalities here violate your tranquillity in this manner under any pretext they choose, and that too with an armed cortege sufficient to undertake the siege of your house in form.

About fifteen departments are in insurrection, ostensibly in behalf of the expelled Deputies; but I believe I am authorized in saying, it is by no means the desire of the people at large to interfere. All who are capable of reflection consider the dispute merely as a family quarrel, and are not partial enough to either party to adopt its cause. The troops they have already raised have been collected by the personal interest of the members who contrived to escape, or by an attempt of a few of the royalists to make one half of the faction subservient to the destruction of the other. If you judge of the principles of the nation by the success of the *Foederalists*,* and the superiority of the Convention, you will be extremely deceived; for it is demonstrable, that neither the most zealous partizans of the ancient system, nor those of the abolished constitution, have taken any share in the dispute; and the departments most notoriously aristocratic have all signified their adherence to the proceedings of the Assembly.

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* On the 31st of May and 2d of June, the Convention, who had been for some months struggling with the Jacobins and the municipality of Paris, was surrounded by an armed force: the most moderate of the Deputies (those distinguished by the name of Brissotins,) were either menaced into a compliance with the measures of the opposite faction, or arrested; others took flight, and, by representing the violence and slavery in which the majority of the Convention was holden, excited some of the departments to take arms in their favour.—This contest, during its short existence, was called the war of the Foederalists.—The result is well known.

Those who would gladly take an active part in endeavouring to establish a good government, are averse from risking their lives and properties in the cause of Brissot or Condorcet.—At Amiens, where almost every individual is an aristocrate, the fugitive Deputies could not procure the least encouragement, but the town would have received Dumouriez, and proclaimed the King without opposition. But this schism in the legislature is considered as a mere contest of banditti, about the division of spoil, not calculated to excite an interest in those they have plundered and oppressed.

The royalists who have been so mistaken as to make any effort on this occasion, will, I fear, fall a sacrifice, having acted for the most part without union or concert; and their junction with the Deputies renders them suspicious, if not odious, to their own party. The extreme difficulty, likewise, of communication between the departments, and the strict watch observed over all travellers, form another obstacle to the success of any attempt at present; and, on the whole, the only hope of deliverance for the French seems to rest upon the allied armies and the insurgents of La Vendee.

When I say this, I do not assert from prejudices, which often deceive, nor from conjecture, that is always fallible; but from unexceptionable information—from an intercourse with various ranks of people, and a minute observance of all. I have scarcely met with a single person who does not relate the progress of the insurgents in La Vendee with an air of satisfaction, or who does not appear to expect with impatience the surrender of Conde: and even their language, perhaps unconsciously, betrays their sentiments, for I remark, they do not, when they speak of any victory gained by the arms of the republic, say, Nous, or Notre armee, but, Les Francais, and, Les troupes de la republique;—and that always in a tone as though they were speaking of an enemy.—Adieu.

June 30, 1793.

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Our modern travellers are mostly either sentimental or philosophical, or courtly or political; and I do not remember to have read any who describe the manner of living among the gentry and middle ranks of life in France. I will, therefore, relieve your attention for a moment from our actual distresses, and give you the picture of a day as usually passed by those who have easy fortunes and no particular employment.—The social assemblage of a whole family in the morning, as in England, is not very common, for the French do not generally breakfast: when they do, it is without form, and on fruit, bread, wine, and water, or sometimes coffee; but tea is scarcely ever used, except by the sick. The morning is therefore passed with little intercourse, and in extreme dishabille. The men loiter, fiddle, work tapestry, and sometimes read, in a robe de chambre, or a jacket and "*pantalons*;" [Trowsers.] while the ladies, equipped only in a short manteau and petticoat, visit their birds, knit, or, more frequently, idle away the forenoon without doing any thing. It is not customary to walk or make visits before dinner, and if by chance any one calls, he is received in the bedchamber. At half past one or two they dine, but without altering the negligence of their apparel, and the business of the toilette does not begin till immediately after the repast. About four, visits of ceremony begin, and may be made till six or seven according to the season; but those who intend passing an evening at any particular house, go before six, and the card parties generally finish between eight and nine. People then adjourn to their supper engagements, which are more common than those for dinner, and are, for the most part, in different places, and considered as a separate thing from the earlier amusements of the evening. They keep better hours than the English, most families being in bed by half past ten. The theatres are also regulated by these sober habits, and the dramatic representations are usually over by nine.

A day passed in this manner is, as you may imagine, susceptible of much ennui, and the French are accordingly more subject to it than to any other complaint, and hold it in greatest dread than either sickness or misfortune. They have no conception how one can remain two hours alone without being ennuye a la mort; and but few, comparatively speaking, read for amusement: you may enter ten houses without seeing a book; and it is not to be wondered at that people, who make a point of staying at home all the morning, yet do not read, are embarrassed with the disposition of so much time.—It is this that occasions such a general fondness for domestic animals, and so many barbarous musicians, and male-workers of tapestry and tambour.

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I cannot but attribute this littleness and dislike of morning exercise to the quantity of animal food the French eat at night, and to going to rest immediately after it, in consequence of which their activity is checked by indigestions, and they feel heavy and uncomfortable for half the succeeding day.—The French pique themselves on being a gayer nation than the English; but they certainly must exclude their mornings from the account, for the forlorn and neglected figure of a Frenchman till dinner is a very antidote to cheerfulness, especially if contrasted with the animation of our countrymen, whose forenoon is passed in riding or walking, and who make themselves at least decent before they appear even in their own families.

The great difficulty the French have in finding amusement makes them averse from long residences in the country, and it is very uncommon for those who can afford only one house not to prefer a town; but those whose fortune will admit of it, live about three months of the year in the country, and the rest in the neighbouring town. This, indeed, as they manage it, is no very considerable expence, for the same furniture often serves for both habitations, and the one they quit being left empty, requires no person to take charge of it, especially as house-breaking is very uncommon in France; at least it was so before the revolution, when the police was more strict, and the laws against robbers were more severe.

You will say, I often describe the habits and manners of a nation so frequently visited, as though I were writing from Kamschatka or Japan; yet it is certain, as I have remarked above, that those who are merely itinerant have not opportunities of observing the modes of familiar life so well as one who is stationary, and travellers are in general too much occupied by more important observations to enter into the minute and trifling details which are the subject of my communications to you. But if your attention be sometimes fatigued by occurrences or relations too well known, or of too little consequence to be interesting, I claim some merit in never having once described the proportions of a building, nor given you the history of a town; and I might have contrived as well to tax your patience by an erudite description, as a superficial reflection, or a female remark. The truth is, my pen is generally guided by circumstances as they rise, and my ideas have seldom any deeper origin than the scene before me. I have no books here, and I am apt to think if professed travellers were deprived of this resource, many learned etymologies and much profound compilation would be lost to the modern reader.

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The insurgents of La Vendee continue to have frequent and decided successes, but the insurrections in the other departments languish. The avowed object of liberating the Convention is not calculated to draw adherents, and if any better purpose be intended, while a faction are the promoters of it, it will be regarded with too much suspicion to procure any effectual movement. Yet, however partial and unconnected this revolt may be, it is an object of great jealousy and inquietude: all the addresses or petitions brought in favour of it are received with disapprobation, and suppressed in the official bulletin of the legislature; but those which express contrary sentiments are ordered to be inserted with the usual terms of “applaudi, adopte, et mention honorable.”—In this manner the army and the people, who derive their intelligence from these accounts (which are pasted up in the streets,) are kept in ignorance of the real state of distant provinces, and, what is still more important for the Convention, the communication of examples, which they know so many are disposed to imitate, is retarded.

The people here are nearly in the same state they have been in for some time—murmuring in secret, and submitting in public; expecting every thing from that energy in others which they have not themselves, and accumulating the discontents they are obliged to suppress. The Convention call them the brave republicans of Amiens; but if their bravery were as unequivocal as their aristocracy, they would soon be at the gates of Paris. Even the first levies are not all departed for the frontiers, and some who were prevailed on to go are already returned.—All the necessaries of life are augmenting in price—the people complain, pillage the shops and the markets one day, and want the next. Many of the departments have opposed the recruiting much more decidedly than they have ventured to do here; and it was not without inspiring terror by numerous arrests, that the levies which were immediately necessary were procured.—France offers no prospect but that of scarcity, disorder, and oppression; and my friends begin to perceive that we have committed an imprudence in remaining so long. No passports can now be obtained, and we must, as well as several very respectable families still here, abide the event of the war.

Some weeks have elapsed since I had letters from England, and those we receive from the interior come open, or sealed with the seal of the district. This is not peculiar to our letters, as being foreigners, but the same unceremonious inspection is practised with the correspondence of the French themselves. Thus, in this land of liberty, all epistolary intercourse has ceased, except for mere matters of business; and though in the declaration of the rights of man it be asserted, that every one is entitled to write or print his thoughts, yet it is certain no person can entrust a letter to the post, but at the risk of having

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it opened; nor could Mr. Thomas Paine himself venture to express the slightest disapprobation of the measures of government, without hazarding his freedom, and, in the end, perhaps, his life. Even these papers, which I reserve only for your amusement, which contain only the opinions of an individual, and which never have been communicated, I am obliged to conceal with the utmost circumspection; for should they happen to fall into the hands of our domiciliary inquisitors, I should not, like your English liberties, escape with the gentle correction of imprisonment, or the pillory.—A man, who had murdered his wife, was lately condemned to twenty years imprisonment only; but people are guillotined every day for a simple discourse, or an inadvertent expression.—Yours.

Amiens, July 5, 1793.

It will be some consolation to the French, if, from the wreck of their civil liberty, they be able to preserve the mode of administering justice as established by the constitution of 1789. Were I not warranted by the best information, I should not venture an opinion on the subject without much diffidence, but chance has afforded me opportunities that do not often occur to a stranger, and the new code appears to me, in many parts, singularly excellent, both as to principle and practice.—Justice is here gratuitous—those who administer it are elected by the people—they depend only on their salaries, and have no fees whatever. Reasonable allowances are made to witnesses both for time and expences at the public charge—a loss is not doubled by the costs of a prosecution to recover it. In cases of robbery, where property found is detained for the sake of proof, it does not become the prey of official rapacity, but an absolute restitution takes place.—The legislature has, in many respects, copied the laws of England, but it has simplified the forms, and rectified those abuses which make our proceedings in some cases almost as formidable to the prosecutor as to the culprit. Having to compose an entire new system, and being unshackled by professional reverence for precedents, they were at liberty to benefit by example, to reject those errors which have been long sanctioned by their antiquity, and are still permitted to exist, through our dread of innovation. The French, however, made an attempt to improve on the trial by jury, which I think only evinces that the institution as adopted in England is not to be excelled. The decision is here given by ballot—unanimity is not required—and three white balls are sufficient to acquit the prisoner. This deviation from our mode seems to give the rich an advantage over the poor. I fear, that, in the number of twelve men taken from any country, it may sometimes happen that three may be found corruptible: now the wealthy delinquent can avail himself of this human failing; but, “through tatter’d robes small vices do appear,” and the indigent sinner has less chance of escaping than another.

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It is to be supposed, that, at this time, the vigour of the criminal laws is much relaxed, and their execution difficult. The army offers refuge and impunity to guilt of all kinds, and the magistrates themselves would be apprehensive of pursuing an offender who was protected by the mob, or, which is the same thing, by the Jacobins.

The groundwork of much of the French civil jurisprudence is arbitration, particularly in those trifling processes which originate in a spirit of litigation; and it is not easy for a man here, however well disposed, to spend twenty pounds in a contest about as many pence, or to ruin himself in order to secure the possession of half an acre of land. In general, redress is easily obtained without unnecessary procrastination, and with little or no cost. Perhaps most legal codes may be simple and efficacious at their first institution, and the circumstance of their being encumbered with forms which render them complex and expensive, may be the natural consequence of length of time and change of manners. Littleton might require no commentary in the reign of Henry II. and the mysterious fictions that constitute the science of modern judicature were perhaps familiar, and even necessary, to our ancestors. It is to be regretted that we cannot adapt our laws to the age in which we live, and assimilate them to our customs; but the tendency of our nature to extremes perpetuates evils, and makes both the wise and the timid enemies to reform. We fear, like John Calvin, to tear the habit while we are stripping off the superfluous decoration; and the example of this country will probably long act as a discouragement to all change, either judicial or political. The very name of France will repress the desire of innovation—we shall cling to abuses as though they were our support, and every attempt to remedy them will become an objection of suspicion and terror.—Such are the advantages which mankind will derive from the French revolution.

The Jacobin constitution is now finished, and, as far as I am able to judge, it is what might be expected from such an origin: calculated to flatter the people with an imaginary sovereignty—to place the whole power of election in the class most easily misled—to exclude from the representation those who have a natural interest in the welfare of the country, and to establish the reign of anarchy and intrigue.—Yet, however averse the greater number of the French may be from such a constitution, no town or district has dared to reject it; and I remark, that amongst those who have been foremost in offering their acceptance, are many of the places most notoriously aristocratic. I have enquired of some of the inhabitants of these very zealous towns on what principle they acted so much in opposition to their known sentiments: the reply is always, that they fear the vengeance of the Jacobins, and that they are awed by military force. This reasoning is, of course, unanswerable; and we learn, from the debates of the Convention, that the people have received the new constitution "*avec la plus vive reconnaissance*," ["With the most lively gratitude."] and that they have all sworn to die in its defence.—Yours, &c.

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July 14, 1793.

The return of this day cannot but suggest very melancholy reflections to all who are witnesses of the changes which a single year has produced. In twelve months only the government of France has been overturned, her commerce destroyed, the country depopulated to raise armies, and the people deprived of bread to support them. A despotism more absolute than that of Turkey is established, the manners of the nation are corrupted, and its moral character is disgraced in the eyes of all Europe. A barbarous rage has laid waste the fairest monuments of art—whatever could embellish society, or contribute to soften existence, has disappeared under the reign of these modern Goths—even the necessities of life are becoming rare and inadequate to the consumption—the rich are plundered and persecuted, yet the poor are in want—the national credit is in the last stage of debasement, yet an immense debt is created, and daily accumulating; and apprehension, distrust, and misery, are almost universal.—All this is the work of a set of adventurers who are now divided among themselves—who are accusing each other of those crimes which the world imputes to them all—and who, conscious they can no longer deceive the nation, now govern with the fear and suspicion of tyrants. Every thing is sacrificed to the army and Paris, and the people are robbed of their subsistence to supply an iniquitous metropolis, and a military force that awes and oppresses them.

The new constitution has been received here officially, but no one seems to take the least interest in it: it is regarded in just the same light as a new tax, or any other ministerial mandate, not sent to be discussed but obeyed. The mode of proclaiming it conveyed a very just idea of its origin and tendency. It was placed on a cushion, supported by Jacobins in their red caps, and surrounded by dragoons. It seemed the image of Anarchy, guarded by Despotism.—In this manner they paraded the town, and the “sacred volume” was then deposed on an altar erected on the Grande Place.—The Garde Nationale, who were ordered to be under arms, attended, and the constitution was read. A few of the soldiers cried “Vive la republique!” and every one returned home with countenances in which delight was by no means the prevailing expression.

A trifling incident which I noticed on this occasion, will serve, among others of the same kind that I could enumerate, to prove that even the very lower class of the people begin to ridicule and despise their legislators. While a municipal officer was very gravely reading the constitution, an ass forced his way across the square, and placed himself near the spot where the ceremony was performing: a boy, who was under our window, on observing it, cried out, “Why don’t they give him the *accolade fraternelle*!”*

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* Fraternal embrace.—This is the reception given by the President to any one whom the Convention wish particularly to distinguish. On an occasion of the sort, the fraternal embrace was given to an old Negress.—The honours of the fitting are also daily accorded to deputations of fish-women, chimney-sweepers, children, and all whose missions are flattering. There is no homage so mean as not to gratify the pride of those to whom dominion is new; and these expressions are so often and so strangely applied, that it is not surprizing they are become the cant phrases of the mob.

—“Yes, (rejoined another,) and admit him *aux honneurs de la feance*.” [To the honours of the fitting.] This disposition to jest with their misfortunes is, however, not so common as it was formerly. A bon mot may alleviate the loss of a battle, and a lampoon on the court solace under the burthen of a new impost; but the most thoughtless or improvident can find nothing very facetious in the prospect of absolute want—and those who have been used to laugh under a circumscription of their political liberty, feel very seriously the evil of a government which endows its members with unlimited power, and enables a Deputy, often the meanest and most profligate character of his department, to imprison all who, from caprice, interest, or vengeance, may have become the objects of his persecution.

I know this will appear so monstrous to an Englishman, that, had I an opportunity of communicating such a circumstance before it were publicly authenticated, you would suppose it impossible, and imagine I had been mistaken, or had written only from report; it is nevertheless true, that every part of France is infested by these Commissioners, who dispose, without appeal, of the freedom and property of the whole department to which they are sent. It frequently happens, that men are delegated to places where they have resided, and thus have an opportunity of gratifying their personal malice on all who are so unfortunate as to be obnoxious to them. Imagine, for a moment, a village-attorney acting with uncontrouled authority over the country where he formerly exercised his profession, and you will have some idea of what passes here, except that I hope no class of men in England are so bad as those which compose the major part of the National Convention.—Yours, &c.

July 23, 1793.

The events of Paris which are any way remarkable are so generally circulated, that I do not often mention them, unless to mark their effect on the provinces; but you will be so much misled by the public papers with regard to the death of Marat, that I think it necessary to notice the subject while it is yet recent in my memory. Were the clubs, the Convention, or the sections of Paris to be regarded as expressing the sense of the people, the assassination of this turbulent journalist must be considered being the case, that the departments are for the most part,

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if not rejoiced, indifferent—and many of those who impute to him the honour of martyrdom, or assist at his apotheosis, are much better satisfied both with his christian and heathen glories, than they were while he was living to propagate anarchy and pillage. The reverence of the Convention itself is a mere political pantomime. Within the last twelve months nearly all the individuals who compose it have treated Marat with contempt; and I perfectly remember even Danton, one of the members of the Committee of Salut Publique, accusing him of being a contre revolutionnaire.

But the people, to use a popular expression here, require to be electrified.—St. Fargeau is almost forgotten, and Marat is to serve the same purposes when dead, to which he contributed while living.—An extreme grossness and want of feeling form the characteristic feature of the Parisians; they are ignorant, credulous, and material, and the Convention do not fail on all occasions to avail themselves of these qualities. The corpse of Marat decently enclosed in a coffin would have made little impression, and it was not pity, but revenge, which was to be excited. The disgusting object of a dead leper was therefore exposed to the eyes of a metropolis calling itself the most refined and enlightened of all Europe—

“And what t’oblivion better were consign’d,
Is hung on high to poison half mankind.”

I know not whether these lines are most applicable to the display of Marat’s body, or the consecration of his fame, but both will be a lasting stigma on the manners and morals of Paris.

If the departments, however, take no interest in the loss of Marat, the young woman who assassinated him has created a very lively one. The slightest anecdotes concerning her are collected with avidity, and repeated with admiration; and this is a still farther proof of what you have heard me advance, that neither patriotism nor humanity has an abundant growth in this country. The French applaud an act in itself horrid and unjustifiable, while they have scarcely any conception of the motive, and such a sacrifice seems to them something supernatural.—The Jacobins assert, that Charlotte Corday was an emissary of the allied powers, or, rather, of Mr. Pitt; and the Parisians have the complaisance to believe, that a young woman could devote herself to certain destruction at the instigation of another, as though the same principles which would lead a person to undertake a diplomatic commission, would induce her to meet death.

I wrote some days ago to a lady of my acquaintance at Caen, to beg she would procure me some information relative to this extraordinary female, and I subjoin an extract of her answer, which I have just received:

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“Miss Corday was a native of this department, and had, from her earliest years, been very carefully educated by an aunt who lives at Caen. Before she was twenty she had decided on taking the veil, and her noviciate was just expired when the Constituent Assembly interdicted all religious vows for the future: she then left the convent, and resided entirely with her aunt. The beauty of her person, and particularly her mental acquisitions, which were superior to that of French women in general, rendered an object of much admiration. She spoke uncommonly well, and her discourse often turned on the ancients, and on such subjects as indicated that masculine turn of mind which has since proved so fatal to her. Perhaps her conversation was a little tainted with that pedantry not unjustly attributed to our sex when they have a little more knowledge than usual, but, at the same time, not in such a degree as to render it unpleasant. She seldom gave any opinion on the revolution, but frequently attended the municipalities to solicit the pensions of the expelled religious, or on any other occasion where she could be useful to her friends. On the arrival of Petion, Barbaroux, and others of the Brissotin faction, she began to frequent the clubs, and to take a more lively interest in political affairs. Petion, and Barbaroux especially, seemed to be much respected by her. It was even said, she had a tender partiality for the latter; but this I believe is untrue.—I dined with her at her aunt’s on the Sunday previous to her departure for Paris. Nothing very remarkable appeared in her behaviour, except that she was much affected by a muster of the recruits who were to march against Paris, and seemed to think many lives might be lost on the occasion, without obtaining any relief for the country.—On the Tuesday following she left Caen, under pretext of visiting her father, who lives at Sens. Her aunt accompanied her to the gate of the town, and the separation was extremely sorrowful on both sides. The subsequent events are too well known to need recital.”

