BOOK VIII

PROGRESS CONTAINED IN THE COUP D'ÉTAT

I

THE QUANTUM OF GOOD CONTAINED IN EVIL

Among us democrats, many well-meaning minds were stupefied by the event of the 2nd of December. It disconcerted some, discouraged others, and terrified many. I have seen some who cried: Finis Poloniae. As for myself, since at certain times I am obliged to say, I, and to speak in the face of history as a witness, I proclaim that I saw that event without perturbation. I say more than this, that at times, in the face of the 2nd of December, I declare myself satisfied.

When I can abstract myself from the present, when for a moment I can turn my eyes away from all the crimes, from all the blood spilt, from all the victims, from all the proscribed, from those hulks that echo the death rattle, from those deadful penal settlements of Lambessa and Cayenne, where death is swift, from that exile where death is slow, from this vote, from this oath, from this vast stain of shame inflicted

upon France, which is growing wider and wider each day; when, forgetting for a few moments these painful thoughts, the usual obsession of my mind, I succeed in confining myself within the severe calmness of the politician, and in considering, not the fact, but the consequences of the fact; then, among many results, disastrous beyond doubt, a considerable, real, enormous progress becomes manifest to me, and, from that moment, while I am still of those whom the 2nd of December exasperates, I am no longer of those whom it afflicts.

Fixing my eyes upon certain points in the future, I say to myself: "The deed was infamous, but the result is good."

Attempts have been made to explain the inexplicable victory of the coup d'état in a hundred ways. A true balance has been struck between all possible resistances, and they are neutralized one by the other: the people were afraid of the bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie were afraid of the people;--the faubourgs hesitated before the restoration of the majority, fearing, wrongfully however, that their victory would bring back to power that Right which is so thoroughly unpopular; the shopocracy recoiled before the red republic; the people did not understand; the middle classes shuffled; some said, "Whom shall we send to the legislative palace?" others: "whom are we going to see at the Hotel de Ville?" In fine, the rude repression of 1848, the insurrection crushed by cannon-shot, the quarries, the casements, and the transportations--a living and terrible recollection;--and then--Suppose some one had succeeded in beating the call to arms! Suppose a single

legion had sallied forth! Suppose M. Sibour had been M. Affre, and had thrown himself in the midst of the bullets of the pretorians! Suppose the High Court had not suffered itself to be driven away by a corporal! Suppose the judges had followed the example of the representatives, and we had seen the scarlet gowns on the barricades, as we saw the scarfs! Suppose a single arrest had miscarried! Suppose a single regiment had hesitated! Suppose the massacre on the boulevards had not taken place, or had turned out ill for Louis Bonaparte! etc., etc., etc. This is all true, and yet what has been, was what was to be. Let us say again, under the shadow of that monstrous victory vast and definitive progress is taking place. The 2nd of December succeeded, because in more than one point of view, I repeat, it was good that it should succeed. All explanations are just, but all are vain. The invisible hand is mingled in all this. Louis Bonaparte committed the crime; Providence brought about the result.

In truth, it was essential that order should come to the end of its logic. It was essential that people should learn, and should learn for all time, that, in the mouths of the men of the past, that word order signifies false oaths, perjury, pillage of the public cash-box, civil war, courts-martial, confiscation, sequestration, deportation, transportation, proscription, fusillades, police, censorship, degradation of the army, disregard of the people, debasement of France, a dumb Senate, the tribune overthrown, the press suppressed, a political guillotine, murder of liberty, garroting of the right, violation of laws, sovereignty of the sword, massacre, treason, ambuscades. The

spectacle that we have before our eyes is a profitable spectacle. What we see in France since the 2nd of December is the debauch of order.

Yes, the hand of Providence is in it. Reflect, too, upon this: for fifty years the Republic and the Empire have filled men's imaginations, the one with its souvenirs of terror, the other with its souvenirs of glory. Of the Republic men saw only 1793, that is to say, the terrible revolutionary necessity,--the furnace; of the Empire they saw only Austerlitz. Hence a prejudice against the Republic, and prestige for the Empire. Now, what is the future of France to be? is it the Empire? No, it is the Republic.

It became necessary to reverse that situation, to suppress the prestige of that which cannot be restored, and to suppress the prejudice against that which must be. Providence did it: it destroyed those two mirages. February came and took away from the Republic its terror; Louis Bonaparte came and deprived the Empire of its prestige. Henceforth, 1848, fraternity, is superimposed upon 1793, terror; Napoleon the Little is superimposed upon Napoleon the Great. The two grand things, one of which alarmed and the other dazzled, are receding. We perceive '93 only through its justification, and Napoleon only through his caricature; the foolish fear of the guillotine vanishes, the empty imperial popularity disappears. Thanks to 1848, the Republic no longer terrifies; thanks to Louis Bonaparte, the Empire no longer fascinates. The future has become possible. These are the secrets of the Almighty!

But the word republic is not sufficient; it is the thing republic that is wanting; well, we shall have the thing with the word. Let us develop this thought.