On her trial, and at her execution, Miss Corday was firm and modest; and I have been told, that in her last moments her whole figure was interesting beyond description. She was tall, well formed, and beautiful—her eyes, especially, were fine and expressive—even her dress was not neglected, and a simple white dishabille added to the charms of this self-devoted victim. On the whole, it is not possible to ascertain precisely the motives which determined her to assassinate Marat. Her letter to Barbaroux expresses nothing but republican sentiments; yet it is difficult to conceive that a young woman, who had voluntarily embraced the life of a cloister, could be really of this way of thinking.—I cannot but suppose her connection with the Deputies arose merely from an idea that they might be the instruments of restoring the abolished government, and her profession of republican principles after she was arrested might

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probably be with a view of saving Duperret, and others of the party, who were still in the power of the Convention.—Her selection of Marat still remains to be accounted for. He was, indeed, the most violent of the Jacobins, but not the most dangerous, and the death of several others might have been more serviceable to the cause. Marat was, however, the avowed persecutor of priests and religion, and if we attribute any influence to Miss Corday's former habits, we may suppose them to have had some share in the choice of her victim. Her refusal of the ministry of a constitutional priest at the scaffold strengthens this opinion. We pay a kind of involuntary tribute of admiration to such firmness of mind in a young and beautiful woman; and I do not recollect that history has transmitted any thing parallel to the heroism of Charlotte Corday. Love, revenge, and ambition, have often sacrificed their victims, and sustained the courage of their voluntaries under punishment; but a female, animated by no personal motives, sensible only to the misfortunes of her country, patriotic both from feeling and reflection, and sacrificing herself from principle, is singular in the annals of human nature.—Yet, after doing justice to such an instance of fortitude and philanthropic devotion, I cannot but sincerely lament the act to which it has given rise. At a time when so many spirits are irritated by despair and oppression, the example may be highly pernicious, and a cause, however good, must always be injured by the use of such means in its support.—Nothing can sanctify an assassination; and were not the French more vindictive than humane, the crimes of the republican party would find a momentary refuge in this injudicious effort to punish them.

My friend La Marquise de ____ has left Paris, and is now at Peronne, where she has engaged me to pass a few weeks with her; so that my next will most probably be dated from thence.--Mr. D____ is endeavouring to get a passport for England. He begins to regret having remained here. His temper, naturally impatient of restraint, accords but ill with the portion of liberty enjoyed by our republicans. Corporal privations and mental interdictions multiply so fast, that irritable people like himself, and valetudinarians like Mrs. C____ and me, could not choose a worse residence; and, as we are now unanimous on the subject, I hope soon to leave the country.—There is, as you observe in your last, something of indolence as well as friendship in my having so long remained here; but if actions were always analyzed so strictly, and we were not allowed to derive a little credit from our weaknesses, how many great characters would be reduced to the common level. Voltaire introduced a sort of rage for anecdotes, and for tracing all events to trifling causes, which has done much more towards exploding the old-fashioned system or the dignity of human nature than the dry maxims of Rochefaucault, the sophisms of

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Mandeville, or even the malicious wit of Swift. This is also another effect of the progress of philosophy; and this sort of moral Quixotism, continually in search of evil, and more gratified in discovering it than pained by its existence, may be very philosophical; but it is at least gloomy and discouraging; and we may be permitted to doubt whether mankind

become wiser or better by learning, that those who have been most remarkable either for wisdom or virtue were occasionally under the influence of the same follies and passions as other people.—Your uncharitable discernment, you see, has led me into a digression, and I have, without intending it, connected the motives of my stay with reflections on Voltaire's General History, Barillon's Letters, and all the secret biography of our modern libraries. This, you will say, is only a chapter of a "man's importance to himself;" but public affairs are now so confused and disgusting, that we are glad to encourage any train of ideas not associated with them.

The Commissioners I gave you some account of in a former letter are departed, and we have lately had Chabot, an Ex-capuchin, and a patriot of special note in the Convention, and one Dumont, an attorney of a neighbouring village. They are, like all the rest of these missionaries, entrusted with unlimited powers, and inspire apprehension and dismay wherever they approach.

The Garde Nationale of Amiens are not yet entirely subdued to the times, and Chabot gave some hints of a project to disarm them, and actually attempted to arrest some of their officers; but, apprized of his design, they remained two nights under arms, and the Capuchin, who is not martially inclined, was so alarmed at this indication of resistance, that he has left the town with more haste than ceremony.—He had, in an harangue at the cathedral, inculcated some very edifying doctrines on the division of property and the right of pillage; and it is not improbable, had he not withdrawn, but the Amienois would have ventured, on this pretext, to arrest him. Some of them contrived, in spite of the centinel placed at the lodging of these great men, to paste up on the door two figures, with the names of Chabot and Dumont; in the "fatal position of the unfortunate brave;" and though certain events in the lives of these Deputies may have rendered this perspective of their last moments not absolutely a novelty, yet I do not recollect that Akenside, or any other author, has enumerated a gibbet amongst the objects, which, though not agreeable in themselves, may be reconciled to the mind by familiarity. I wish, therefore, our representatives may not, in return for this admonitory portrait of their latter end, draw down some vengeance on the town, not easily to be appeased. I am no astrologer, but in our sublunary world the conjunction of an attorney and a renegade

monk cannot present a fortunate aspect; and I am truly anxious to find myself once again under the more benign influence of your English hemisphere.—Yours.

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Peronne, July 29, 1793.

Every attempt to obtain passports has been fruitless, and, with that sort of discontented resignation which is the effect of necessity, I now look upon myself as fixed here till the peace. I left Mr. and Mrs. D_____ yesterday morning, the disappointment operating upon them in full force. The former takes longer walks than usual, breaks out in philippics against tyrannies of all kinds, and swears ten times a day that the French are the most noisy people upon earth—the latter is vexed, and, for that reason, fancies she is ill, and calculates, with great ingenuity, all the hazard and inconvenience we may be liable to by remaining here. I hope, on my return, to find them more reconciled.

At Villars de Bretonne, on my road hither, some people told me, with great gaiety, that the English had made a descent on the coast of Picardy. Such a report (for I did not suppose it possible) during the last war would have made me tremble, but I heard this without alarm, having, in no instance, seen the people take that kind of interest in public events which formerly made a residence in France unpleasant to an individual of an hostile nation. It is not that they are become more liberal, or better informed—no change of this kind has been discovered even by the warmest advocates of the revolution; but they are more indifferent, and those who are not decidedly the enemies of the present government, for the most part concern themselves as little about the events of the war, as though it were carried on in the South Sea.

I fear I should risk an imputation on my veracity, were I to describe the extreme ignorance and inattention of the French with respect to public men and measures. They draw no conclusions from the past, form no conjectures for the future, and, after exclaiming “Il ne peut pas durer comme cela,” they, with a resignation which is certainly neither pious nor philosophic, leave the rest to the agency of Providence.—Even those who are more informed so bewilder themselves in the politics of Greece and Rome, that they do not perceive how little these are applicable to their own country. Indeed, it should seem that no modern age or people is worthy the knowledge of a Frenchman.—I have often remarked, in the course of our correspondence, how little they are acquainted with what regards England or the English; and scarcely a day passes that I have not occasion to make the same observation.

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My conductor hither, who is a friend of Mad. de T____, and esteemed “bien instruit,” was much surprized when I told him that the population and size of London exceeded that of Paris—that we had good fruit, and better vegetables than were to be found in many parts of France. I saw that he suspected my veracity, and there is always on these occasions such a decided and impenetrable incredulity in a Frenchman as precludes all hopes of convincing him. He listens with a sort of self-sufficient complacence which tells you he does not consider your assertions as any thing more than the exaggerations of national vanity, but that his politeness does not allow him to contradict you. I know nothing more disgustingly impertinent than his ignorance, which intrenches itself behind the forms of civility, and, affecting to decline controversy, assumes the merit of forbearance and moderation: yet this must have been often observed by every one who has lived much in French society: for the first emotion of a Frenchman, on hearing any thing which tends to place another country on an equality with France, is doubt—this doubt is instantly reinforced by vanity—and, in a few seconds, he is perfectly satisfied that the thing is impossible.

One must be captious indeed to object to this, did it arise from that patriotic feeling so common in the English; but here it is all vanity, downright vanity: a Frenchman must have his country and his mistress admired, though he does not often care much for either one or the other. I have been in various parts of France in the most critical periods of the revolution—I have conversed with people of all parties and of all ranks—and I assert, that I have never yet met but with one man who had a grain of real patriotism. If the Athenian law were adopted which doomed all to death who should be indifferent to the public welfare in a time of danger, I fear there would be a woeful depopulation here, even among the loudest champions of democracy.

It is not thirty miles from Amiens to Peronne, yet a journey of thirty miles is not now to be undertaken inconsiderately; the horses are so much worked, and so ill fed, that few perform such a distance without rest and management. If you wish to take others, and continue your route, you cannot, or if you wait while your own horses are refreshed, as a reward for your humanity you get starved yourself. Bread being very scarce, no family can get more than sufficient for its own consumption, and those who travel without first supplying themselves, do it at the risk of finding none on the road.

Peronne is chiefly remarkable in history for never having been taken, and for a tower where Louis XI. was confined for a short time, after being outwitted in a manner somewhat surprizing for a Monarch who piqued himself on his talents for intrigue, by Charles le Temeraire, Duke of Burgundy. Its modern reputation, arises from its election

of the Abbe Maury for its representative, and for entertaining political principles every way analogous to such a choice.

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I found the Marquise much altered in her person, and her health much impaired, by the frequent alarms and continual apprehensions she had been subject to at Paris. Fortunately she has no imputation against her but her rank and fortune, for she is utterly guiltless of all political opinions; so that I hope she will be suffered to knit stockings, tend her birds and dogs, and read romances in peace.—Yours, &c. &c.

August 1, 1793.

When the creation of assignats was first proposed, much ingenuity was employed in conjecturing, and much eloquence displayed in expatiating upon, the various evils that might result from them; yet the genius of party, however usually successful in gloomy perspective, did not at that time imagine half the inconvenience this measure was fraught with. It was easy, indeed, to foresee, that an immense circulation of paper, like any other currency, must augment the price of every thing; but the excessive discredit of the assignats, operating accessarily to their quantity, has produced a train of collateral effects of greater magnitude than even those that were originally apprehended. Within the last twelve months the whole country are become monopolizers—the desire of realizing has so possessed all degrees of people, that there is scarcely an article of consumption which is not bought up and secreted. One would really suppose that nothing was perishable but the national credit—the nobleman, the merchant, the shopkeeper, all who have assignats, engage in these speculations, and the necessities of our dissipated heirs do not drive them to resources for obtaining money more whimsical than the commerce now practised here to get rid of it. I know a beau who has converted his *hypothèque* [Mortgage.] on the national domains into train oil, and a General who has given these “airy nothings” the substance and form of hemp and leather!*

* In the late rage for monopolies in France, a person who had observed the vast daily consumption of onions, garlic, and eschalots, conceived the project of making the whole district of Amiens tributary for this indispensable article. In consequence, he attended several market-days, and purchased all that came in his way. The country people finding a ready sale for their onions, poured in from all quarters, and our projector found that, in proportion as he bought, the market became more profusely supplied, and that the commodity he had hoped to monopolize was inexhaustible.

Goods purchased from such motives are not as you may conceive sold till the temptation of an exorbitant profit seduces the proprietor to risk a momentary possession of assignats, which are again disposed of in a similar way. Thus many necessities of life are withdrawn from circulation, and when a real scarcity ensues, they are produced to the people, charged with all the accumulated gains of these intermediate barterers.

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This illiberal and pernicious commerce, which avarice and fear have for some time kept in great activity, has at length attracted the notice of the Convention, and very severe laws are now enacted against monopolies of all kinds. The holder of any quantity of merchandize beyond what he may be supposed to consume is obliged to declare it to his municipality, and to expose the articles he deals in in writing over his door. These clauses, as well as every other part of the decree, seem very wise and equitable; but I doubt if the severity of the punishment annexed to any transgression of it will not operate so as to defeat the purposes intended to be produced. A false declaration is punishable by six years imprisonment, and an absolute non-compliance with death.—Blackstone remarks, that it is the certainty, not the severity, of punishment, which makes laws efficacious; and this must ever be the case amongst an humane people.—An inordinate desire of gain is not often considered by mankind as very criminal, and those who would willingly subject it to its adequate punishment of fine and confiscation, will hesitate to become the means of inflicting death on the offender, or of depriving him of his liberty. The Poets have, from time immemorial, claimed a kind of exclusive jurisdiction over the sin of avarice: but, unfortunately, minds once steeled by this vice are not often sensible to the attacks of ridicule; and I have never heard that any poet, from Plautus to Moliere, has reformed a single miser. I am not, therefore, sorry that our legislature has encroached on this branch of the poetical prerogative, and only wish that the mild regimen of the Muses had been succeeded by something less rigid than the prison or the guillotine. It is true, that, in the present instance, it is not the ordinary and habitual practice of avarice that has called forth the severity of the laws, but a species so destructive and extensive in its consequences, that much may be said in defence of any penalty short of death; and such is the general distrust of the paper-money, that I really believe, had not some measure of the kind been adopted, no article susceptible of monopoly would have been left for consumption. There are, however, those who retort on the government, and assert, that the origin of the evil is in the waste and speculation of its agents, which also make the immense emission of paper more necessary; and they are right in the fact, though not in their deduction, for as the evil does exist whatever may be the cause, it is certainly wise to endeavour to remedy it.

The position of Valenciennes, which is supposed to be on the eve of a surrender—the progress of the insurgents in La Vendee—the discontents in the South—and the charge of treachery against so many of the Generals, and particularly Custine—all together seem to have agitated the public extremely: yet it is rather the agitation of uncertainty than that occasioned by any deep impression of hope or fear. The people wish to be relieved from their present situation, yet are without any determinate views for the future; and, indeed, in this part of the country, where they have neither leaders nor union, it would be very difficult for them to take a more active part.

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The party of the foederalists languish, merely because it is nothing more than a party, and a party of which the heads excite neither interest nor esteem. I conclude you learn from the papers all the more important events, and I confine myself, as usual, to such details as I think less likely to reach you. The humanity of the English must often banish their political animosities when they read what passes here; and thousands of my countrymen must at this moment lament with me the situation to which France is reduced by projects in which common sense can distinguish no medium between wickedness and folly.

All apparent attachment to royalism is now cautiously avoided, but the royalists do not diminish by persecution, and the industry with which they propagate their opinions is nearly a match for all the force armee of the republicans.—It is not easy to print pamphlets or newspapers, but there are certain shops which one would think were discovered by instinct, where are sold a variety of mysterious emblems of royalty, such as fans that have no visible ornaments except landscapes, &c. but when opened by the initiated, present tolerable likenesses of the Royal Family; snuff-boxes with secret lids, containing miniature busts of the late King; and music so ingeniously printed, that what to the common eye offers only some popular air, when folded so as to join the heads and tails of the notes together, forms sentences of very treasonable import, and by no means flattering to the existing government—I have known these interdicted trifles purchased at extravagant prices by the best-reputed patriots, and by officers who in public breathe nothing but unconquerable democracy, and detestation of Kings. Yet, though these things are circulated with extreme caution, every body has something of the sort, and, as Charles Surface says, “for my part, I don’t see who is out of the secret.”

The belief in religious miracles is exploded, and it is only in political ones that the faith of the people is allowed to exercise itself.—We have lately seen exhibited at the fairs and markets a calf, produced into the world with the tri-coloured cockade on its head; and on the painted cloth that announces the phenomenon is the portrait of this natural revolutionist, with a mayor and municipality in their official scarfs, addressing the four-footed patriot with great ceremony.

We set out early to-morrow-morning for Soissons, which is about twenty leagues from hence. Travelling is not very desirable in the present circumstances, but Mad. de F_____ has some affairs to settle there which cannot well be entrusted to a third person. The times, however, have a very hostile appearance, and we intend, if possible, to be absent but three days.—Yours.

Soissons, August 4, 1793.

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“And you may go by Beauvais if you will, for which reason many go by Beauvais;” and the stranger who turns out of his road to go by Soissons, must use the same reasoning, for the consciousness of having exercised his free agency will be all his reward for visiting Soissons. This, by the way; for my journey hither not being one of curiosity, I have no right to complain; yet somehow or other, by associating the idea of the famous Vase, the ancient residence of the first French Kings, and other circumstances as little connected as these I suppose with modern history, I had ranked Soissons in my imagination as one of the places I should see with interest. I find it, however, only a dull, decent-looking town, tolerably large, but not very populous. In the new division of France it is the capital of the department De l’Aisne, and is of course the seat of the administration.

We left Peronne early, and, being so fortunate as to encounter no accidental delays, we arrived within a league of Soissons early in the afternoon. Mad. de F____, recollecting an acquaintance who has a chateau not far out of our road, determined to stop an hour or two; for, as she said, her friend was so “fond of the country,” she should be sure to find him there. We did, indeed, find this Monsieur, who is so “fond of the country,” at home, extremely well powdered, dressed in a striped silk coat, and engaged with a card party, on a warm afternoon on the third of August.—The chateau was situated as a French chateau usually is, so as to be benefited by all the noises and odours of the village—built with a large single front, and a number of windows so judiciously placed, that it must be impossible either to be cool in summer or warm in winter.

We walked out after taking some coffee, and I learned that this lover of the country did not keep a single acre of land in his own hands, but that the part immediately contiguous to the house was cultivated for a certain share of the profit by a farmer who lives in a miserable looking place adjoining, and where I saw the operations of the dairy-maid carried on amidst pigs, ducks, and turkeys, who seemed to have established a very familiar access.

Previous to our arrival at Soissons, the Marquise (who, though she does not consider me as an aristocrate, knows I am by no means a republican,) begged me to be cautious in expressing my sentiments, as the Comte de _____, where we were going, had embraced the principles of the revolution very warmly, and had been much blamed by his family on this account. Mad. de F____ added, that she had not seen him for above a year, but that she believed him still to be “extremement patriote.”

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We reached *Mons. de ____*'s just as the family were set down to a very moderate supper, and I observed that their plate had been replaced by pewter. After the first salutations were over, it was soon visible that the political notions of the count were much changed. He is a sensible reflecting man, and seems really to wish the good of his country. He thinks, with many others, that all the good effects which might have been obtained by the revolution will be lost through the contempt and hatred which the republican government has drawn upon it.

Mons. de ____ has two sons who have distinguished themselves very honourably in the army, and he has himself made great pecuniary sacrifices; but this has not secured him from numerous domiciliary visits and vexations of all kinds. The whole family are at intervals a little pensive, and *Mons. de ____* told us, at a moment when the ladies were absent, that the taking of Valenciennes had occasioned a violent fermentation at Paris, and that he had serious apprehensions for those who have the misfortune to be distinguished by their rank, or obnoxious from their supposed principles—that he himself, and all who were presumed to have an attachment to the constitution of eighty-nine, were much more feared, and of course more suspected, than the original aristocrats—and “enfin” that he had made up his mind *à la Française* to the worst that could happen.

I have just run over the papers of the day, and I perceive that the debates of the Convention are filled with invectives against the English. A letter has been very opportunely found on the ramparts of Lisle, which is intended to persuade the people that the British government has distributed money and phosphoric matches in every town in France—the one to provoke insurrection, the other to set fire to the corn.* You will conclude this letter to be a fabrication, and it is imagined and executed with so little ingenuity, that I doubt whether it will impose on the most ignorant of the people for a moment.

* “The National Convention, in the name of violated humanity, denounces to all the world, and to the people of England in particular, the base, perfidious, and wicked conduct of the British government, which does not hesitate to employ fire, poison, assassination, and every other crime, to procure the triumph of tyranny, and the destruction of the rights of man.” (Decree, 1st August, 1793.)

The Queen has been transferred to the Conciergerie, or common prison, and a decree is passed for trying her; but perhaps at this moment (whatever may be the result hereafter) they only hope her situation may operate as a check upon the enemy; at least I have heard it doubted by many whether they intend to proceed seriously on this trial so

long threatened.— Perhaps I may have before noticed to you that the convention never seemed capable of any thing great or uniform, and that all their proceedings took a tinge from that

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frivolity and meanness which I am almost tempted to believe inherent in the French character. They have just now, amidst a long string of decrees, the objects of which are of the first consequence, inserted one for the destruction of all the royal tombs before the tenth of August, and another for reducing the expences of the King's children, particularly their food, to bare necessities. Had our English revolutionists thus employed themselves, they might have expelled the sculptured Monarchs from the Abbey, and waged a very successful war on the admirers of Gothic antiquity; but neither the Stuarts, nor the Catholic religion, would have had much to fear from them.

We have been wandering about the town all day, and I have not remarked that the successes of the enemy have occasioned any regret. When I was in France three years ago, you may recollect that my letters usually contained some relation of our embarrassment and delays, owing to the fear and ignorance of the people. At one place they apprehended the introduction of foreign troops—at another, that the Comte d'Artois was to burn all the corn. In short, the whole country teemed with plots and counterplots, every one of which was more absurd and inexplicable than those of Oates, with his whole tribe of Jesuits. At present, when a powerful army is invading the frontiers, and people have not in many places bread to eat, they seem to be very little solicitous about the former, and as little disposed to blame the aristocrates for the latter.

It is really extraordinary, after all the pains that have been taken to excite hatred and resentment against the English, that I have not heard of a single instance of their having been insulted or molested. Whatever inconveniencies they may have been subjected to, were acts of the government, not of the people; and perhaps this is the first war between the two nations in which the reverse has not been the case.

I accompanied Mad. de ____ this afternoon to the house of a rich merchant, where she had business, and who, she told me, had been a furious patriot, but his ardour is now considerably abated. He had just returned from the department, [Here used for the place where the public business is transacted.] where his affairs had led him; and he assures us, that in general the agents of the republic were more inaccessible, more insolent, corrupt, and ignorant, than any employed under the old government. He demurred to paying Mad. de ____ a sum of money all in *assignats a face*;* and this famous patriot would readily have given me an hundred livres for a pound sterling.

* *Assignats a face*—that is, with the King's effigy; at this time greatly preferred to those issued after his death.



We shall return to Peronne to-morrow, and I have availed myself of the hour between cards and supper, which is usually employed by the French in undressing, to scribble my remarks. In some families, I suppose, supping in dishabille is an arrangement of oeconomy, in others of ease; but I always think it has the air of preparation for a very solid meal; and, in effect, supping is not a mere ceremony with either sex in this country.

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I learnt in conversation with M. de _____, whose sons were at Famars when the camp was forced, that the carnage was terrible, and that the loss of the French on this occasion amounted to several thousands. You will be informed of this much more accurately in England, but you will scarcely imagine that no official account was ever published here, and that in general the people are ignorant of the circumstance, and all the disasters attending it. In England, you have opposition papers that amply supply the omissions of the ministerial gazettes, and often dwell with much complacency on the losses and defeats of their country; here none will venture to publish the least event which they suppose the government wish to keep concealed. I am told, a leading feature of republican governments is to be extremely jealous of the liberty of the press, and that of France is, in this respect, truly republican.—Adieu.

Peronne, August, 1793.

I have often regretted, my dear brother, that my letters have for some time been rather intended to satisfy your curiosity than your affection. At this moment I feel differently, and I rejoice that the inquietude and danger of my situation will, probably, not come to your knowledge till I shall be no longer subject to them. I have been for several days unwell, and yet my body, valetudinarian as I am at best, is now the better part of me; for my mind has been so deranged by suspense and terror, that I expect to recover my health long before I shall be able to tranquillize my spirits.

On our return from Soissons I found, by the public prints, that a decree had passed for arresting all natives of the countries with which France is at war, and who had not constantly resided there since 1789.—This intelligence, as you will conceive, sufficiently alarmed me, and I lost no time in consulting Mad. de _____'s friends on the subject, who were generally of opinion that the decree was merely a menace, and that it was too unjust to be put in execution. As some days elapsed and no steps were taken in consequence, I began to think they were right, and my spirits were somewhat revived; when one evening, as I was preparing to go to bed, my maid suddenly entered the room, and, before she could give me any previous explanation, the apartment was filled with armed men. As soon as I was collected enough to enquire the object of this unseasonable visit, I learned that all this military apparel was to put the seals on my papers, and convey my person to the Hotel de Ville!—I knew it would be vain to remonstrated, and therefore made an effort to recover my spirits and submit. The business, however, was not yet terminated, my papers were to be sealed—and though they were not very voluminous, the process was more difficult than you would imagine, none of the company having been employed on affairs of the kind before. A debate ensued on the manner in which it should be done, and, after a very tumultuous discussion, it was sagaciously concluded to seal up the doors and windows of all the

apartments appropriated to my use. They then discovered that they had no seal fit for the purpose, and a new consultation was holden on the propriety of affixing a cypher which was offered them by one of the Garde Nationale.

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This weighty matter being at length decided, the doors of my bedchamber, dressing-room, and of the apartments with which they communicated, were carefully fastened up, though not without an observation on my part that I was only a guest at Mad. de ____'s, and that an order to seize my papers or person was not a mandate for rendering a part of her home useless. But there was no reasoning with ignorance and a score of bayonets, nor could I obtain permission even to take some linen out of my drawers. On going down stairs, I found the court and avenues to the garden amply guarded, and with this numerous escort, and accompanied by Mad. de ____, I was conducted to the Hotel de Ville. I know not what resistance they might expect from a single female, but, to judge by their precautions, they must have deemed the adventure a very perilous one. When we arrived at the Hotel de Ville, it was near eleven o'clock: the hall was crowded, and a young man, in a dirty linen jacket and trowsers and dirty linen, with the air of a Polisson and the countenance of an assassin, was haranguing with great vehemence against the English, who, he asserted, were all agents of Pitt, (especially the women,) and were to set fire to the corn, and corrupt the garrisons of the fortified towns.— The people listened to these terrible projects with a stupid sort of surprize, and, for the most part, seemed either very careless or very incredulous. As soon as this inflammatory piece of eloquence was finished, I was presented to the ill-looking orator, who, I learned, was a representant du peuple. It was very easy to perceive that my spirits were quite overpowered, and that I could with difficulty support myself; but this did not prevent the representant du peuple from treating me with that inconsiderable brutality which is commonly the effect of a sudden accession of power on narrow and vulgar minds. After a variety of impertinent questions, menaces of a prison for myself, and exclamations of hatred and vengeance against my country, on producing some friends of Mad. de ____, who were to be answerable for me, I was released, and returned home more dead than alive.

You must not infer, from what I have related, that I was particularly distinguished on this occasion, for though I have no acquaintance with the English here, I understand they had all been treated much in the same manner.—As soon as the representant had left the town, by dint of solicitation we prevailed on the municipality to take the seal off the rooms, and content themselves with selecting and securing my papers, which was done yesterday by a commission, formally appointed for the purpose. I know not the quality of the good citizens to whom this important charge was entrusted, but I concluded from their costume that they had been more usefully employed the preceding part of the day at the anvil and last. It is certain, however, they had undertaken a business greatly beyond their powers. They indeed turned over

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all my trunks and drawers, and dived to the bottom of water-jugs and flower-jars with great zeal, but neglected to search a large portfolio that lay on the table, probably from not knowing the use of it; and my servant conveyed away some letters, while I amused them with the sight of a blue-bottle fly through a microscope. They were at first much puzzled to know whether books and music were included under the article of papers, and were very desirous of burning a history of France, because they discovered, by the title-plate, that it was “about Kings;” but the most difficult part of this momentous transaction was taking an account of it in writing. However, as only one of the company could write, there was no disputing as to the scribe, though there was much about the manner of execution. I did not see the composition, but I could hear that it stated “comme quoi,” they had found the seals unbroken, “comme quoi,” they had taken them off, and divers “as hows” of the same kind. The whole being concluded, and my papers deposited in a box, I was at length freed from my guests, and left in possession of my apartments.

It is impossible to account for this treatment of the English by any mode of reasoning that does not exclude both justice and policy; and viewing it only as a symptom of that desperate wickedness which commits evil, not as a means, but an end, I am extremely alarmed for our situation. At this moment the whole of French politics seems to center in an endeavour to render the English odious both as a nation and as individuals. The Convention, the clubs, and the streets of Paris, resound with low abuse of this tendency; and a motion was made in the former, by one Garnier, to procure the assassination of Mr. Pitt. Couthon, a member of the Comite de Salut Publique, has proposed and carried a decree to declare him the enemy of mankind; and the citizens of Paris are stunned by the hawkers of Mr. Pitt’s plots with the Queen to “starve all France,” and “massacre all the patriots.”—Amidst so many efforts* to provoke the destruction of the English, it is wonderful, when we consider the sanguinary character which the French people have lately evinced, that we are yet safe, and it is in effect only to be accounted for by their disinclination to take any part in the animosities of their government.

* When our representative appeared at Abbeville with an intention of arresting the English and other foreigners, the people, to whom these missionaries with unlimited powers were yet new, took the alarm, and became very apprehensive that he was come likewise to disarm their Garde Nationale. The streets were crowded, the town house was beset, and Citizen Dumout found it necessary to quiet the town’s people by the following proclamation. One part of his purpose, that of insuring his personal safety, was answered by it; but that of exciting the people against the English, failed—insomuch, that I was told even the lowest classes, so far from giving credit to the malignant calumnies propagated against the English, openly regretted their arrestation.

“Citizens,

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“On my arrival amongst you, I little thought that malevolence would be so far successful as to alarm you on the motives of my visit. Could the aristocrates, then, flatter themselves with the hope of making you believe I had the intention of disarming you? Be deaf, I beseech you, to so absurd a calumny, and seize on those who propagate it. I came here to fraternize with you, and to assist you in getting rid of those malcontents and foreigners, who are striving to destroy the republic by the most infernal manoeuvres.—An horrible plot has been conceived. Our harvests are to be fired by means of phosphoric matches, and all the patriots assassinated. Women, priests, and foreigners, are the instruments employed by the coalesced despots, and by England above all, to accomplish these criminal designs.—A law of the first of this month orders the arrest of all foreigners born in the countries with which the republic is at war, and not settled in France before the month of July, 1789. In execution of this law I have required domiciliary visits to be made. I have urged the preservation of the public tranquillity. I have therefore done my duty, and only what all good citizens must approve.”

I have just received a few lines from Mrs. D____, written in French, and put in the post without sealing. I perceive, by the contents, though she enters into no details, that circumstances similar to those I have described have likewise taken place at Amiens. In addition to my other anxieties, I have the prospect of a long separation from my friends; for though I am not in confinement, I cannot, while the decree which arrested me remains in force, quit the town of Peronne. I have not often looked forward with so little hope, or so little certainty, and though a first-rate philosopher might make up his mind to a particular event, yet to be prepared for any thing, and all things, is a more difficult matter.

The histories of Greece and Rome have long constituted the grand resources of French eloquence, and it is not till within a few days that an orator has discovered all this good learning to be of no use—not, as you might imagine, because the moral character and political situation of the French differ from those of the Greeks and Romans, but because they are superior to all the people who ever existed, and ought to be cited as models, instead of descending to become copyists. “Therefore, continues this Jacobin sage, (whose name is Henriot, and who is highly popular,) let us burn all the libraries and all the antiquities, and have no guide but ourselves—let us cut off the heads of all the Deputies who have not voted according to our principles, banish or imprison all the gentry and the clergy, and guillotine the Queen and General Custine!”

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These are the usual subjects of discussion at the clubs, and the Convention itself is not much more decent. I tremble when I recollect that I am in a country where a member of the legislature proposes rewards for assassination, and the leader of a society, that pretends to inform and instruct the people, argues in favour of burning all the books. The French are on the eve of exhibiting the singular spectacle of a nation enlightened by science, accustomed to the benefit of laws and the enjoyment of arts, suddenly becoming barbarous by system, and sinking into ignorance from choice.—When the Goths shared the most curious antiques by weight, were they not more civilized than the Parisian of 1793, who disturbs the ashes of Henry the Fourth, or destroys the monument of Turenne, by a decree?—I have myself been forced to an act very much in the spirit of the times, but I could not, without risking my own safety, do otherwise; and I sat up late last night for the purpose of burning Burke, which I had brought with me, but had fortunately so well concealed, that it escaped the late inquisition. I indeed made this sacrifice to prudence with great unwillingness—every day, by confirming Mr. Burke's assertions, or fulfilling his predictions, had so increased my reverence for the work, that I regarded it as a kind of political oracle. I did not, however, destroy it without an apologetic apostrophe to the author's benevolence, which I am sure would suffer, were he to be the occasion, though involuntarily, of conducting a female to a prison or the Guillotine.

“How chances mock, and changes fill the cup of alteration up with divers liquors.”—On the same hearth, and in a mingled flame, was consumed the very constitution of 1789, on which Mr. Burke's book was a censure, and which would now expose me to equal danger were it to be found in my possession. In collecting the ashes of these two compositions, the tendency of which is so different, (for such is the complexion of the moment, that I would not have even the servant suspect I had been burning a quantity of papers,) I could not but moralize on the mutability of popular opinion. Mr. Burke's Gallic adversaries are now most of them proscribed and anathematized more than himself. Perhaps another year may see his bust erected on the pedestal which now supports that of Brutus or Le Pelletier.

The letters I have written to you since the communication was interrupted, with some other papers that I am solicitous to preserve, I have hitherto always carried about me, and I know not if any danger, merely probable, will induce me to part with them. You will not, I think, suspect me of attaching any consequence to my scribblings from vanity; and if I run some personal risk in keeping them, it is because the situation of this country is so singular, and the events which occur almost daily so important, that the remarks of any one who is unlucky enough to be a spectator, may interest, without the advantage of literary talents.—Yours.

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Peronne, August 24, 1793.

I have been out to-day for the first time since the arrest of the English, and, though I have few acquaintances here, my adventure at the Hotel de Ville has gained me a sort of popularity. I was saluted by many people I did not know, and overwhelmed with expressions of regret for what had happened, or congratulations on my having escaped so well.

The French are not commonly very much alive to the sufferings of others, and it is some mortification to my vanity that I cannot, but at the expence of a reproaching conscience, ascribe the civilities I have experienced on this occasion to my personal merit. It would doubtless have been highly flattering to me to relate the tender and general interest I had excited even among this cold-hearted people, who scarcely feel for themselves: but the truth is, they are disposed to take the part of any one whom they think persecuted by their government; and their representative, Dumont, is so much despised in his private character, and detested in his public one, that it suffices to have been ill treated by him, to ensure one a considerable portion of the public good will.

This disposition is not a little consolatory, at a time when the whole rage of an oligarchical tyranny, though impotent against the English as a nation, meanly exhausts itself on the few helpless individuals within its power. Embarrassments accumulate and if Mr. Pitt's agents did not most obligingly write letters, and these letters happen to be intercepted just when they are most necessary, the Comite de Salut Publique would be at a loss how to account for them.

Assignats have fallen into a discredit beyond example, an hundred and thirty livres having been given for one Louis-d'or; and, as if this were not the natural result of circumstances like the present, a correspondence between two Englishmen informs us, that it is the work of Mr. Pitt, who, with an unparalleled ingenuity, has contrived to send couriers to every town in France, to concert measures with the bankers for this purpose. But if we may believe Barrere, one of the members of the Committee, this atrocious policy of Mr. Pitt will not be unrevenged, for another intercepted letter contains assurances that an hundred thousand men have taken up arms in England, and are preparing to march against the iniquitous metropolis that gives this obnoxious Minister shelter.

My situation is still the same—I have no hope of returning to Amiens, and have just reason to be apprehensive for my tranquillity here. I had a long conversation this morning with two people whom Dumont has left here to keep the town in order during his absence. The subject was to prevail on them to give me a permission to leave Peronne, but I could not succeed. They were not, I believe, indisposed to gratify me, but were afraid of involving themselves. One of them expressed much partiality for the English, but was very vehement in his disapprobation

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of their form of government, which he said was “detestable.” My cowardice did not permit me to argue much in its behalf, (for I look upon these people as more dangerous than the spies of the old police,) and I only ventured to observe, with great diffidence, that though the English government was monarchical, yet the power of the Crown was very much limited; and that as the chief subjects of our complaints at present were not our institutions, but certain practical errors, they might be remedied without any violent or radical changes; and that our nobility were neither numerous nor privileged, and by no means obnoxious to the majority of the people.—“*Ah, vous avez donc de la noblesse blesse en Angleterre, ce sont peut-etre les milords,*” [“What, you have nobility in England then? The milords, I suppose.”] exclaimed our republican, and it operated on my whole system of defence like my uncle Toby’s smoke-jack, for there was certainly no discussing the English constitution with a political critic, who I found was ignorant even of the existence of a third branch of it; yet this reformer of governments and abhorrer of Kings has power delegated to him more extensive than those of an English Sovereign, though I doubt if he can write his own language; and his moral reputation is still less in his favour than his ignorance—for, previous to the revolution, he was known only as a kind of swindler, and has more than once been nearly convicted of forgery.—This is, however, the description of people now chiefly employed, for no honest man would accept of such commissions, nor perform the services annexed to them.

Bread continues very scarce, and the populace of Paris are, as usual, very turbulent; so that the neighbouring departments are deprived of their subsistence to satisfy the wants of a metropolis that has no claim to an exemption from the general distress, but that which arises from the fears of the Convention. As far as I have opportunity of learning or observing, this part of France is in that state of tranquillity which is not the effect of content but supineness; the people do not love their government, but they submit to it, and their utmost exertions amount only to a little occasional obstinacy, which a few dragoons always reduce to compliance. We are sometimes alarmed by reports that parties of the enemy are approaching the town, when the gates are shut, and the great bell is toll’d; but I do not perceive that the people are violently apprehensive about the matter. Their fears are, I believe, for the most part, rather personal than political—they do not dread submission to the Austrians, but military licentiousness.

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I have been reading this afternoon Lord Orrery's definition of the male Cecisbeo, and it reminds me that I have not yet noticed to you a very important class of females in France, who may not improperly be denominated female Cecisbeos. Under the old system, when the rank of a woman of fashion had enabled her to preserve a degree of reputation and influence, in spite of the gallantries of her youth and the decline of her charms, she adopted the equivocal character I here allude to, and, relinquishing the adorations claimed by beauty, and the respect due to age, charitably devoted herself to the instruction and advancement of some young man of personal qualifications and uncertain fortune. She presented him to the world, panegyricized him into fashion, and insured his consequence with one set of females, by hinting his successes with another. By her exertions he was promoted in the army or distinguished at the levee, and a career begun under such auspices often terminated in a brilliant establishment. —In the less elevated circle, a female Cecisbeo is usually of a certain age, of an active disposition, and great volubility, and her functions are more numerous and less dignified. Here the grand objects are not to besiege Ministers, nor give a “ton” to the protege at a fashionable ruelle, but to obtain for him the solid advantages of what she calls “*un bon parti*.” [A good match.] To this end she frequents the houses of widows and heiresses, vaunts the docility of his temper, and the greatness of his expectations, enlarges on the solitude of widowhood, or the dependence and insignificance of a spinster; and these prefatory encomiums usually end in the concerted introduction of the Platonic “ami.”

But besides these principal and important cares, a female Cecisbeo of the middle rank has various subordinate ones—such as buying linen, choosing the colour of a coat, or the pattern of a waistcoat, with all the minutiae of the favourite's dress, in which she is always consulted at least, if she has not the whole direction.

It is not only in the first or intermediate classes that these useful females abound, they are equally common in more humble situations, and only differ in their employments, not in their principles. A woman in France, whatever be her condition, cannot be persuaded to resign her influence with her youth; and the bourgeoisie who has no pretensions to court favour or the disposal of wealthy heiresses, attaches her eleve by knitting him stockings, forcing him with bons morceaux till he has an indigestion, and frequent regales of coffee and liqueur.

You must not conclude from all this that there is any gallantry implied, or any scandal excited—the return for all these services is only a little flattery, a philosophic endurance of the card-table, and some skill in the disorders of lap-dogs. I know there are in England, as well as in France, many notable females of a certain age, who delight in what they call managing, and who are zealous in promoting, matches among the young people of their acquaintance; but for one that you meet with in England there are fifty here.

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I doubt much if, upon the whole, the morals of the English women are not superior to those of the French; but however the question may be decided as to morals, I believe their superiority in decency of manners is indisputable—and this superiority is, perhaps, more conspicuous in women of a certain age, than in the younger part of the sex. We have a sort of national regard for propriety, which deters a female from lingering on the confines of gallantry, when age has warned her to withdraw; and an old woman that should take a passionate and exclusive interest about a young man not related to her, would become at least an object of ridicule, if not of censure:—yet in France nothing is more common; every old woman appropriates some youthful dangler, and, what is extraordinary, his attentions are not distinguishable from those he would pay to a younger object.—I should remark, however, as some apology for these juvenile gallants, that there are very few of what we call Tabbies in France; that is, females of severe principles and contracted features, in whose apparel every pin has its destination with mathematical exactness, who are the very watch-towers of a neighbourhood, and who give the alarm on the first appearance of incipient frailty. Here, antique dowagers and faded spinsters are all gay, laughing, rouged, and indulgent—so that 'bating the subtraction of teeth and addition of wrinkles, the disparity between one score and four is not so great:

“Gay rainbow silks their mellow charms enfold,
Nought of these beauties but themselves is old.”