II

THE FOUR INSTITUTIONS THAT STAND OPPOSED TO THE REPUBLIC

Awaiting the marvellous but tardy simplifications which the union of Europe and the democratic federation of the continent will some day bring forth, what will be in France, the form of the social edifice, of whose ill-defined and luminous outlines the thinking man already has a glimpse, through the darkness of dictatorships?

That form is this:--

The sovereign commune, ruled by an elective mayor; universal suffrage everywhere, subordinate to the national unity only in respect to acts of general concern; so much for the administration. Syndics and upright men arranging the private differences of associations and industries; the jury, magistrate of the fact, enlightening the judge, magistrate of the law; elective judges; so much for justice. The priest excluded from everything except the church, living with his eye fixed on his book and on Heaven, a stranger to the budget, unknown to the state, known only to his flock, no longer possessing authority, but possessing liberty;

so much for religion. War confined to the defence of the territory. The whole nation constituting a national guard, divided into three districts, and able to rise as one man; so much for power. The law for ever, the right for ever, the ballot for ever, the sword nowhere.

Now, what were the obstacles to this future, to this magnificent realization of the democratic ideal?

There were four material obstacles, namely:--

The standing army.
Centralized administration.
The office-holding clergy.
The irremovable magistracy.

III

SLOW MOVEMENT OF NORMAL PROGRESS

What these four obstacles are, what they were even under the Republic of February, even under the Constitution of 1848; the evil they produced, the good they prevented, what sort of past they perpetuated, what excellent social order they postponed, the publicist saw, the philosopher knew, the nation did not know.

These four institutions, immense, ancient, solid, supported one upon another, composite at their base and summit, growing like a hedge of tall old trees, their roots under our feet, their branches over our heads, smothered and crushed on all sides the scattered germs of the new France. Where life and movement, association, local liberty, communal initiative should have been, there was administrative despotism; where there should have been the intelligent vigilance, armed at need, of the patriot and the citizen, there was the passive obedience of the soldier; where the quick Christian faith should have gushed forth, there was the Catholic priest; where there should have been justice, there was the judge. And the future was there, under the feet of suffering generations, which could not rise and were waiting.

Was this known among the people? Was it suspected? Was it divined?

No!

Far from it. In the eyes of the greater part, and of the middle classes in particular, these four obstacles were four buttresses. Army, magistracy, administration, clergy, these were the four virtues of order, the four social powers, the four sacred pillars of the old French structure.

Attack that, if you dare!

I have no hesitation is saying, that in the state of blindness in which are plunged the best minds, with the measured march of normal progress, with our assemblies, of which I shall not be suspected to be the detractor, but which, when they are both honest and timid, as is often the case, are disposed to be led only by their average men, that is, by mediocrity; with the committees of initiative, their delays and ballottings, if the 2nd of December had not brought its overwhelming demonstration, if Providence had not taken a hand, France would have remained condemned for an indefinite term to its irremovable magistracy, to administrative centralization, to the standing army, and to the office-holding clergy.

Surely, the power of the tribune and of the press combined, these two great forces of civilization,--it is not I who seek to deny or belittle them; but see how many efforts of all kinds it would have required, in every direction, and under every form, by the tribune and by the

newspaper, by the book and by the spoken word, to succeed even in shaking the universal prejudice in favor of these four fatal institutions! How many to succeed in overthrowing them! to exhibit the evidence to the eyes of all, to overcome selfish, passionate or unintelligent resistance, thoroughly to enlighten public opinion, the consciences of the people, and the ruling powers, to cause this fourfold reform to force its way first into ideas, then into the laws. Reckon up the speeches, the writings, the newspaper articles, the projects of laws, the counter-projects, the amendments, the amendments to amendments, the reports, the counter-reports, the facts, the incidents, the polemics, the discussions, the assertions, the denials, the storms, the steps forward, the steps backward, the days, the weeks, the months, the years, the quarter-century, the half-century!

IV

WHAT AN ASSEMBLY WOULD HAVE DONE

I imagine, on the benches of an assembly, the most intrepid of thinkers, a brilliant mind, one of those men who, when they ascend the tribune, feel it beneath them like the tripod of the oracle, suddenly grow in stature and become colossal, surpass by a head the massive appearances that mask reality, and see clearly the future over the high, frowning wall of the present. That man, that orator, that seer, seeks to warn his country; that prophet seeks to enlighten statesmen; he knows where the breakers are; he knows that society will crumble by means of these four false supports: centralized government, standing army, irremovable judges, salaried priesthood; he knows it, he desires that all should know it, he ascends the tribune and says:--

"I denounce to you four great public perils. Your political system bears that within it that will destroy it. It is incumbent upon you to transform your government root and branch, the army, the clergy, and the magistracy: to suppress here, retrench there, remodel everything, or perish through these four institutions, which you consider as lasting elements, but which are elements of dissolution."

Murmurs. He exclaims: "Do you know what your centralized administration may become in the hands of a perjured executive power? A vast treason,

carried into effect at one blow over the whole of France, by every office-holder without exception."