I know if I venture to add a word in defence of Tabbyhood, I shall be engaged in a war with yourself and all our young acquaintance; yet in this age, which so liberally “softens, and blends, and weakens, and dilutes” away all distinctions, I own I am not without some partiality for strong lines of demarcation; and, perhaps, when fifty retrogrades into fifteen, it makes a worse confusion in society than the toe of the peasant treading on the heel of the courtier.—But, adieu: I am not gay, though I trifle. I have learnt something by my residence in France, and can be, as you see, frivolous under circumstances that ought to make me grave.—Yours.

Peronne, August 29, 1793.

The political horizon of France threatens nothing but tempests. If we are still tranquil here, it is only because the storm is retarded, and, far from deeming ourselves secure from its violence, we suffer in apprehension almost as much as at other places is suffered in reality. An hundred and fifty people have been arrested at Amiens in one night, and numbers of the gentry in the neighbouring towns have shared the same fate. This measure, which I understand is general throughout the republic, has occasioned great alarms, and is beheld by the mass of the people themselves with regret. In some towns, the Bourgeois have petitions to the Representatives on mission in behalf of their gentry thus imprisoned: but, far from succeeding, all who have signed such petitions are menaced and intimidated, and the terror is so much increased, that I doubt if even this slight effort will be repeated any where.

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The levee en masse, or rising in a body, which has been for some time decreed, has not yet taken place. There are very few, I believe, that comprehend it, and fewer who are disposed to comply. Many consultations have been holden, many plans proposed; but as the result of all these consultations and plans is to send a certain number to the frontiers, the suffrages have never been unanimous except in giving their negative.—Like Falstaff's troops, every one has some good cause of exemption; and if you were to attend a meeting where this affair is discussed, you would conclude the French to be more physically miserable than any people on the globe. Youths, in apparent good health, have internal disorders, or concealed infirmities—some are near-sighted—others epileptic—one is nervous, and cannot present a musquet—another is rheumatic, and cannot carry it. In short, according to their account, they are a collection of the lame, the halt, and the blind, and fitter to send to the hospital, than to take the field. But, in spite of all these disorders and incapacities, a considerable levy must be made, and the dragoons will, I dare say, operate very wonderful cures.

The surrender of Dunkirk to the English is regarded as inevitable. I am not politician enough to foresee the consequences of such an event, but the hopes and anxieties of all parties seem directed thither, as if the fate of the war depended on it. As for my own wishes on the subject, they are not national, and if I secretly invoke the God of Armies for the success of my countrymen, it is because I think all that tends to destroy the present French government may be beneficial to mankind. Indeed, the successes of war can at no time gratify a thinking mind farther than as they tend to the establishment of peace.

After several days of a mockery which was called a trial, though the witnesses were afraid to appear, or the Counsel to plead in his favour, Custine has suffered at the Guillotine. I can be no judge of his military conduct, and Heaven alone can judge of his intentions. None of the charges were, however, substantiated, and many of them were absurd or frivolous. Most likely, he has been sacrificed to a cabal, and his destruction makes a part of that system of policy, which, by agitating the minds of the people with suspicions of universal treason and unfathomable plots, leaves them no resource but implicit submission to their popular leaders.

The death of Custine seems rather to have stimulated than appeased the barbarity of the Parisian mob. At every defeat of their armies they call for executions, and several of those on whom the lot has fallen to march against the enemy have stipulated, at the tribune of the Jacobins, for the heads they exact as a condition of their departure,* or as the reward for their labours. The laurel has no attraction for heroes like these, who invest themselves with the baneful yew and inauspicious cypress, and go to the field of honour with the dagger of the assassin yet ensanguined.

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* Many insisted they would not depart until after the death of the Queen—some claimed the death of one General, some that of another, and all, the lives or banishment of the gentry and clergy.

“Fair steeds, gay shields, bright arms,” [Spencer.] the fancy-created deity, the wreath of fame, and all that poets have imagined to decorate the horrors of war, are not necessary to tempt the gross barbarity of the Parisian: he seeks not glory, but carnage—his incentive is the groans of defenceless victims—he inlists under the standard of the Guillotine, and acknowledges the executioner for his tutelary Mars.

In remarking the difficulties that have occurred in carrying into execution the levee en masse, I neglected to inform you that the prime mover of all these machinations is your omnipotent Mr. Pitt—it is he who has fomented the perverseness of the towns, and alarmed the timidity of the villages—he has persuaded some that it is not pleasant to leave their shops and families, and insinuated into the minds of others that death or wounds are not very desirable—he has, in fine, so effectually achieved his purpose, that the Convention issues decree after decree, the members harangue to little purpose, and the few recruits already levied, like those raised in the spring, go from many places strongly escorted to the army.—I wish I had more peaceful and more agreeable subjects for your amusement, but they do not present themselves, and “you must blame the times, not me.” I would wish to tell you that the legislature is honest, that the Jacobins are humane, and the people patriots; but you know I have no talent for fiction, and if I had, my situation is not favourable to any effort of fancy.—Yours.

Peronne, Sept. 7, 1793.

The successes of the enemy on all sides, the rebellion at Lyons and Marseilles, with the increasing force of the insurgents in La Vendee, have revived our eagerness for news, and if the indifference of the French character exempt them from more patriotic sensations, it does not banish curiosity; yet an eventful crisis, which in England would draw people together, here keeps them apart. When an important piece of intelligence arrives, our provincial politicians shut themselves up with their gazettes, shun society, and endeavour to avoid giving an opinion until they are certain of the strength of a party, or the success of an attempt. In the present state of public affairs, you may therefore conceive we have very little communication—we express our sentiments more by looks and gestures than words, and Lavater (admitting his system) would be of more use to a stranger than Boyer or Chambaud. If the English take Dunkirk, perhaps we may be a little more social and more decided.

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Mad. de ____ has a most extensive acquaintance, and, as we are situated on one of the roads from Paris to the northern army, notwithstanding the cautious policy of the moment, we are tolerably well informed of what passes in most parts of France; and I cannot but be astonished, when I combine all I hear, that the government is able to sustain itself. Want, discord, and rebellion, assail it within—defeats and losses from without. Perhaps the solution of this political problem can only be found in the selfishness of the French character, and the want of connection between the different departments. Thus one part of the country is subdued by means of another: the inhabitants of the South take up arms in defence of their freedom and their commerce, while those of the North refuse to countenance or assist them, and wait in selfish tranquillity till the same oppression is extended to themselves. The majority of the people have no point of union nor mode of communication, while the Jacobins, whose numbers are comparatively insignificant, are strong, by means of their general correspondence, their common center at Paris, and the exclusive direction of all the public prints. But, whatever are the causes, it is certain that the government is at once powerful and detested—almost without apparent support, yet difficult to overthrow; and the submission of Rome to a dotard and a boy can no longer excite the wonder of any one who reflects on what passes in France.

After various decrees to effect the levee en masse, the Convention have discovered that this sublime and undefined project was not calculated for the present exhausted state of martial ardour. They therefore no longer presume on any movement of enthusiasm, but have made a positive and specific requisition of all the male inhabitants of France between eighteen and twenty-five years of age. This, as might be expected, has been more effectual, because it interests those that are exempt to force the compliance of those who are not. Our young men here were like children with a medicine—they proposed first one form of taking this military potion, then another, and finding them all equally unpalatable, would not, but for a little salutary force, have decided at all.

A new law has been passed for arresting all the English who cannot produce two witnesses of their civisme, and those whose conduct is thus guaranteed are to receive tickets of hospitality, which they are to wear as a protection. This decree has not yet been carried into effect at Peronne, nor am I much disturbed about it. Few of our countrymen will find the matter very difficult to arrange, and I believe they have all a better protection in the disposition of the people towards them, than any that can be assured them by decrees of the Convention.

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Sept. 11. The news of Lord Hood's taking possession of Toulon, which the government affected to discredit for some days, is now ascertained; and the Convention, in a paroxysm of rage, at once cowardly and unprincipled, has decreed that all the English not resident in France before 1789, shall be imprisoned as hostages, and be answerable with their lives for the conduct of their countrymen and of the Toulonese towards Bayle and Beauvais, two Deputies, said to be detained in the town at the time of its surrender. My first emotions of terror and indignation have subsided, and I have, by packing up my clothes, disposing of my papers, and providing myself with money, prepared for the worst. My friends, indeed, persuade me, (as on a former occasion,) that the decree is too atrocious to be put in execution; but my apprehensions are founded on a principle not likely to deceive me—namely, that those who have possessed themselves of the French government are capable of any thing. I live in constant fear, watching all day and listening all night, and never go to bed but with the expectation of being awakened, nor rise without a presentiment of misfortune.—I have not spirits nor composure to write, and shall discontinue my letters until I am relieved from suspense, if nor from uneasiness. I risk much by preserving these papers, and, perhaps, may never be able to add to them; but whatever I may be reserved for, while I have a hope they may reach you they shall not be destroyed. —I bid you adieu in a state of mind which the circumstances I am under will describe better than words.—Yours.

Maison d'Arret, Arras, Oct. 15, 1793.

Dear Brother,

The fears of a timid mind usually magnify expected evil, and anticipated suffering often diminishes the effect of an apprehended blow; yet my imagination had suggested less than I have experienced, nor do I find that a preparatory state of anxiety has rendered affliction more supportable. The last month of my life has been a compendium of misery; and my recollection, which on every other subject seems to fail me, is, on this, but too faithful, and will enable me to relate events which will interest you not only as they personally concern me, but as they present a picture of the barbarity and despotism to which this whole country is subject, and to which many thousands besides myself were at the same instant victims.

A few evenings after I concluded my last, the firing of cannon and ringing the great bell announced the arrival of Dumont (still Representative en mission in our department). The town was immediately in alarm, all the gates were shut, and the avenues leading to the ramparts guarded by dragoons. Our house being in a distant and unfrequented street, before we could learn the cause of all this confusion, a party of the national guard, with a municipal officer at their head, arrived, to escort Mad. de ____ and myself to a church, where the Representant was then

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examining the prisoners brought before him. Almost as much astonished as terrified, we endeavoured to procure some information of our conductors, as to what was to be the result of this measure; but they knew nothing, and it was easy to perceive they thought the office they were executing an unpleasant one. The streets we passed were crowded with people, whose silent consternation and dismayed countenances increased our forebodings, and depressed the little courage we had yet preserved. The church at our arrival was nearly empty, and Dumont preparing to depart, when the municipal officer introduced us to him. As soon as he learned that Mad. de ____ was the sister of an emigrant, and myself a native of England, he told us we were to pass the night in a church appointed for the purpose, and that on the morrow we should be conveyed to Arras. For a moment all my faculties became suspended, and it was only by an effort almost convulsive that I was able to ask how long it was probable we should be deprived of our liberty. He said he did not know—"but that the raising of the siege of Dunkirk, and the loss of six thousand troops which the French had taken prisoners, would doubtless produce an insurrection in England, par consequent a peace, and our release from captivity!"

You may be assured I felt no desire of freedom on such terms, and should have heard this ignorant and malicious suggestion only with contempt, had not the implication it conveyed that our detention would not terminate but with the war overwhelmed every other idea. Mad. de ____ then petitioned that we might, on account of our health, (for we were both really unwell,) be permitted to go home for the night, accompanied by guards if it were thought necessary. But the Representant was inexorable, and in a brutal and despotic tone ordered us away.—When we reached the church, which was to be our prison till morning, we found about an hundred and fifty people, chiefly old men, women, and children, dispersed in melancholy groupes, lamenting their situation, and imparting their fears to each other. The gloom of the building was increased by the darkness of the night; and the noise of the guard, many of whom were intoxicated, the odour of tobacco, and the heat of the place, rendered our situation almost insupportable. We soon discovered several of our acquaintance, but this association in distress was far from consolatory, and we passed the time in wandering about together, and consulting upon what would be of most use to us in our confinement. We had, indeed, little to hope for from the morrow, yet the hours dragged on heavily, and I know not if ever I beheld the return of light with more pleasure. I was not without apprehension for our personal safety. I recollected the massacres in churches at Paris, and the frequent propositions that had been made to exterminate the gentry and clergy. Mad. de ____ has since confessed, that she had the same ideas.

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Morning at length came, and our servants were permitted to enter with breakfast. They appeared sorrowful and terror-stricken, but offered with great willingness to accompany us whithersoever we should be sent. After a melancholy sort of discussion, it was decided that we should take our *femmes de chambres*, and that the others should remain for the safety of the house, and to send us what we might have occasion for. This settled, they returned with such directions as we were able to give them, (God knows, not very coherent ones,) to prepare for our journey: and as our orders, however confused, were not very voluminous, they were soon executed, and before noon every thing was in readiness for our departure. The people employed by our companions were equally diligent, and we might very well have set out by one o'clock, had our case been at all considered; but, I know not why, instead of so providing that we might reach our destination in the course of the day, it seemed to have been purposely contrived that we should be all night on the road, though we had already passed one night without rest, and were exhausted by watching and fatigue.

In this uncertain and unpleasant state we waited till near six o'clock; a number of small covered waggons were then brought, accompanied by a detachment of dragoons, who were to be our escort. Some time elapsed, as you may suppose, before we could be all settled in the carriages and such a cavalcade put in motion; but the concourse of people that filled the streets, the appearance of the troops, and the tumult occasioned by so many horses and carriages, overpowered my spirits, and I remember little of what passed till I found we were on the road to Arras. Mad. de ____'s maid now informed us, that Dumont had arrived the evening before in extreme ill humour, summoned the municipality in haste, enquired how many people they had arrested, and what denunciations they had yet to make. The whole body corporate trembled, they had arrested no one, and, still worse, they had no one to accuse; and could only alledge in their behalf, that the town was in the utmost tranquillity, and the people were so well disposed, that all violence was unnecessary. The Representant became furious, vociferated *tout grossierement a la Francaise*, [In the vulgar French manner.] that he knew there were five thousand aristocrates in Peronne, and that if he had not at least five hundred brought him before morning, he would declare the town in a state of rebellion.

Alarmed by this menace, they began to arrest with all possible speed, and were more solicitous to procure their number than to make discriminations. Their diligence, however, was inadequate to appease the choleric legislator, and the Mayor, municipal officers, and all the administrators of the district, were in the morning sent to the Castle, whence they are to be conveyed, with some of their own prisoners, to Amiens.

Besides this intelligence, we learned that before our servants had finished packing up our trunks, some Commissioners of the section arrived to put the seals on every thing belonging to us, and it was not without much altercation that they consented to our being furnished with necessaries—that they had not only sealed up all the house, but



had placed guards there, each of whom Mad. de _____ is to pay, at the rate of two shillings a day.

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We were too large a body to travel fast, and by the time we reached Bapaume (though only fifteen miles) it was after twelve; it rained dreadfully, the night was extremely dark, the roads were bad, and the horses tired; so that the officer who conducted us thought it would be difficult to proceed before morning. We were therefore once more crowded into a church, in our wet clothes, (for the covering of the waggon was not thick enough to exclude the rain,) a few bundles of damp straw were distributed, and we were then shut up to repose as well as we could. All my melancholy apprehensions of the preceding night returned with accumulated force, especially as we were now in a place where we were unknown, and were guarded by some of the newly-raised dragoons, of whom we all entertained very unfavourable suspicions.

We did not, as you may well imagine, attempt to sleep—a bed of wet straw laid on the pavement of a church, filthy, as most French churches are, and the fear of being assassinated, resisted every effort of nature herself, and we were very glad when at the break of day we were summoned to continue our journey. About eleven we entered Arras: the streets were filled by idle people, apprized of our arrival; but no one offered us any insult, except some soldiers, (I believe, by their uniform, refugees from the Netherlands,) who cried, “a la Guillotine!—a la Guillotine!”

The place to which we were ordered had been the house of an emigrant, now converted into an house of detention, and which, though large, was excessively full. The keeper, on our being delivered to him, declared he had no room for us, and we remained with our baggage in the court-yard some hours before he had, by dislodging and compressing the other inhabitants, contrived to place us. At last, when we were half dead with cold and fatigue, we were shown to our quarters. Those allotted for my friend, myself, and our servants, was the corner of a garret without a ceiling, cold enough in itself, but rendered much warmer than was desirable by the effluvia of a score of living bodies, who did not seem to think the unpleasantness of their situation at all increased by dirt and offensive smells. Weary as we were, it was impossible to attempt reposing until a purification had been effected: we therefore set ourselves to sprinkling vinegar and burning perfumes; and it was curious to observe that the people, (*all gens comme il faut* [People of fashion.]) whom we found inhaling the atmosphere of a Caffrarian hut, declared their nerves were incommoded by the essence of roses and vinaigre des quatre voleurs.

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As a part of the room was occupied by men, our next business was to separate our corner by a curtain, which we had fortunately brought with our bedding; and this done, we spread our mattresses and lay down, while the servants were employed in getting us tea. As soon as we were a little refreshed, and the room was quiet for the night, we made up our beds as well as we could, and endeavoured to sleep. Mad. de ____ and the two maids soon forgot their cares; but, though worn out by fatigue, the agitation of my mind conquered the disposition of my body. I seemed to have lost the very faculty of sleeping, and passed this night with almost as little repose as the two preceding ones. Before morning I discovered that remaining so long in damp clothes, and the other circumstances of our journey, had given me cold, and that I had all the symptoms of a violent fever.

I leave you to conjecture, for it would be impossible to detail, all the misery of illness in such a situation; and I will only add, that by the care of Mad. de ____, whose health was happily less affected, and the attention of my maid, I was able to leave the room in about three weeks. —I must now secrete this for some days, but will hereafter resume my little narrative, and explain how I have ventured to write so much even in the very neighbourhood of the Guillotine.—Adieu.

Maison d'Arret, Arras, Oct. 17, 1793.

On the night I concluded my last, a report that Commissioners were to visit the house on the morrow obliged me to dispose of my papers beyond the possibility of their being found. The alarm is now over, and I proceed.—After something more than three weeks indisposition, I began to walk in the yard, and make acquaintance with our fellow-prisoners. Mad. de ____ had already discovered several that were known to her, and I now found, with much regret, that many of my Arras friends were here also. Having been arrested some days before us, they were rather more conveniently lodged, and taking the wretchedness of our garret into consideration, it was agreed that Mad. de ____ should move to a room less crowded than our own, and a dark closet that would just contain my mattresses was resigned to me. It is indeed a very sorry apartment, but as it promises me a refuge where I may sometimes read or write in peace, I have taken possession of it very thankfully. A lock on the door is not the least of its recommendations, and by way of securing myself against all surprize, I have contrived an additional fastening by means of a large nail and the chain of a portmanteau—I have likewise, under pretext of keeping out the wind, papered over the cracks of the door, and provided myself with a sand-bag, so that no one can perceive when I have a light later than usual.—With these precautions, I can amuse myself by putting on paper any little occurrences that I think worth preserving, without much danger, and perhaps the details of a situation so new and so strange may not be uninteresting to you.

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We are now about three hundred in number of both sexes, and of all ages and conditions—*ci-devant* noblesse, parents, wives, sisters, and other relations of emigrants—priests who have not taken the oaths, merchants and shopkeepers accused of monopoly, nuns, farmers that are said to have concealed their corn, miserable women, with scarcely clothes to cover them, for not going to the constitutional mass, and many only because they happened to be at an inn, or on a visit from their own town, when a general arrest took place of all who are what is called *etrangers*, that is to say, not foreigners only, but not inhabitants of the town where they are found.—There are, besides, various descriptions of people sent here on secret informations, and who do not themselves know the precise reason of their confinement. I imagine we are subject to nearly the same rules as the common prisons: no one is permitted to enter or speak to a “*detenu*” but at the gate, and in presence of the guard; and all letters, parcels, baskets, &c. are examined previous to their being either conveyed from hence or received. This, however, depends much on the political principles of those who happen to be on guard: an aristocrate or a constitutionalist will read a letter with his eyes half shut, and inspect bedding and trunks in a very summary way; while a thorough-paced republican spells every syllable of the longest epistle, and opens all the roasted pigs or duck-pies before he allows their ingress.—None of the servants are suffered to go out, so that those who have not friends in the town to procure them necessaries are obliged to depend entirely on the keeper, and, of course, pay extravagantly dear for every thing; but we are so much in the power of these people, that it is prudent to submit to such impositions without murmuring.

I did not, during my illness, read the papers, and have to-day been amusing myself with a large packet. General Houchard, I find, is arrested, for not having, as they say he might have done, driven all the English army into the sea, after raising the siege of Dunkirk; yet a few weeks ago their utmost hopes scarcely amounted to the relief of the town: but their fears having subsided, they have now leisure to be jealous; and I know no situation so little to be envied under the present government as that of a successful General.—Among all their important avocations, the Convention have found time to pass a decree for obliging women to wear the national cockade, under pain of imprisonment; and the municipality of the superb Paris have ordered that the King’s family shall, in future, use pewter spoons and eat brown bread!

Oct. 18.

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I begin to be very uneasy about Mr. and Mrs. D____. I have written several times, and still receive no answer. I fear they are in a confinement more severe than my own, or that our letters miscarry. A servant of Mad. de ____'s was here this morning, and no letters had come to Peronne, unless, as my friend endeavours to persuade me, the man would not venture to give them in presence of the guard, who par excellence happened to be a furious Jacobin.—We had the mortification of hearing that a very elegant carriage of Mad. de ____'s has been put in requisition, and taken to convey a tinman and two farriers who were going to Paris on a mission—that two of her farmer's best horses had been killed by hard work in taking provisions to the army, and that they are now cutting down the young wood on her estate to make pikes.—The seals are still on our effects, and the guard remains in possession, which has put us to the expence of buying a variety of articles we could not well dispense with: for, on examining the baggage after our arrival, we found it very much diminished; and this has happened to almost all the people who have been arrested. Our suspicions naturally fall on the dragoons, and it is not very surprizing that they should attempt to steal from those whom they are certain would not dare to make any complaint.

Many of our fellow-prisoners are embarrassed by their servants having quitted them.—One Collot d'Herbois, a member of the Commite de Salut Public, has proposed to the Convention to collect all the gentry, priests, and suspected people, into different buildings, which should be previously mined for the purpose, and, on the least appearance of insurrection, to blow them up all together.—You may perhaps conclude, that such a project was received with horror, and the adviser of it treated as a monster. Our humane legislature, however, very coolly sent it to the committee to be discussed, without any regard to the terror and apprehension which the bare idea of a similar proposal must inspire in those who are the destined victims. I cannot myself believe that this abominable scheme is intended for execution, but it has nevertheless created much alarm in timid minds, and has occasioned in part the defection of the servants I have just mentioned. Those who were sufficiently attached to their masters and mistresses to endure the confinement and privations of a Maison d'Arret, tremble at the thoughts of being involved in the common ruin of a gunpowder explosion; and the men seem to have less courage than the women, at least more of the latter have consented to remain here.—It was atrocious to publish such a conception, though nothing perhaps was intended by it, as it may deprive many people of faithful attendants at a time when they are most necessary.

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We have a tribunal revolutionnaire here, with its usual attendant the Guillotine, and executions are now become very frequent. I know not who are the sufferers, and avoid enquiring through fear of hearing the name of some acquaintance. As far as I can learn, the trials are but too summary, and little other evidence is required than the fortune, rank, and connections of the accused. The Deputy who is Commissioner for this department is one Le Bon, formerly a priest—and, I understand, of an immoral and sanguinary character, and that it is he who chiefly directs the verdicts of the juries according to his personal hatred or his personal interest.—We have lately had a very melancholy instance of the terror created by this tribunal, as well as of the notions that prevail of its justice. A gentleman of Calais, who had an employ under the government, was accused of some irregularity in his accounts, and, in consequence, put under arrest. The affair became serious, and he was ordered to prison, as a preliminary to his trial. When the officers entered his apartment to take him, regarding the judicial procedure as a mere form, and concluding it was determined to sacrifice him, he in a frenzy of despair seized the dogs in the chimney, threw them at the people, and, while they escaped to call for assistance, destroyed himself by cutting his arteries.—It has appeared, since the death of this unfortunate man, that the charge against him was groundless, and that he only wanted time to arrange his papers, in order to exonerate himself entirely.

Oct. 19.

We are disturbed almost nightly by the arrival of fresh prisoners, and my first question of a morning is always "*N'est il pas du monde entre la nuit?*"—Angelique's usual reply is a groan, and "*Ah, mon Dieu, oui;*" "*Une dixaine de pretres;*" or, "*Une trentaine de nobles:*" ["Did not some people arrive in the night?"]—"Yes, God help us—half a score priests, or twenty or thirty gentry." And I observe the depth of the groan is nearly in proportion to the quality of the person she commiserates. Thus, a groan for a Comte, a Marquise, or a Priest, is much more audible than one for a simple gentlewoman or a merchant; and the arrival of a Bishop (especially if not one of the constitutional clergy) is announced in a more sorrowful key than either.

While I was walking in the yard this morning, I was accosted by a female whom I immediately recollected to be Victoire, a very pretty *couturiere*, [Sempstress.] who used to work for me when I was at Panthemont, and who made your last holland shirts. I was not a little surprized to see her in such a situation, and took her aside to enquire her history. I found that her mother was dead, and that her brother having set up a little shop at St. Omer, had engaged her to go and live with him. Being under five-and-twenty, the last requisition obliged him to depart for the army, and leave her to carry on the business alone.

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Three weeks after, she was arrested at midnight, put into a cart, and brought hither. She had no time to take any precautions, and their little commerce, which was in haberdashery, as well as some work she had in hand, is abandoned to the mercy of the people that arrested her. She has reason to suppose that her crime consists in not having frequented the constitutional mass; and that her accuser is a member of one of the town committees, who, since her brother's absence, has persecuted her with dishonourable proposals, and, having been repulsed, has taken this method of revenging himself. Her conjecture is most probably right, as, since her imprisonment, this man has been endeavouring to make a sort of barter with her for her release.

I am really concerned for this poor creature, who is at present a very good girl, but if she remain here she will not only be deprived of her means of living, but perhaps her morals may be irremediably corrupted. She is now lodged in a room with ten or dozen men, and the house is so crowded that I doubt whether I have interest enough to procure her a more decent apartment.

What can this strange policy tend to, that thus exposes to ruin and want a girl of one-and-twenty—not for any open violation of the law, but merely for her religious opinions; and this, too, in a country which professes toleration as the basis of its government?

My friend, Mad. de ____ s'ennui terribly; she is not incapable of amusing herself, but is here deprived of the means. We have no corner we can call our own to sit in, and no retreat when we wish to be out of a crowd except my closet, where we can only see by candle-light. Besides, she regrets her employments, and projects for the winter. She had begun painting a St. Theresa, and translating an Italian romance, and had nearly completed the education of a dozen canary birds, who would in a month's time have accompanied the harp so delightfully, as to overpower the sound of the instrument. I believe if we had a few more square inches of room, she would be tempted, if not to bring the whole chorus, at least to console herself with two particular favourites, distinguished by curious topknots, and rings about their necks.

With all these feminine propensities, she is very amiable, and her case is indeed singularly cruel and unjust.—Left, at an early age, under the care of her brother, she was placed by him at Panthemont (where I first became acquainted with her) with an intention of having her persuaded to take the veil; but finding her averse from a cloister, she remained as a pensioner only, till a very advantageous marriage with the Marquis de ____, who was old enough to be her father, procured her release. About two years ago he died, and left her a very considerable fortune, which the revolution has reduced

to nearly one-third of its former value. The Comte de _____, her brother, was one of the original patriots, and embraced with great warmth the cause of the people; but having very narrowly escaped the massacres of September, 1792, he immediately after emigrated.

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Thus, my poor friend, immured by her brother till the age of twenty-two in a convent, then sacrificed three years to a husband of a disagreeable temper and unsuitable age, is now deprived of the first liberty she ever enjoyed, and is made answerable for the conduct of a man over whom she has no sort of influence. It is not, therefore, extraordinary that she cannot reconcile herself to her present situation, and I am really often more concerned on her account than my own. Cut off from her usual resources, she has no amusement but wandering about the house; and if her other causes of uneasiness be not augmented, they are at least rendered more intolerable by her inability to fill up her time.—This does not arise from a deficiency of understanding, but from never having been accustomed to think. Her mind resembles a body that is weak, not by nature, but from want of exercise; and the number of years she has passed in a convent has given her that mixture of childishness and romance, which, my making frivolities necessary, renders the mind incapable of exertion or self-support.

Oct. 20.

The unfortunate Queen, after a trial of some days, during which she seems to have behaved with great dignity and fortitude, is no longer sensible of the regrets of her friends or the malice of her enemies. It is singular, that I have not yet heard her death mentioned in the prison—every one looks grave and affects silence. I believe her death has not occasioned an effect so universal as that of the King, and whatever people's opinions may be, they are afraid of expressing them: for it is said, though I know not with what truth, that we are surrounded by spies, and several who have the appearance of being prisoners like ourselves have been pointed out to me as the objects of this suspicion.

I do not pretend to undertake the defence of the Queen's imputed faults—yet I think there are some at least which one may be very fairly permitted to doubt. Compassion should not make me an advocate for guilt—but I may, without sacrificing morals to pity, venture to observe, that the many scandalous histories circulated to her prejudice took their rise at the birth of the Dauphin,* which formed so insurmountable a bar to the views of the Duke of Orleans.—

* Nearly at the same time, and on the same occasion, there were literary partizans of the Duke of Orleans, who endeavoured to persuade the people that the man with the iron mask, who had so long excited curiosity and eluded conjecture, was the real son of Louis XIII.—and Louis XIV. in consequence, supposititious, and only the illegitimate offspring of Cardinal Mazarin and Anne of Austria—that the spirit of ambition and intrigue which characterized this Minister had suggested this substitution to the lawful heir, and that the fears of the Queen and confusion of the times had obliged her to acquiesce: “Cette opinion ridicule, et dont

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les dates connues de l'histoire demontrent l'absurdite, avoit eu des partisans en France —elle tendoit a avilir la maison regnante, et a persuader au peuple que le trone n'appartient pas aux descendants de Louis XIV. prince furtivement sutsttue, mais a la posterite du second fils de Louis XIII. qui est la tige de la branche d'Orleans, et qui est reconnue comme descendant legitimement, et sans objection, du Roi Louis XIII."

—Nouvelles Considerations sur la Masque de Fer, Memoirs de Richelieu.

"This ridiculous opinion, the absurdity of which is demonstrated by historical dates, had not been without its partizans in France.—It tended to degrade the reigning family, and to make the people believe that the throne did not of right belong to the descendants of Louis XIV. (a prince surreptitiously intruded) but to the posterity of the second son of Louis XIII. from whom is derived the branch of Orleans, and who was, without dispute, the legitimate and unobjectionable offspring of Louis XIII."

—New Considerations on the Iron Mask.—Memoirs of the Duc de Richelieu.

The author of the above Memoirs adds, that after the taking of the Bastille, new attempts were made to propagate this opinion, and that he himself had refuted it to many people, by producing original letters and papers, sufficiently demonstrative of its absurdity.

—He might hope, by popularity, to supersede the children of the Count d'Artois, who was hated; but an immediate heir to the Crown could be removed only by throwing suspicions on his legitimacy. These pretensions, it is true, were so absurd, and even incredible, that had they been urged at the time, no inference in the Queen's favour would have been admitted from them; but as the existence of such projects, however absurd and iniquitous, has since been demonstrated, one may now, with great appearance of reason, allow them some weight in her justification.

The affair of the necklace was of infinite disservice to the Queen's reputation; yet it is remarkable, that the most furious of the Jacobins are silent on this head as far as it regarded her, and always mention the Cardinal de Rohan in terms that suppose him to be the culpable party: but, "whatever her faults, her woes deserve compassion;" and perhaps the moralist, who is not too severe, may find some excuse for a Princess, who, at the age of sixteen, possibly without one real friend or disinterested adviser, became the unrestrained idol of the most licentious Court in Europe. Even her enemies do not pretend that her fate was so much a merited punishment as a political measure: they alledge, that while her life was yet spared, the valour of their troops was checked by the possibility of negotiation; and that being no more, neither the people nor armies expecting any thing but execration or revenge, they will be more ready to proceed to the

most desperate extremities.—This you will think a barbarous sort of policy, and considering it as national, it appears no less absurd than barbarous; but for the Convention, whose views perhaps extend little farther than to saving their heads, peculating, and receiving their eighteen livres a day, such measures, and such a principle of action, are neither unwise nor unaccountable: “for the wisdom of civilized nations is not their wisdom, nor the ways of civilized people their ways.”*—

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* I have been informed, by a gentleman who saw the Queen pass in her way to execution, that the short white bed gown and the cap which she wore were discoloured by smoke, and that her whole appearance seemed to have been intended, if possible, to degrade her in the eyes of the multitude. The benevolent mind will recollect with pleasure, that even the Queen's enemies allow her a fortitude and energy of character which must have counteracted this paltry malice, and rendered it incapable of producing any emotion but contempt. On her first being removed to the Conciergerie, she applied for some necessaries; but the humane municipality of Paris refused them, under pretext that the demand was contrary to the system of *la sainte elagite*—"holy equality."

—It was reported that the Queen was offered her life, and the liberty to retire to St. Cloud, her favourite residence, if she would engage the enemy to raise the siege of Maubeuge and withdraw; but that she refused to interfere.

Arras, 1793.

For some days previous to the battle by which Maubeuge was relieved, we had very gloomy apprehensions, and had the French army been unsuccessful and forced to fall back, it is not improbable but the lives of those detained in the *Maison d'Arret* [House of detention.] might have been sacrificed under pretext of appeasing the people, and to give some credit to the suspicions so industriously inculcated that all their defeats are occasioned by internal enemies. My first care, as soon as I was able to go down stairs, was to examine if the house offered any means of escape in case of danger, and I believe, if we could preserve our recollection, it might be practicable; but I can so little depend on my strength and spirits, should such a necessity occur, that perhaps the consolation of knowing I have a resource is the only benefit I should ever derive from it.

Oct. 21.

I have this day made a discovery of a very unpleasant nature, which Mad. de ____ had hitherto cautiously concealed from me. All the English, and other foreigners placed under similar circumstances, are now, without exception, arrested, and the confiscation of their property is decreed. It is uncertain if the law is to extend to wearing apparel, but I find that on this ground the Committee of Peronne persist in refusing to take the seals off my effects, or to permit my being supplied with any necessaries whatsoever. In other places they have put two, four, and, I am told, even to the number of six guards, in houses belonging to the English; and these guards, exclusive of being paid each two shillings per day, burn the wood, regale on the wine, and pillage in detail all they can find, while the unfortunate owner is starving in a *Maison d'Arret*, and cannot obtain permission to withdraw a single article for his own

use.—The plea for this paltry measure is, that, according to the report of a deserter escaped from Toulon, Lord Hood has hanged one Beauvais, a

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member of the Convention. I have no doubt but the report is false, and, most likely, fabricated by the Comité de Salut Public, in order to palliate an act of injustice previously meditated.

It is needless to expatiate on the atrocity of making individuals, living here under the faith of the nation, responsible for the events of the war, and it is whispered that even the people are a little ashamed of it; yet the government are not satisfied with making us accountable for what really does happen, but they attribute acts of cruelty to our countrymen, in order to excuse those they commit themselves, and retaliate imagined injuries by substantial vengeance.—Legendre, a member of the Convention, has proposed, with a most benevolent ingenuity, that the manes of the aforesaid Beauvais should be appeased by exhibiting Mr. Luttrell in an iron cage for a convenient time, and then hanging him.

A gentleman from Amiens, lately arrested while happening to be here on business, informs me, that Mr. Luttrell is now in the common gaol of that place, lodged with three other persons in a miserable apartment, so small, that there is not room to pass between their beds. I understand he was advised to petition Dumont for his removal to a Maison d'Arret, where he would have more external convenience; but he rejected this counsel, no doubt from a disdain which did him honour, and preferred to suffer all that the mean malice of these wretches would inflict, rather than ask any accommodation as a favour.—The distinguishing Mr. Luttrell from any other English gentleman is as much a proof of ignorance as of baseness; but in this, as in every thing else, the present French government is still more wicked than absurd, and our ridicule is suppressed by our detestation.

Oct. 22.

Mad. de ____'s *homme d'affaires* [Agent] has been here to-day, but no news from Amiens. I know not what to conjecture. My patience is almost exhausted, and my spirits are fatigued. Were I not just now relieved by a distant prospect of some change for the better, my situation would be insupportable.—“Oh world! oh world! but that thy strange mutations make us wait thee, life would not yield to age.” We should die before our time, even of moral diseases, unaided by physical ones; but the uncertainty of human events, which is the “worm i'the bud” of happiness, is to the miserable a cheering and consolatory reflection. Thus have I dragged on for some weeks, postponing, as it were, my existence, without any resource, save the homely philosophy of “*nous verrons demain.*”

["We shall see to-morrow."]

At length our hopes and expectations are become less general, and if we do not obtain our liberty, we may be able at least to procure a more eligible prison. I confess, the source of our hopes, and the protector we have found, are not of a dignity to be ushered to your notice by citations of blank verse, or scraps of sentiment; for though the top of the ladder is not quite so high, the first rounds are as low as that of Ben Bowling's.

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Mad. de ____'s confidential servant, who came here to-day, has learned, by accident, that a man, who formerly worked with the Marquis's tailor, having (in consequence, I suppose of a political vocation,) quitted the selling of old clothes, in which he had acquired some eminence, has become a leading patriot, and is one of Le Bon's, the Representative's, privy counsellors. Fleury has renewed his acquaintance with this man, has consulted him upon our situation, and obtained a promise that he will use his interest with Le Bon in our behalf. Under this splendid patronage, it is not unlikely but we may get an order to be transferred to Amiens, or, perhaps, procure our entire liberation. We have already written to Le Bon on the subject, and Fleury is to have a conference with our friend the tailor in a few days to learn the success of his mediation; so that, I trust, the business will not be long in suspense.

We have had a most indulgent guard to-day, who, by suffering the servant to enter a few paces within the gate, afforded us an opportunity of hearing this agreeable intelligence; as also, by way of episode, that boots being wanted for the cavalry, all the boots in the town were last night put in requisition, and as Fleury was unluckily gone to bed before the search was made at his inn, he found himself this morning very unceremoniously left bootless. He was once a famous patriot, and the oracle of Mad. de ____'s household; but our confinement had already shaken his principles, and this seizure of his "superb English boots" has, I believe, completed his defection.

Oct. 25.

I have discontinued my journal for three days to attend my friend, Mad. de ____, who has been ill. Uneasiness, and want of air and exercise, had brought on a little fever, which, by the usual mode of treatment in this country, has been considerably increased. Her disorder did not indeed much alarm me, but I cannot say as much of her medical assistants, and it seems to me to be almost supernatural that she has escaped the jeopardy of their prescriptions. In my own illness I had trusted to nature, and my recollection of what had been ordered me on similar occasions; but for Mad. de ____ I was less confident, and desirous of having better advice, begged a physician might be immediately sent for. Had her disorder been an apoplexy, she must infallibly have died, for as no person, not even the faculty, can enter, without an order from the municipal Divan, half a day elapsed before this order could be procured. At length the physician and surgeon arrived, and I know not why the learned professions should impose on us more by one exterior than another; but I own, when I saw the



physician appear in a white camblet coat, lined with rose colour, and the surgeon with dirty linen, and a gold button and loop to his hat, I began to tremble for my friend. My feminine prejudices did not, however, in this instance, deceive me. After the usual questions, the patient was

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declared in a fever, and condemned to cathartics, bleeding, and “bon bouillons;” that is to say, greasy beef soup, in which there is never an oeconomy of onions.—When they were departed, I could not help expressing my surprize that people’s lives should be entrusted to such hands, observing, at the same time, to the Baron de L____, (who is lodged in the same apartment with Mad. de ____,) that the French must never expect men, whose education fitted them for the profession, would become physicians, while they continued to be paid at the rate of twenty-pence per visit.—Yet, replied the Baron, if they make twenty visits a day, they gain forty livres—“*et c’est de quoi vivre.*” [It is a living.] It is undeniably *de quoi vivre*, but as long as a mere subsistence is the only prospect of a physician, the French must be content to have their fevers cured by “drastics, phlebotomy, and beef soup.”

They tell me we have now more than five hundred detenus in this single house. How so many have been wedged in I can scarcely conceive, but it seems our keeper has the art of calculating with great nicety the space requisite for a given number of bodies, and their being able to respire freely is not his affair. Those who can afford it have their dinners, with all the appurtenances, brought from the inns or *traiteurs*; and the poor cook, sleep, and eat, by scores, in the same room. I have persuaded my friend to sup as I do, upon tea; but our associates, for the most part, finding it inconvenient to have suppers brought at night, and being unwilling to submit to the same privations, regale themselves with the remains of their dinner, re-cooked in their apartments, and thus go to sleep, amidst the fumes of *perdrix a l’oignon*, *oeufs a la tripe*, [Partridge a l’oignon—eggs a la tripe.] and all the produce of a French kitchen.

It is not, as you may imagine, the Bourgeois, and less distinguished prisoners only, who indulge in these highly-seasoned repasts, at the expence of inhaling the savoury atmosphere they leave behind them: the beaux and petites mistresses, among the *ci-devant*, have not less exigent appetites, nor more delicate nerves; and the ragout is produced at night, in spite of the odours and disorder that remain till the morrow.

I conclude, notwithstanding your English prejudices, that there is nothing unwholesome in filth, for if it were otherwise, I cannot account for our being alive. Five hundred bodies, in a state of coacervation, without even a preference for cleanliness, “think of that Master Brook.” All the forenoon the court is a receptacle for cabbage leaves, fish scales, leeks, &c. &c.—and as a French chambermaid usually prefers the direct road to circumambulation, the refuse of the kitchen is then washed away by plentiful inundations from the dressing-room—the passages are blockaded by foul plates,

fragments, and bones; to which if you add the smell exhaling from hoarded apples and gruyere cheese, you may form some notion

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of the sufferings of those whose olfactory nerves are not robust. Yet this is not all—nearly every female in the house, except myself, is accompanied even here by her lap-dog, who sleeps in her room, and, not unfrequently, on her bed; and these Lesbians and Lindamiras increase the insalubrity of the air, and colonize one's stockings by sending forth daily emigrations of fleas. For my own part, a few close November days will make me as captious and splenetic as Matthew Bramble himself. Nothing keeps me in tolerable good humour at present, but a clear frosty morning, or a high wind.

Oct. 27.

I thought, when I wrote the above, that the house was really so full as to be incapable of containing more; but I did not do justice to the talents of our keeper. The last two nights have brought us an addition of several waggon loads of nuns, farmers, shopkeepers, &c. from the neighbouring towns, which he has still contrived to lodge, though much in the way that he would pack goods in bales. Should another convoy arrive, it is certain that we must sleep perpendicularly, for even now, when the beds are all arranged and occupied for the night, no one can make a diagonal movement without disturbing his neighbour.—This very sociable manner of sleeping is very far, I assure you, from promoting the harmony of the day; and I am frequently witness to the reproaches and recriminations occasioned by nocturnal misdemeanours. Sometimes the lap-dog of one dowager is accused of hostilities against that of another, and thereby producing a general chorus of the rest—then a four-footed favourite strays from the bed of his mistress, and takes possession of a General's uniform—and there are female somnambules, who alarm the modesty of a pair of Bishops, and suspended officers, that, like Richard, warring in their dreams, cry “to arms,” to the great annoyance of those who are more inclined to sleep in peace. But, I understand, the great disturbers of the room where Mad. de ____ sleeps are two chanoines, whose noses are so sonorous and so untuneable as to produce a sort of duet absolutely incompatible with sleep; and one of the company is often deputed to interrupt the serenade by manual application *mais tout en badinant et avec politesse* [But all in pleasantry, and with politeness.] to the offending parties.

All this, my dear brother, is only ludicrous in the relation; yet for so many people to be thus huddled together without distinction of age, sex, or condition, is truly miserable.-- Mad. De ____ is still indisposed, and while she is thus suffocated by bad air, and distracted by the various noises of the house, I see no prospect of her recovery.

Arras is the common prison of the department, and, besides, there are a number of other houses and convents in the town appropriated to the same use, and all equally full. God knows when these iniquities are to terminate! So far from having any hopes at present, the rage for arresting seems, I think, rather to increase than subside. It is supposed there are now more than three hundred thousand people in France confined

under the simple imputation of being what is called “gens suspect:” but as this generic term is new to you, I will, by way of explanation, particularize the several species as classed by the Convention, and then described by Chaumette, solicitor for the City of Paris;*—

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* Decree concerning suspected people:

“Art. I. Immediately after the promulgation of the present decree, all suspected persons that are found on the territory of the republic, and who are still at large, shall be put under arrest.

“II. Those are deemed suspicious, who by their connections, their conversation, or their writings, declare themselves partizans of tyranny or foederation, and enemies to liberty—Those who have not demonstrated their means of living or the performance of their civic duties, in the manner prescribed by the law of March last—Those who, having been suspended from public employments by the Convention or its Commissioners, are not reinstated therein—Those of the ci-devant noblesse, who have not invariably manifested their attachment to the revolution, and, in general, all the fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and agents of emigrants—All who have emigrated between the 1st of July, 1789, and 8th of April, 1792.”“III. The execution of the decree is confided to the Committee of Inspection. The individuals arrested shall be taken to the houses of confinement appointed for their reception. They are allowed to take with them such only of their effects as are strictly necessary, the guards set upon them shall be paid at their expence, and they shall be kept in confinement until the peace.—The Committees of Inspection shall, without delay, transmit to the Committee of General Safety an account of the persons arrested, with the motives of their arrest. [If this were observed (which I doubt much) it was but a mockery, few persons ever knew the precise reason of their confinement.]—The civil and criminal tribunals are empowered, when they deem it necessary, to detain and imprison, as suspected persons, those who being accused of crimes have nevertheless had no bill found against them, (lieu a accusation,) or who have even been tried and acquitted.”

Indications that may serve to distinguish suspicious persons, and those to whom it will be proper to refuse certificates of civism:

“I. Those who in popular assemblies check the ardour of the people by artful speeches, by violent exclamations or threats.

“II. Those who with more caution speak in a mysterious way of the public misfortunes, who appear to pity the lot of the people, and are ever ready to spread bad news with an affectation of concern.

“III. Those who adapt their conduct and language to the circumstances of the moment—who, in order to be taken for republicans, put on a studied austerity of manners, and exclaim with vehemence against the most trifling error in a patriot, but mollify when the crimes of an Aristocrate or a Moderee are the subject of complaint. [These trifling events were, being concerned in the massacres of September, 1792—public peculations—occasional, and even habitual

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robbery, forgeries, &c. &c. &c.—The second, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh classes, were particularly numerous, insomuch that I doubt whether they would not have included nineteen-twentieths of all the people in France who were honest or at all capable of reflection.]

“IV. Those who pity avaricious farmers and shopkeepers, against whom the laws have been necessarily directed.

“V. Those who with the words liberty, country, republic, &c. constantly in their mouths, hold intercourse with ci-devant Nobles, Contre-revolutionnaires, Priests, Aristocrats, Feuillans, &c. and take an interest in their concerns.”“VI. Those who not having borne an active part in the revolution, endeavour to excuse themselves by urging the regular payment of their taxes, their patriotic gifts, and their service in the Garde National by substitute or otherwise.

“VII. Those who received the republican constitution with coolness, or who intimated their pretended apprehensions for its establishment and duration.

“VIII. Those who, having done nothing against liberty, have done as little for it.

“IX. Those who do not frequent the assembly of their section, and offer, for excuse, that they are no orators, or have no time to spare from their own business.

“X. Those who speak with contempt of the constituted authorities, of the rigour of the laws, of the popular societies, and the defenders of liberty.

“XI. Those who have signed anti-revolutionary petitions, or any time frequented unpatriotic clubs, or were known as partizans of La Fayette, and accomplices in the affair of the Champ de Mars.”

—and it must be allowed by all who reside in France at this moment, and are capable of observing the various forms under which hatred for the government shelters itself, that the latter is a chef d’oeuvre in its kind.

Now, exclusive of the above legal and moral indications of people to be suspected, there are also outward and visible signs which we are told from the tribune of the Convention, and the Jacobins, are not much less infallible—such as *Gens a bas de soie rayes mouchetes—a chapeau rond—habit carre—culotte pincee etroite—a bottes cirees—les muscadins—Freloquets—Robinets, &c.* [People that wear spotted or

striped silk stockings—round hats—small coats—tight breeches—blackened boots—perfumes—coxcombs—sprigs of the law, &c.] The consequence of making the cut of a man's coat, or the shape of his hat, a test of his political opinions, has been the transformation of the whole country into republicans, at least as far as depends on the costume; and where, as is natural, there exists a consciousness of inveterate aristocracy, the external is more elaborately "à la Jacobin." The equipment, indeed, of a French patriot of the latest date is as singular as his manners, and in both he is highly distinguishable from the inhabitants of any other country: from those of civilized nations, because he is gross and ferocious—from those of barbarous ones, because his grossness is often affected, and his ferocity a matter of principle and preference.

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A man who would not be reckoned suspect now arrays himself in a jacket and trowsers (a Carmagnole) of striped cotton or coarse cloth, a neckcloth of gaudy cotton, wadded like a horse-collar, and projecting considerably beyond his chin, a cap of red and blue cloth, embroidered in front and made much in the form of that worn by the Pierrot of a pantomime, with one, or sometimes a pair, of ear-rings, about the size of a large curtain-ring! Finally, he crops his hair, and carefully encourages the growth of an enormous pair of whiskers, which he does not fail to perfume with volumes of tobacco smoke. He, however, who is ambitious of still greater eminence, disdains these fopperies, and affects an appearance of filth and rags, which he dignifies with the appellation of stern republicanism and virtuous poverty; and thus, by means of a thread-bare coat out at elbows, wooden shoes, and a red woollen cap, the rich hope to secure their wealth, and the covetous and intriguing to acquire lucrative employment.—Rolland, I think, was the founder of these modern Franciscans, and with this miserable affectation he machinated the death of the King, and, during some months, procured for himself the exclusive direction of the government.

All these patriots by prescription and system have likewise a peculiar and appropriated dialect—they address every one by the title of Citizen, thee and thou indistinctly, and talk of nothing but the agents of Pitt and Cobourg, the coalesced tyrants, royal ogres, satellites of the despots, automaton slaves, and anthropophagi; and if they revert to their own prosperous state, and this very happy country, it is, *un peuple libre, en peuple heureux, and par excellence la terre de la liberte*. ["A free people—a happy people—and, above all others, the land of liberty."]—It is to be observed, that those with whom these pompous expressions are most familiar, are officers employed in the war-like service of mutilating the wooden saints in churches, and arresting old women whom they encounter without national cockades; or members of the municipalities, now reduced to execute the offices of constables, and whose chief functions are to hunt out suspected people, or make domiciliary visits in quest of concealed eggs and butter. But, above all, this democratic oratory is used by tailors, shoemakers, &c.* of the Committees of Inspection, to whom the Representatives on mission have delegated their unlimited powers, who arrest much on the principle of Jack Cade, and with whom it is a crime to read and write, or to appear decently dressed.

* For some months the departments were infested by people of this description—corrupt, ignorant, and insolent. Their motives of arrest were usually the hope of plunder, or the desire of distressing those whom they had been used to look upon as their superiors.—At Arras it sufficed even to have disoblged the wives of these miscreants to become the object of persecution.

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In some places they arrested with the most barbarous caprice, even without the shadow of a reason. At Hesden, a small town in Artois, Dumont left the Mayor carte blanche, and in one night two hundred people were thrown into prison. Every where these low and obscure dominators reigned without controul, and so much were the people intimidated, that instead of daring to complain, they treated their new tyrants with the most servile adulation.—I have seen a ci-devant Comtesse coquetting with all her might a Jacobin tailor, and the richest merchants of a town soliciting very humbly the good offices of a dealer in old clothes.

These ridiculous accoutrements, and this magnificent phraseology, are in themselves very harmless; but the ascendancy which such a class of people are taking has become a subject of just alarm.—The whole administration of the country is now in the hands of uninformed and necessitous profligates, swindlers, men already condemned by the laws, and who, if the revolution had not given them “place and office,” would have been at the galleys, or in prison.*

* One of the administrators of the department de la Somme (which, however, was more decently composed than many others,) was, before the revolution, convicted of house-breaking, and another of forgery; and it has since been proved on various occasions, particularly on the trial of the ninety-four Nantais, that the revolutionary Committees were, for the most part, composed of the very refuse of society—adventurers, thieves, and even assassins; and it would be difficult to imagine a crime that did not there find reward and protection.—In vain were the privileges of the nobility abolished, and religion proscribed. A new privileged order arose in the Jacobins, and guilt of every kind, without the semblance of penitence, found an asylum in these Committees, and an inviolability more sacred than that afforded by the demolished altars.

To these may be added a few men of weak character, and unsteady principles, who remain in office because they fear to resign; with a few, and but very few, ignorant fanatics, who really imagine they are free because they can molest and destroy with impunity all they have hitherto been taught to respect, and drink treble the quantity they did formerly.

Oct. 30.

For some days the guards have been so untractable, and the croud at the door has been so great, that Fleury was obliged to make various efforts before he could communicate the result of his negotiation. He has at length found means to inform us, that his friend the tailor had exerted all his interest in our favour, but that Dumont and Le Bon (as often happens between neighbouring potentates) are at war, and their enmity being in some degree subject to their mutual fears, neither will venture to liberate any prisoner arrested by the other, lest such a disposition to clemency should be seized on by his rival as a ground of accusation.*

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* But if they did not free the enemies of each other, they revenged themselves by throwing into prison all their mutual friends—for the temper of the times was such, that, though these Representatives were expressly invested with unlimited powers, they did not venture to set any one at liberty without a multitude of forms and a long attendance: on the contrary, they arrested without any form at all, and allowed their myrmidons to harrass and confine the persons and sequester the property of all whom they judged proper.—It seemed to have been an elementary principle with those employed by the government at this time, that they risked nothing in doing all the mischief they could, and that they erred only in not doing enough.

—All, therefore, that can be obtained is, a promise to have us removed to Amiens in a short time; and I understand the detenus are there treated with consideration, and that no tribunal revolutionnaire has yet been established.

My mind will be considerably more at ease if this removal can be effected. Perhaps we may not be in more real danger here than at any other place, but it is not realities that constitute the misery of life; and situated as we are, that imagination must be phlegmatic indeed, which does not create and exaggerate enough to prevent the possibility of ease.—We are, as I before observed, placed as it were within the jurisdiction of the guillotine; and I have learned “a secret of our prison-house” to-day which Mad. de _____ had hitherto concealed from me, and which has rendered me still more anxious to quit it. Several of our fellow prisoners, whom I supposed only transferred to other houses, have been taken away to undergo the ceremony of a trial, and from thence to the scaffold. These judicial massacres are now become common, and the repetition of them has destroyed at once the feeling of humanity and the sense of justice. Familiarized to executions, the thoughtless and sanguinary people behold with equal indifference the guilty or innocent victim; and the Guillotine has not only ceased to be an object of horror, but is become almost a source of amusement.

* At Arras this horrid instrument of death was what they called en permanence, (stationary,) and so little regard was paid to the morals of the people, (I say the morals, because every thing which tends to destroy their humanity renders them vicious,) that it was often left from one execution to another with the ensanguined traces of the last victim but too evident.—Children were taught to amuse themselves by making models of the Guillotine, with which they destroyed flies, and even animals. On the Pontneuf, at Paris, a sort of puppet-show was exhibited daily, whose boast it was to give a very exact imitation of a guillotinage; and the burthen of a popular song current for some months was “*Dansons la Guillotine.*” —On the 21st of January, 1794, the anniversary of the King’s death, the Convention

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were invited to celebrate it on the “Place de la Revolution,” where, during the ceremony, and in presence of the whole legislative body, several people were executed. It is true, Bourdon, one of the Deputies, complained of this indecency; but not so much on account of the circumstance itself, as because it gave some of the people an opportunity of telling him, in a sort of way he might probably deem prophetic, that one of the victims was a Representative of the People. The Convention pretended to order that some enquiry should be made why at such a moment such a place was chosen; but the enquiry came to nothing, and I have no doubt but the executions were purposely intended as analogous to the ceremony.—It was proved that Le Bon, on an occasion when he chose to be a spectator of some executions he had been the cause of, suspended the operation while he read the newspaper aloud, in order, as he said, that the aristocrates might go out of the world with the additional mortification of learning the success of the republican arms in their last moments. The People of Brest were suffered to behold, I had almost said to be amused with (for if those who order such spectacles are detestable, the people that permit them are not free from blame,) the sight of twenty-five heads ranged in a line, and still convulsed with the agonies of death.—The cant word for the Guillotine was “our holy mother;” and verdicts of condemnation were called prizes in the Sainte Lotterie—“holy lottery.”

The dark and ferocious character of Le Bon developes itself hourly: the whole department trembles before him; and those who have least merited persecution are, with reason, the most apprehensive. The most cautious prudence of conduct, the most undeviating rectitude in those who are by their fortune or rank obnoxious to the tyrant, far from contributing to their security, only mark them out for a more early sacrifice. What is still worse, these horrors are not likely to terminate, because he is allowed to pay out of the treasury of the department the mob that are employed to popularize and applaud them.—I hope, in a few days, we shall receive our permission to depart. My impatience is a malady, and, for nearly the first time in my life, I am sensible of ennui; not the ennui occasioned by want of amusement, but that which is the effect of unquiet expectation, and which makes both the mind and body restless and incapable of attending to any thing. I am incessantly haunted by the idea that the companion of to-day may to-morrow expire under the Guillotine, that the common acts of social intercourse may be explained into intimacy, intimacy into the participation of imputed treasons, and the fate of those with whom we are associated become our own. It appears both useless and cruel to have brought us here, nor do I yet know any reason why we were not all removed to Amiens, except it was to avoid exposing to the eyes of the people in the places through which we must pass too large a number of victims at once.—The cause of our being removed from Peronne is indeed avowed, as it is at present a rule not to confine people at the place of their residence, lest they should have too much facility or communication with, or assistance from, their friends.*

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* In some departments the nobles and priests arrested were removed from ten to twenty leagues distant from their homes; and if they happened to have relations living at the places where they were confined, these last were forbidden to reside there, or even to travel that way.

We should doubtless have remained at Arras until some change in public affairs had procured our release, but for the fortunate discovery of the man I have mentioned; and the trifling favour of removal from one prison to another has been obtained only by certain arrangements which Fleury has made with this subordinate agent of tyranny, and in which justice or consideration for us had no share. Alas! are we not miserable? is not the country miserable, when our only resource is in the vices of those who govern?—It is uncertain when we shall be ordered from hence—it may happen when we least expect it, even in the night, so that I shall not attempt to write again till we have changed our situation. The risk is at present too serious, and you must allow my desire of amusing you to give way to my solicitude for my own preservation.

Bicetre at Amiens, Nov. 18, 1793.

Nous voila donc encore, logees a la nation; that is to say, the common prison of the department, amidst the thieves, vagabonds, maniacs, &c. confined by the old police, and the gens suspects recently arrested by the new.—I write from the end of a sort of elevated barn, sixty or seventy feet long, where the interstices of the tiles admit the wind from all quarters, and scarcely exclude the rain, and where an old screen and some curtains only separate Mad. de _____, myself, and our servants, from sixty priests, most of them old, sick, and as wretched as men can be, who are pious and resigned. Yet even here I feel comparatively at ease, and an escape from the jurisdiction of Le Bon and his merciless tribunal seems cheaply purchased by the sacrifice of our personal convenience. I do not pretend to philosophize or stoicize, or to any thing else which implies a contempt of life—I have, on the contrary, a most unheroic solicitude about my existence, and consider my removal to a place where I think we are safe, as a very fortunate aera of our captivity.

After many delays and disappointments, Fleury at length procured an order, signed by the Representative, for our being transferred to Amiens, under the care of two *Gardes Nationaux*, and, of course, at our expence.—Every thing in this country wears the aspect of despotism. At twelve o'clock at night we were awakened by the officer on guard, and informed we were to depart on the morrow; and, notwithstanding the difficulty of procuring horses and carriages, it was specified, that if we did not go on the day appointed, we were not to go at all. It was, or course, late before we could surmount the various obstacles to our journey, and procure two crazy cabriolets, and a cart for the guards, ourselves,

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and baggage. The days being short, we were obliged to sleep at Dourlens; and, on our arrival at the castle, which is now, as it always has been, a state-prison, we were told it was so full, that it was absolutely impossible to lodge us, and that we had better apply to the Governor, for permission to sleep at an inn. We then drove to the Governor's* house, who received us very civilly, and with very little persuasion agreed to our request. At the best of the miserable inns in the town we were informed they had no room, and that they could not accommodate us in any way whatever, except a sick officer then in the house would permit us to occupy one of two beds in his apartment.

* The Commandant had been originally a private soldier in the regiment of Dillon.—I know not how he had obtained his advancement, but, however obtained, it proved fatal to him: he was, a very short time after I saw him, guillotined at Arras, for having borrowed money of a prisoner. His real crime was, probably, treating the prisoners in general with too much consideration and indulgence; and at this period every suspicion of the kind was fatal.

In England it would not be very decent to make such a request, or to accept such an accommodation. In France, neither the one nor the other is unusual, and we had suffered lately so many embarrassments of the kind, that we were, if not reconciled, at least inured to them. Before, however, we could determine, the gentleman had been informed of our situation, and came to offer his services. You may judge of our surprise when we found in the stranger, who had his head bound up and his arm in a sling, General _____, a relation of Mad. de _____. We had now, therefore, less scruple in sharing his room, though we agreed, notwithstanding, only to repose a few hours in our clothes.

After taking some tea, the remainder of the evening was dedicated to reciprocal conversation of all kinds; and our guards having acquaintance in the town, and knowing it was impossible for us to escape, even were we so inclined, very civilly left us to ourselves. We found the General had been wounded at Maubeuge, and was now absent on conge for the recovery of his health. He talked of the present state of public affairs like a military man who is attached to his profession, and who thinks it his duty to fight at all events, whatever the rights or merits of those that employ him. He confessed, indeed, that they were repulsing their external enemies, only to confirm the power of those who were infinitely more to be dreaded at home, and that the condition of a General was more to be commiserated at this time than any other: if he miscarry, disgrace and the Guillotine await him—if he be successful, he gains little honour, becomes an object of jealousy, and assists in rivetting the chains of his country. He said, the armies were for the most part licentious and insubordinate, but that the political discipline

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was terrible—the soldiers are allowed to drink, pillage, and insult their officers with impunity, but all combinations are rigorously suppressed, the slightest murmur against the Representative on mission is treason, and to disapprove of a decree of the convention, death—that every man of any note in the army is beset with spies, and if they leave the camp on any occasion, it is more necessary to be on their guard against these wretches than against an ambushade of the enemy; and he related a circumstance which happened to himself, as an example of what he mentioned, and which will give you a tolerable idea of the present system of government.—After the relief of Dunkirk, being quartered in the neighbourhood of St. Omer, he occasionally went to the town on his private concerns. One day, while he was waiting at the inn where he intended to dine, two young men accosted him, and after engaging him in a general conversation for some time, began to talk with great freedom, though with an affected caution of public men and measures, of the banditti who governed, the tyranny that was exercised, and the supineness of the people: in short, of all those too poignant truths which constitute the leze nation of the day. *Mons. de ____* was not at first very attentive, but finding their discourse become still more liberal, it excited his suspicions, and casting his eyes on a glass opposite to where they were conversing, he perceived a sort of intelligence between them, which immediately suggested to him the profession of his companions; and calling to a couple of dragoons who had attended him, ordered them to arrest the two gentlemen as artistocrates, and convey them without ceremony to prison. They submitted, seemingly more surprized than alarmed, and in two hours the General received a note from a higher power, desiring him to set them at liberty, as they were agents of the republic.

Duquesnoy, one of the Representatives now with the Northern army, is ignorant and brutal in the extreme. He has made his brother (who, as well as himself, used to retail hops in the streets of St. Pol,) a General; and in order to deliver him from rivals and critics, he breaks, suspends, arrests, and sends to the Guillotine every officer of any merit that comes in his way. After the battle of Maubeuge, he arrested a General Bardell, [The Generals Bardell and D'Avesnes, and several others, were afterwards guillotined at Paris.] for accommodating a wounded prisoner of distinction (I think a relation of the Prince of Cobourg) with a bed, and tore with his own hands the epaulette from the shoulders of those Generals whose divisions had not sustained the combat so well as the others. His temper, naturally savage and choleric, is irritated to fury by the habit of drinking large quantities of strong liquors; and *Mad. de ____*'s relation assured us, that he had himself seen him take the Mayor of Avesnes (a venerable old man, who was presenting some petition to him that

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regarded the town,) by the hair and throw him on the ground, with the gestures of an enraged cannibal. He also confined one of his own fellow deputies in the tower of Guise, upon a very frivolous pretext, and merely on his own authority. In fact, I scarcely remember half the horrors told us of this man; and I shall only remind you, that he has an unlimited controul over the civil constitution of the Northern army, and over the whole department of the North.

You, I suppose, will be better informed of military events than we are, and I mention our friend's conjecture, that (besides an enormous number of killed) the wounded at Maubeuge amounted to twelve or fourteen thousand, only to remark the deception which is still practised on the people; for no published account ever allowed the number to be more than a few hundreds.—Besides these professional details, the General gave us some very unpleasant family ones. On returning to his father's chateau, where he hoped to be taken care of while his wounds were curing, he found every room in it under seals, three guards in possession, his two sisters arrested at St. Omer, where they happened to be on a visit, and his father and mother confined in separate houses of detention at Arras. After visiting them, and making some ineffectual applications for their relief, he came to the neighbourhood of Dourlens, expecting to find an asylum with an uncle, who had hitherto escaped the general persecution of the gentry. Here again his disappointment and chagrin were renewed: his uncle had been carried off to Amiens the morning of his arrival, and the house rendered inaccessible, by the usual affixture of seals, and an attendant pair of myrmidons to guard them from infraction. Thus excluded from all his family habitations, he had taken up his residence for a day or two at the inn where we met him, his intention being to return to Arras.

In the morning we made our adieus and pursued our journey; but, tenacious of this comparative liberty and the enjoyment of pure air, we prevailed on our conductors to let us dine on the road, so that we lingered with the unwillingness of truant children, and did not reach Amiens until dark. When we arrived at the Hotel de Ville, one of the guards enquired how we were to be disposed of. Unfortunately for us, Dumont happened to be there himself, and on hearing we were sent from Arras by order of Le Bon, declared most furiously (for our Representative is subject to choler since his accession to greatness) that he would have no prisoners received from Arras, and that we should sleep at the Conciergerie, and be conveyed back again on the morrow. Terrified at this menace, we persuaded the guard to represent to Dumont that we had been sent to Amiens at our own instance, and that we had been originally arrested by himself, and were therefore desirous of returning to the department where he was on mission, and where we had more reason to expect justice than at Arras.

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Mollified, perhaps, by this implied preference of his authority, he consented that we should remain for the present at Amiens, and ordered us to be taken to the Bicetre. Whoever has been used to connect with the word Bicetre the idea of the prison so named at Paris, must recoil with horror upon hearing they are destined to such a abode. Mad. de ____, yet weak from the remains of her illness, laid hold of me in a transport of grief; but, far from being able to calm or console her, my thoughts were so bewildered that I did not, till we alighted at the gate, begin to be really sensible of our situation. The night was dark and dreary, and our first entrance was into a kitchen, such as my imagination had pictured the subterraneous one of the robbers in Gil Blas. Here we underwent the ceremony of having our pocket-books searched for papers and letters, and our trunks rummaged for knives and fire-arms. This done, we were shown to the lodging I have described, and the poor priests, already insufferably crowded, were obliged almost to join their beds in order to make room for us.—I will not pain you by a recital of all the embarrassments and distresses we had to surmount before we could even rest ourselves. We were in want of every thing, and the rules of the prison such, that it was nearly impossible, for some time, to procure any thing: but the human mind is more flexible than we are often disposed to imagine it; and in two days we were able to see our situation in this best point of view, (that is, as an escape from Arras,) and the affair of submitting our bodies to our minds must be atchieved by time.—We have now been here a week. We have sounded the very depth of humiliation, taken our daily allowance of bread with the rest of the prisoners, and contracted a most friendly intimacy with the gaoler.

I have discovered since our arrival, that the order for transferring us hither described me as a native of the Low Countries. I know not how this happened, but my friend has insisted on my not rectifying the mistake, for as the French talk continually of re-conquering Brabant, she persuades herself such an event would procure me my liberty. I neither desire the one nor expect the other; but, to indulge her, I speak no English, and avoid two or three of my countrymen who I am told are here. There have been also some English families who were lately removed, but the French pronounce our names so strangely, that I have not been able to learn who they were.

November 19, 1793.

The English in general, especially of late years, have been taught to entertain very formidable notions of the Bastille and other state prisons of the ancient government, and they were, no doubt, horrid enough; yet I have not hitherto been able to discover that those of the new republic are any way preferable. The only difference is, that the great number of prisoners which, for want of room, are obliged to be heaped together, makes it impossible to exclude them

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as formerly from communication, and, instead of being maintained at the public expence, they now, with great difficulty, are able to procure wherewithal to eat at their own. Our present habitation is an immense building, about a quarter of a mile from the town, intended originally for the common gaol of the province. The situation is damp and unwholesome, and the water so bad, that I should suppose a long continuance here of such a number of prisoners must be productive of endemical disorders. Every avenue to the house is guarded, and no one is permitted to stop and look up at the windows, under pain of becoming a resident. We are strictly prohibited from all external intercourse, except by writing; and every scrap of paper, though but an order for a dinner, passes the inquisition of three different people before it reaches its destination, and, of course, many letters and notes are mislaid, and never sent at all.—There is no court or garden in which the prisoners are allowed to walk, and the only exercise they can take is in damp passages, or a small yard, (perhaps thirty feet square,) which often smells so detestably, that the atmosphere of the house itself is less mephitic.

Our fellow-captives are a motley collection of the victims of nature, of justice, and of tyranny—of lunatics who are insensible of their situation, of thieves who deserve it, and of political criminals whose guilt is the accident of birth, the imputation of wealth, or the profession of a clergyman. Among the latter is the Bishop of Amiens, whom I recollect to have mentioned in a former letter. You will wonder why a constitutional Bishop, once popular with the democratic party, should be thus treated. The real motive was, probably, to degrade in his person a minister of religion—the ostensible one, a dispute with Dumont at the Jacobin club. As the times grew alarming, the Bishop, perhaps, thought it politic to appear at the club, and the Representative meeting him there one evening, began to interrogate him very rudely with regard to his opinion of the marriage of priests. M. Dubois replied, that when it was officially incumbent on him to explain himself, he would do so, but that he did not think the club a place for such discussions, or something to this purpose. "*Tu prevariques donc!—Je t'arrete sur le champ:*" ["What, you prevaricate!—I arrest you instantly."] the Bishop was accordingly arrested at the instant, and conducted to the Bicetre, without even being suffered to go home and furnish himself with necessaries; and the seals being immediately put on his effects, he has never been able to obtain a change of linen and clothes, or any thing else—this too at a time when the pensions of the clergy are ill paid, and every article of clothing so dear as to be almost unpurchaseable by moderate fortunes, and when those who might otherwise be disposed to aid or accommodate their friends, abandon them through fear of being implicated in their misfortunes.

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But the Bishop, yet in the vigour of life, is better capable of enduring these hardships than most of the poor priests with whom he is associated: the greater number of them are very old men, with venerable grey locks— and their tattered clerical habits, scanty meals, and wretched beds, give me many an heart-ache. God send the constant sight of so much misery may not render me callous!—It is certain, there are people here, who, whatever their feelings might have been on this occasion at first, seem now little affected by it. Those who are too much familiarized with scenes of wretchedness, as well as those to whom they are unknown, are not often very susceptible; and I am sometimes disposed to cavil with our natures, that the sufferings which ought to excite our benevolence, and the prosperity that enables us to relieve them, should ever have a contrary effect. Yet this is so true, that I have scarcely ever observed even the poor considerate towards each other—and the rich, if they are frequently charitable, are not always compassionate.*

* Our situation at the Bicetre, though terrible for people unused to hardships or confinement, and in fact, wretched as personal inconvenience could make it, was yet Elysium, compared to the prisons of other departments. At St. Omer, the prisoners were frequently disturbed at midnight by the entrance of men into their apartments, who, with the detestable ensign of their order, (red caps,) and pipes in their mouths, came by way of frolic to search their pockets, trunks, &c.—At Montreuil, the Maisons d'Arret were under the direction of a Commissary, whose behaviour to the female prisoners was too atrocious for recital—two young women, in particular, who refused to purchase milder treatment, were locked up in a room for seventeen days.—Soon after I left Arras, every prison became a den of horror. The miserable inhabitants were subject to the agents of Le Bon, whose avarice, cruelty, and licentiousness, were beyond any thing a humane mind can imagine. Sometimes the houses were suddenly surrounded by an armed force, the prisoners turned out in the depth of winter for several hours into an open court, during the operation of robbing them of their pocket-books, buckles, ear-rings, or whatever article of value they had about them. At other times they were visited by the same military array, and deprived of their linen and clothes. Their wine and provisions were likewise taken from them in the same manner—wives were separated from their husbands, parents from their children, old men treated with the most savage barbarity, and young women with an indecency still more abominable. All communication, either by writing or otherwise, was often prohibited for many days together, and an order was once given to prevent even the entry of provisions, which was not revoked till the prisoners became absolutely distressed. At the Hotel Dieu they were forbidden to draw more than a single jug of water

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in twenty-four hours. At the Providence, the well was left three days without a cord, and when the unfortunate females confined there procured people to beg water of the neighbours, they were refused, "because it was for prisoners, and if Le Bon heard of it he might be displeased!" Windows were blocked up, not to prevent escape, but to exclude air; and when the general scarcity rendered it impossible for the prisoners to procure sufficient food for their support, their small portions were diminished at the gate, under pretext of searching for letters, &c. —People, respectable both for their rank and character, were employed to clean the prisons and privies, while their low and insolent tyrants looked on and insulted them. On an occasion when one of the Maisons d'Arrets was on fire, guards were planted round, with orders to fire upon those that should attempt to escape.—My memory has but too faithfully recorded these and still greater horrors; but curiosity would be gratified but too dearly by the relation. I added the above note some months after writing the letter to which it is annexed.

Nov. 20.

Besides the gentry and clergy of this department, we have likewise for companions a number of inhabitants of Lisle, arrested under circumstances singularly atrocious, even where atrocity is the characteristic of almost every proceeding.—In the month of August a decree was passed to oblige all the nobility, clergy, and their servants, as well as all those persons who had been in the service of emigrants, to depart from Lisle in eight-and-forty hours, and prohibiting their residence within twenty leagues from the frontiers. Thus banished from their own habitations, they took refuge in different towns, at the prescribed distance; but, almost as soon as they were arrived, and had been at the expence of settling themselves, they were arrested as strangers,* and conducted to prison.

* I have before, I believe, noticed that the term *estranger* at this time did not exclusively apply to foreigners, but to such as had come from one town to another, who were at inns or on a visit to their friends.

It will not be improper to notice here the conduct of the government towards the towns that have been besieged. Thionville,* to whose gallant defence in 1792 France owed the retreat of the Prussians and the safety of Paris, was afterwards continually reproached with aristocracy; and when the inhabitants sent a deputation to solicit an indemnity for the damage the town had sustained during the bombardment a member of the Convention threatened them from the tribune with "indemnities a coup de baton!" that is, in our vernacular tongue, with a good thrashing.

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* Wimpfen, who commanded there, and whose conduct at the time was enthusiastically admired, was driven, most probably by the ingratitude and ill treatment of the Convention, to head a party of the Foederalists.—These legislators perpetually boast of imitating and surpassing the Romans, and it is certain, that their ingratitude has made more than one Coriolanus. The difference is, that they are not jealous for the liberty of the country, but for their own personal safety.

The inhabitants of Lisle, who had been equally serviceable in stopping the progress of the Austrians, for a long time petitioned without effect to obtain the sums already voted for their relief. The noblesse, and others from thence who have been arrested, as soon as it was known that they were Lillois, were treated with peculiar rigour;* and an *armee revolutionnaire*,** with the Guillotine for a standard, has lately harrassed the town and environs of Lisle, as though it were a conquered country.

* The Commandant of Lisle, on his arrival at the Bicetre, was stripped of a considerable sum of money, and a quantity of plate he had unluckily brought with him by way of security. Out of this he is to be supplied with fifty livres at a time in paper, which, according to the exchange and the price of every thing, is, I suppose, about half a guinea.** The *armee revolutionnaire* was first raised by order of the Jacobins, for the purpose of searching the countries for provisions, and conducting them to Paris. Under this pretext, a levy was made of all the most desperate ruffians that could be collected together. They were divided into companies, each with its attendant Guillotine, and then distributed in the different departments: they had extraordinary pay, and seem to have been subject to no discipline. Many of them were distinguished by the representation of a Guillotine in miniature, and a head just severed, on their cartouch-boxes. It would be impossible to describe half the enormities committed by these banditti: wherever they went they were regarded as a scourge, and every heart shrunk at their approach. Lecointre, of Versailles, a member of the Convention, complained that a band of these wretches entered the house of a farmer, one of his tenants, by night, and, after binding the family hand and foot, and helping themselves to whatever they could find, they placed the farmer with his bare feet on the chaffing-dish of hot ashes, by way of forcing him to discover where he had secreted his plate and money, which having secured, they set all the vessels of liquor running, and then retired.

You are not to suppose this a robbery, and the actors common thieves; all was in the usual form—“au nom de la loi,” and for the service of the republic; and I do not mention this instance as remarkable, otherwise than as having been noticed in the Convention. A thousand events of this kind, even still more atrocious, have happened; but the sufferers who had not the means of defence as well as of complaint, were obliged, through policy, to be silent.

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—The garrison and national guard, indignant at the horrors they committed, obliged them to decamp. Even the people of Dunkirk, whose resistance to the English, while the French army was collecting together for their relief, was perhaps of more consequence than ten victories, have been since intimidated with Commissioners, and Tribunals, and Guillotines, as much as if they had been convicted of selling the town. In short, under this philanthropic republic, persecution seems to be very exactly proportioned to the services rendered. A jealous and suspicious government does not forget, that the same energy of character which has enabled a people to defend themselves against an external enemy, may also make them less submissive to domestic oppression; and, far from repaying them with the gratitude to which they have a claim, it treats them, on all occasions, as opponents, whom it both fears and hates.

Nov. 22. We have been walking in the yard to-day with General Laveneur, who, for an act which in any other country would have gained him credit, is in this suspended from his command.—When Custine, a few weeks before his death, left the army to visit some of the neighbouring towns, the command devolved on Laveneur, who received, along with other official papers, a list of countersigns, which, having probably been made some time, and not altered conformably to the changes of the day, contained, among others, the words Condorcet—Constitution; and these were in their turn given out. On Custine's trial, this was made a part of his accusation. Laveneur, recollecting that the circumstance had happened in the absence of Custine, thought it incumbent on him to take the blame, if there were any, on himself, and wrote to Paris to explain the matter as it really stood; but his candour, without availing Custine, drew persecution on himself, and the only notice taken of his letter was an order to arrest him. After being dragged from one town to another, like a criminal, and often lodged in dungeons and common prisons, he was at length deposited here.

I know not if the General's principles are republican, but he has a very democratic pair of whiskers, which he occasionally strokes, and seems to cherish with much affection. He is, however, a gentleman-like man, and expresses such anxiety for the fate of his wife and children, who are now at Paris, that one cannot but be interested in his favour. —As the agents of the republic never err on the side of omission, they arrested *Mons.* Laveneur's aid-de-camp with him; and another officer of his acquaintance, who was suspended, and living at Amiens, has shared the same fate, only for endeavouring to procure him a trifling accommodation. This gentleman called on Dumont, to beg that General Laveneur's servant might be permitted to go in and out of the prison on his master's errands. After breakfasting together, and conversing on very civil terms, Dumont told him, that as he concerned himself so much in behalf of his friend, he would send him to keep the latter company, and at the conclusion of his visit he was sent prisoner to the Bicetre.

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Perhaps the greater part of between three and four hundred thousand people, now imprisoned on suspicion, have been arrested for reasons as little substantial.

—I begin to fear my health will not resist the hardship of a long continuance here. We have no fire-place, and are sometimes starved with partial winds from the doors and roof; at others faint and heartsick with the unhealthy air produced by so many living bodies. The water we drink is not preferable to the air we breathe; the bread (which is now every where scarce and bad) contains such a mixture of barley, rye, damaged wheat, and trash of all kinds, that, far from being nourished by it, I lose both my strength and appetite daily.—Yet these are not the worst of our sufferings. Shut out from all society, victims of a despotic and unprincipled government capable of every thing, and ignorant of the fate which may await us, we are occasionally oppressed by a thousand melancholy apprehensions. I might, indeed, have boasted of my fortitude, and have made myself an heroine on paper at as small an expence of words as it has cost me to record my cowardice: but I am of an unlucky conformation, and think either too much or too little (I know not which) for a female philosopher; besides, philosophy is getting into such ill repute, that not possessing the reality, the name of it is not worth assuming.

A poor old priest told me just now, (while Angelique was mending his black coat with white thread,) that they had left at the place where they were last confined a large quantity of linen, and other necessaries; but, by the express orders of Dumont, they were not allowed to bring a single article away with them. The keeper, too, it seems, was threatened with dismissal, for supplying one of them with a shirt.—In England, where, I believe, you ally political expediency as much as you can with justice and humanity, these cruelties, at once little and refined, will appear incredible; and the French themselves, who are at least ashamed of, if they are not pained by, them, are obliged to seek refuge in the fancied palliative of a “state of revolution.”—Yet, admitting the necessity of confining the persons of these old men, there can be none for heaping them together in filth and misery, and adding to the sufferings of years and infirmity by those of cold and want. If, indeed, a state of revolution require such deeds, and imply an apology for them, I cannot but wish the French had remained as they were, for I know of no political changes that can compensate for turning a civilized nation into a people of savages. It is not surely the eating acorns or ragouts, a well-powdered head, or one decorated with red feathers, that constitutes the difference between barbarism and civilization; and, I fear, if the French proceed as they have begun, the advantage of morals will be considerably on the side of the unrefined savages.

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The conversation of the prison has been much engaged by the fate of an English gentleman, who lately destroyed himself in a Maison d'Arret at Amiens. His confinement had at first deeply affected his spirits, and his melancholy increasing at the prospect of a long detention, terminated in deranging his mind, and occasioned this last act of despair.—I never hear of suicide without a compassion mingled with terror, for, perhaps, simple pity is too light an emotion to be excited by an event which reminds us, that we are susceptible of a degree of misery too great to be borne—too strong for the efforts of instinct, reflection, and religion. —I could moralize on the necessity of habitual patience, and the benefit of preparing the mind for great evils by a philosophic endurance of little ones; but I am at the Bicetre—the winds whistle round me—I am beset by petty distresses, and we do not expatiate to advantage on endurance while we have any thing to endure.—Seneca's contempt for the things of this world was doubtless suggested in the palace of Nero. He would not have treated the subject so well in disgrace and poverty. Do not suppose I am affecting to be pleasant, for I write in the sober sadness of conviction, that human fortitude is often no better than a pompous theory, founded on self-love and self-deception.

I was surprized at meeting among our fellow-prisoners a number of Dutch officers. I find they had been some time in the town on their parole, and were sent here by Dumont, for refusing to permit their men to work on the fortifications.—The French government and its agents despise the laws of war hitherto observed; they consider them as a sort of aristocratie militaire, and they pretend, on the same principle, to be enfranchised from the law of nations.—An orator of the convention lately boasted, that he felt himself infinitely superior to the prejudices of Grotius, Puffendorff, and Vatel, which he calls "l'aristocratie diplomatique."—Such sublime spirits think, because they differ from the rest of mankind, that they surpass them. Like Icarus, they attempt to fly, and are perpetually struggling in the mire.—Plain common sense has long pointed out a rule of action, from which all deviation is fatal, both to nations and individuals. England, as well as France, has furnished its examples; and the annals of genius in all countries are replete with the miseries of eccentricity.—Whoever has followed the course of the French revolution, will, I believe, be convinced, that the greatest evils attending on it have been occasioned by an affected contempt for received maxims. A common banditti, acting only from the desire of plunder, or men, erring only through ignorance, could not have subjugated an whole people, had they not been assisted by narrow-minded philosophers, who were eager to sacrifice their country to the vanity of making experiments, and were little solicitous whether their systems were good or bad, provided they

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were celebrated as the authors of them. Yet, where are they now? Wandering, proscribed, and trembling at the fate of their followers and accomplices.—The Brissotins, sacrificed by a party even worse than themselves, have died without exciting either pity or admiration. Their fall was considered as the natural consequence of their exaltation, and the courage with which they met death obtained no tribute but a cold and simple comment, undistinguished from the news of the day, and ending with it.

December.

Last night, after we had been asleep about an hour, (for habit, that “lulls the wet sea-boy on the high and giddy mast,” has reconciled us to sleep even here,) we were alarmed by the trampling of feet, and sudden unlocking of our door. Our apprehensions gave us no time for conjecture—in a moment an ill-looking fellow entered the room with a lantern, two soldiers holding drawn swords, and a large dog! The whole company walked as it were processionally to the end of the apartment, and, after observing in silence the beds on each side, left us. It would not be easy to describe what we suffered at this moment: for my own part, I thought only of the massacres of September, and the frequent proposals at the Jacobins and the Convention for dispatching the “*gens suspect*,” and really concluded I was going to terminate my existence “*revolutionnairement*.” I do not now know the purport of these visits, but I find they are not unusual, and most probably intended to alarm the prisoners.

After many enquiries and messages, I have had the mortification of hearing that Mr. and Mrs. D____ were taken to Arras, and were there even before I left it. The letters sent to and from the different prisons are read by so many people, and pass through so many hands, that it is not surprising we have not heard from each other. As far as I can learn, they had obtained leave, after their first arrest, to remove to a house in the vicinity of Dourlens for a few days, on account of Mrs. D____’s health, which had suffered by passing the summer in the town, and that at the taking of Toulon they were again arrested while on a visit, and conveyed to a *Maison d’Arret* at Arras. I am the more anxious for them, as it seems they were unprepared for such an event; and as the seals were put upon their effects, I fear they must be in want of every thing. I might, perhaps, have succeeded in getting them removed here, but Fleury’s Arras friend, it seems, did not think, when the Convention had abolished every other part of Christianity, that they intended still to exact a partial observance of the eighth article of the decalogue; and having, in the sense of Antient Pistol, “conveyed” a little too notoriously, Le Bon has, by way of securing him from notice or pursuit, sent him to the

frontiers in the capacity of Commissary.

The prison, considering how many French inhabitants it contains, is tolerably quiet—to say

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the truth, we are not very sociable, and still less gay. Common interest establishes a sort of intimacy between those of the same apartment; but the rest of the house pass each other, without farther intercourse than silent though significant civility. Sometimes you see a pair of unfortunate aristocrats talking politics at the end of a passage, or on a landing-place; and here and there a bevy of females, en deshabille, recounting altogether the subject of their arrest. One's ear occasionally catches a few half-suppressed notes of a proscribed aire, but the unhallowed sounds of the Carmagnole and Marseillois are never heard, and would be thought more dissonant here than the war-whoop. In fact, the only appearance of gaiety is among the ideots and lunatics. — "*Je m'ennuye furieusement*," is the general exclamation.—An Englishman confined at the Bicetre would express himself more forcibly, but, it is certain, the want of knowing how to employ themselves does not form a small part of the distresses of our fellow-prisoners; and when they tell us they are "*ennuyes*," they say, perhaps, nearly as much as they feel— for, as far as I can observe, the loss of liberty has not the same effect on a Frenchman as an Englishman. Whether this arises from political causes, or the natural indifference of the French character, I am not qualified to determine; probably from both: yet when I observe this facility of mind general, and by no means peculiar to the higher classes, I cannot myself but be of opinion, that it is more an effect of their original disposition than of their form of government; for though in England we were accustomed from our childhood to consider every man in France as liable to wake and find himself in the Bastille, or at Mont St. Michel, this formidable despotism existed more in theory than in practice; and if courtiers and men of letters were intimidated by it, the mass of the people troubled themselves very little about Lettres de Cachet. The revenge or suspicion of Ministers might sometimes pursue those who aimed at their power, or assailed their reputation; but the lesser gentry, the merchants, or the shopkeepers, were very seldom victims of arbitrary imprisonment—and I believe, amongst the evils which it was the object of the revolution to redress, this (except on the principle) was far from being of the first magnitude. I am not likely, under my present circumstances, to be an advocate for the despotism of any form of government; and I only give it as a matter of opinion, that the civil liberty of the French was not so often and generally violated,* as to influence their character in such a degree as to render them insensible of its loss. At any rate, we must rank it among the *bizarreries* [Unaccountable whimsical events.] of this world, that the French should have been prepared, by the theory of oppression under their old system, for enduring the practice of it under the new one; and that what during the monarchy was only possible to a few, is, under the republic, almost certain to all.

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* I remember in 1789, after the destruction of the Bastille, our compassionate countrymen were taught to believe that this tremendous prison was peopled with victims, and that even the dungeons were inhabited; yet the truth is, though it would not have told so pathetically, or have produced so much theatrical effect, there were only seven persons confined in the whole building, and certainly not one in the dungeons.

Amiens, Providence, Dec. 10, 1793.

We have again, as you will perceive, changed our abode, and that too without expecting, and almost without desiring it. In my moments of sullenness and despondency, I was not very solicitous about the modifications of our confinement, and little disposed to be better satisfied with one prison than another: but, heroics apart, external comforts are of some importance, and we have, in many respects, gained by our removal.

Our present habitation is a spacious building, lately a convent, and though now crowded with more prisoners by two or three hundred than it will hold conveniently, yet we are better lodged than at the Bicetre, and we have also a large garden, good water, and, what above all is desirable, the liberty of delivering our letters or messages ourselves (in presence of the guard) to any one who will venture to approach us. Mad. de ____ and myself have a small cell, where we have just room to place our beds, but we have no fire-place, and the maids are obliged to sleep in an adjoining passage.

A few evenings ago, while we were at the Bicetre, we were suddenly informed by the keeper that Dumont had sent some soldiers with an order to convey us that night to the Providence. We were at first rather surprized than pleased, and reluctantly gathered our baggage together with as much expedition as we could, while the men who were to escort us were exclaiming “a la Francaise” at the trifling delay this occasioned. When we had passed the gate, we found Fleury, with some porters, ready to receive our beds, and overjoyed at having procured us a more decent prison, for, it seems, he could by no means reconcile himself to the name of Bicetre. We had about half a mile to walk, and on the road he contrived to acquaint us with the means by which he had solicited this favour of Dumont. After advising with all Mad. de ____’s friends who were yet at liberty, and finding no one willing to make an effort in her behalf, for fear of involving themselves, he discovered an old acquaintance in the “femme de chambre” of one of Fleury’s mistresses.— This, for one of Fleury’s sagacity, was a spring to have set the whole Convention in a ferment; and in a few days he profited so well by this female patronage, as to obtain an order for transferring us hither. On our arrival, we were informed, as usual, that the house was already full, and that there was no possibility of admitting us. We however, set up all night in the keeper’s room with some other people newly arrived like ourselves, and in the morning, after a little disputing and a pretty general derangement of the more ancient inhabitants, we were “nichees,” as I have described to you.

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We have not yet quitted our room much, but I observe that every one appears more chearful, and more studied in their toilette, than at the Bicetre, and I am willing to infer from thence that confinement here is less insupportable.—I have been employed two days in enlarging the notes I had made in our last prison, and in making them more legible, for I ventured no farther than just to scribble with a pencil in a kind of short-hand of my own invention, and not even that without a variety of precautions. I shall be here less liable either to surprize or observation, and as soon as I have secured what I have already noted, (which I intend to do to-night,) I shall continue my remarks in the usual form. You will find even more than my customary incorrectness and want of method since we left Peronne; but I shall not allow your competency as a critic, until you have been a prisoner in the hands of French republicans.

It will not be improper to notice to you a very ingenious decree of Gaston, (a member of the Convention,) who lately proposed to embark all the English now in France at Brest, and then to sink the ships.—Perhaps the Committee of Public Welfare are now in a sort of benevolent indecision, whether this, or Collot d'Herbois' gunpowder scheme, shall have the preference. Legendre's iron cage and simple hanging will, doubtless, be rejected, as too slow and formal. The mode of the day is "les grandes mesures." If I be not seriously alarmed at these propositions, it is not that life is indifferent to me, or that I think the government too humane to adopt them. My tranquillity arises from reflecting that such measures would be of no political use, and that we shall most likely be soon forgotten in the multitude of more important concerns. Those, however, whom I endeavour to console by this reasoning, tell me it is nothing less than infallible, that the inutility of a crime is here no security against its perpetration, and that any project which tends to evil will sooner be remembered than one of humanity or justice.

[End of Vol. I. The Printed Books]

[Beginning of Volume II. Of The Printed Books]

Providence, Dec. 20, 1793.

"All places that are visited by the eye of Heaven, are to the wise man happy havens." If Shakspeare's philosophy be orthodox, the French have, it must be confessed, many claims to the reputation of a wise people; and though you know I always disputed their pretensions to general gaiety, yet I acknowledge that misfortune does not deprive them of the share they possess, and, if one may judge by appearances, they have at least the habit, more than any other nation, of finding content under situations with which it should seem incompatible. We are here between six and seven hundred, of all ages and of all ranks, taken from our homes, and from all that usually makes the comfort of life, and crowded together under many of the inflictions that constitute its misery; yet,

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in the midst of all this, we fiddle, dress, rhyme, and visit as ceremoniously as though we had nothing to disturb us. Our beaux, after being correctly frizz'd and powdered behind some door, compliment the belle just escaped from a toilet, performed amidst the apparatus of the kitchen; three or four beds are piled one upon another to make room for as many card-tables; and the wits of the prison, who are all the morning employed in writing doleful placets to obtain their liberty, in the evening celebrate the loss of it in bout-rimees and acrostics.

I saw an ass at the *Corps de Garde* this morning laden with violins and music, and a female prisoner seldom arrives without her complement of bandboxes.—Embarrassed, stifled as we are by our numbers, it does not prevent a daily importation of lap-dogs, who form as consequential a part of the community in a prison, as in the most superb hotel. The faithful valet, who has followed the fortunes of his master, does not so much share his distresses as contribute to his pleasure by adorning his person, or, rather, his head, for, excepting the article of hair-dressing, the beaux here are not elaborate. In short, there is an indifference, a frivolity, in the French character, which, in circumstances like the present, appears unaccountable. But man is not always consistent with himself, and there are occasions in which the French are nothing less than philosophers. Under all these externals of levity, they are a very prudent people, and though they seem to bear with infinite fortitude many of the evils of life, there are some in which their sensibility is not to be questioned. At the death of a relation, or the loss of liberty, I have observed that a few hours suffice, *pour prendre son parti*; [To make up his mind.] but on any occasion where his fortune has suffered, the liveliest Frenchman is *au desespoir* for whole days. Whenever any thing is to be lost or gained, all his characteristic indifference vanishes, and his attention becomes mentally concentrated, without dissipating the habitual smile of his countenance. He may sometimes be deceived through deficiency of judgment, but I believe not often by unguardedness; and, in a matter of interest, a *petit maitre* of five-and-twenty might *tout en badinage* [All in the way of pleasantry.] maintain his ground against a whole synagogue.—This disposition is not remarkable only in affairs that may be supposed to require it, but extends to the minutest objects; and the same oeconomy which watches over the mass of a Frenchman's estate, guards with equal solicitude the menu property of a log of wood, or a hen's nest.

There is at this moment a general scarcity of provisions, and we who are confined are, of course, particularly inconvenienced by it; we do not even get bread that is eatable, and it is curious to observe with what circumspection every one talks of his resources. The possessor of a few eggs takes care not to expose them to the eye of his neighbour; and a slice of white bread is a donation of so much consequence, that those who procure any for themselves do not often put their friends to the pain either of accepting or refusing it.

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Mad. de ____ has been unwell for some days, and I could not help giving a hint to a relation of her's whom we found here, and who has frequent supplies of bread from the country, that the bread we eat was peculiarly inimical to her; but I gained only a look of repulsive apprehension, and a cold remark that it was very difficult to get good bread—"*et que c'étoit bien malheureux.*" [And that it certainly was very unfortunate.] I own this kind of selfishness is increased by a situation where our wants are numerous, and our enjoyments few; and the great distinctions of meum and tuum, which at all times have occasioned so much bad fellowship in the world, are here perhaps more rigidly observed than any where else; yet, in my opinion, a close-hearted consideration has always formed an essential and a predominant quality in the French character.

People here do not ruin themselves, as with us, by hospitality; and examples of that thoughtless profusion which we censure and regret, without being able entirely to condemn, are very rare indeed. In France it is not uncommon to see a man apparently dissipated in his conduct, and licentious in his morals, yet regular, even to parsimony, in his pecuniary concerns.—He oeconomizes with his vices, and indulges in all the excesses of fashionable life, with the same system of order that accumulates the fortune of a Dutch miser. Lord Chesterfield was doubtless satisfied, that while his son remained in France, his precepts would have all the benefit of living illustration; yet it is not certain that this cautious and reflecting licentiousness has any merit over the more imprudent irregularity of an English spendthrift: the one is, however, likely to be more durable than the other; and, in fact, the character of an old libertine is more frequent in France than in England.

If oeconomy preside even over the vices of the rich and fashionable, you may conclude that the habits of the middling ranks of people of small fortunes are still more scrupulously subjected to its influence. A French *menage* [Household.] is a practical treatise on the art of saving—a spirit of oeconomy pervades and directs every part of it, and that so uniformly, so generally, and so consistently, as not to make the same impression on a stranger as would a single instance where the whole was not conducted on the same principle. A traveller is not so forcibly stricken by this part of the French character, because it is more real than apparent, and does not seem the effect of reasoning or effort, which is never consequential, but rather that of inclination and the natural course of things.

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A degree of parsimony, which an Englishman, who does not affect the reputation of a Codrus, could not acquire without many self-combats, appears in a Frenchman a matter of preference and convenience, and till one has lived long and familiarly in the country, one is apt to mistake principles for customs, and character for manners, and to attribute many things to local which have their real source in moral causes.—The traveller who sees nothing but gay furniture, and gay clothes, and partakes on invitation of splendid repasts, returns to England the enamoured panegyrist of French hospitality.—On a longer residence and more domestic intercourse, all this is discoverable to be merely the sacrifice of parsimony to vanity—the solid comforts of life are unknown, and hospitality seldom extends beyond an occasional and ostentatious reception. The gilding, painting, glasses, and silk hangings of a French apartment, are only a gay disguise; and a house, which to the eye may be attractive even to splendour, often has not one room that an Englishman would find tolerably convenient. Every thing intended for use rather than shew is scanty and sordid—all is *beau, magnifique, gentil, or superb*, [Fine magnificent, genteel, or superb.] and nothing comfortable. The French have not the word, or its synonyme, in their language.

In France, clothes are almost as durable as furniture, and the gaiety which twenty or thirty years ago we were complaisant enough to admire is far from being expensive. People are not more than five or six hours a day in their gala habits, and the whole of this period is judiciously chosen between the hours of repast, so that no risk is incurred by accidents at table. Then the caprices of fashion, which in England are so various and despotic, have here a more limited influence: the form of a dress changes as long as the material is convertible, and when it has outlasted the possibility of adaptation to a reigning mode, it is not on that account rejected, but is generally worn in some way or other till banished by the more rational motive of its decay. All the expences of tea-visits, breakfast-loungings, and chance-dinners, are avoided—an evening visit is passed entirely at cards, a breakfast in form even for the family is unusual, and there are very few houses where you could dine without being previously engaged. I am, indeed, certain, that (unless in large establishments) the calculation for diurnal supply is so exact, that the intrusion of a stranger would be felt by the whole family. I must, however, do them the justice to say, that on such occasions, and where they find the thing to be inevitable, they put the best face possible on it, and the guest is entertained, if not plentifully, and with a very sincere welcome, at least with smiles and compliments. The French, indeed, allow, that they live less hospitably than the English: but then they say they are not so rich; and it is true, property is not so general,

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nor so much diffused, as with us. This is, however, only relative, and you will not suspect me of being so uncandid as to make comparisons without allowing for every difference which is the effect of necessity. All my remarks of this kind are made after an unprejudiced comparison of the people of the same rank or fortune in the two countries;—yet even the most liberal examination must end by concluding, that the oeconomy of the French too nearly approaches to meanness, and that their civility is ostentatious, perhaps often either interested, or even verbal.

You already exclaim, why, in the year 1793, you are characterizing a nation in the style of Salmon! and implying a panegyric on the moral of the School for Scandal! I plead to the first part of the charge, and shall hereafter defend my opinion against the more polished writers who have succeeded Salmon. For the moral of the School for Scandal, I have always considered it as the seal of humanity on a comedy which would otherwise be perfection.

It is not the oeconomy of the French that I am censuring, but their vanity, which, engrossing all their means of expence, prefers show to accommodation, and the parade of a sumptuous repast three or four times a year to a plainer but more frequent hospitality.—I am far from being the advocate of extravagance, or the enemy of domestic order; and the liberality which is circumscribed only by prudence shall not find in me a censurer.

My ideas on the French character and manner of living may not be unuseful to such of my countrymen as come to France with the project of retrieving their affairs; for it is very necessary they should be informed, that it is not so much the difference in the price of things, which makes a residence here oeconomical, as a conformity to the habits of the country; and if they were not deterred by a false shame from a temporary adoption of the same system in England, their object might often be obtained without leaving it. For this reason it may be remarked, that the English who bring English servants, and persist in their English mode of living, do not often derive very solid advantages from their exile, and their abode in France is rather a retreat from their creditors than the means of paying their debts.

Adieu.—You will not be sorry that I have been able for a moment to forget our personal sufferings, and the miserable politics of the country. The details of the former are not pleasant, and the latter grow every day more inexplicable.