Murmurs break out anew with redoubled violence; cries of "order!" The orator continues: "Do you know what your standing army may become at any moment? An instrument of crime. Passive obedience is the bayonet ever pointed at the heart of the law. Yes, here, in this France, which is the initiatress of the world, in this land of the tribune and the press, in this birthplace of human thought, yes, the time may come when the sword will rule, when you, inviolable legislators, will be collared by corporals, when our glorious regiments will transform themselves, for the profit of one man and to the shame of the nation, into gold-laced hordes and pretorian bands, when the sword of France will become a thing that strikes from behind, like the dagger of a hired assassin, when the life-blood of the first city in the world, done to death, will splash the gold epaulettes of your generals!"

The murmur becomes an uproar, cries of "Order!" are heard from all quarters. The orator is interrupted: "You have been insulting the government, now you insult the army!" The President calls the orator to order.

The orator resumes:

"And if it should happen some day that a man, having in his hand the five hundred thousand officeholders who constitute the government, and

the four hundred thousand soldiers composing the army, if it should happen that this man should tear up the Constitution, should violate every law, break every oath, trample upon every right, commit every crime, do you know what your irremovable magistrates, instructors in the right, and guardians of the law, would do? They would hold their tongues."

The uproar prevents the orator from completing his sentence. The tumult becomes a tempest.--"This man respects nothing. After the government and the army, he drags the magistracy in the mire! Censure! censure!" The orator is censured and the censure entered in the journal. The President declares that, if he continues, the Assembly will proceed to a vote, and the floor will be taken from him.

The orator continues: "And your paid clergy! and your office-holding bishops! On the day when a pretender shall have employed in such enterprises the government, the magistracy, and the army; on the day when all these institutions shall drip with the blood shed by and for the traitor; when, placed between the man who has committed the crimes and God who orders an anathema to be launched against the criminal--do you know what these bishops of yours will do? They will prostrate themselves, not before God, but before man!"

Can you form any idea of the frenzied shouts and imprecations that would greet such words? Can you imagine the shouts, the apostrophes, the threats, the whole Assembly rising en masse, the tribune

escaladed and with difficulty guarded by the ushers! The orator has profaned every sanctified ark in succession, and he has ended by profaning the Holy of Holies, the clergy! And what does he mean by it all? What a medley of impossible and infamous hypotheses! Do you not hear Baroche growl, and Dupin thunder? The orator would be called to order, censured, fined, suspended from the Chamber for three days, like Pierre Leroux and Émile de Girardin; who can tell, perhaps expelled, like Manuel.

And the next day, the indignant citizen would say: "That is well done!" And from every quarter the journals devoted to order would shake their fist at the CALUMNIATOR. And in his own party, on his usual bench in the Assembly, his best friends would forsake him, and say: "It is his own fault; he has gone too far; he has imagined chimeras and absurdities."

And after this generous and heroic effort, it would be found that the four institutions that have been attacked were more venerable and impeccable than ever, and that the question, instead of advancing, had receded.

V

WHAT PROVIDENCE HAS DONE

But Providence,--Providence goes about it differently. It places the thing luminously before your eyes, and says, "Behold!"

A man arrives some fine morning,--and such a man! The first comer, the last comer, without past, without future, without genius, without renown, without prestige. Is he an adventurer? Is he a prince? This man has his hands full of money, of bank-notes, of railroad shares, of offices, of decorations, of sinecures; this man stoops down to the office-holders, and says, "Office-holders, betray your trust!"

The office-holders betray their trust.

What, all? without one exception?

Yes, all!

He turns to the generals, and says: "Generals, massacre."

And the generals massacre.

He turns towards the irremovable judges, and says: "Magistrates, I

shatter the Constitution, I commit perjury, I dissolve the sovereign Assembly, I arrest the inviolate members, I plunder the public treasury, I sequester, I confiscate, I banish those who displease me, I transport people according to my fancy, I shoot down without summons to surrender, I execute without trial, I commit all that men are agreed in calling crime, I outrage all that men are agreed in calling right; behold the laws--they are under my feet."

"We will pretend not to see any thing," say the magistrates.

"You are insolent," replies the providential man. "To turn your eyes away is to insult me. I propose that you shall assist me. Judges, you are going to congratulate me to-day, me who am force and crime; and to-morrow, those who have resisted me, those who are honor, right, and law, them you will try,--and you will condemn them."

These irremovable judges kiss his boot, and set about investigating l'affaire des troubles.

They swear fidelity to him, to boot.

Then he perceives, in a corner, the clergy, endowed, gold-laced, with cross and cope and mitre, and he says:--

"Ah, you are there, Archbishop! Come here. Just bless all this for me."

And the Archbishop chants his Magnificat.

VI

WHAT THE MINISTERS, ARMY, MAGISTRACY, AND CLERGY HAVE DONE

Oh! what a striking thing and how instructive! "Erudimini," Bossuet would say.

The Ministers fancied that they were dissolving the Assembly; they dissolved the government.

The soldiers fired on the army and killed it.

The judges fancied that they were trying and convicting innocent persons; they tried and convicted the irremovable magistracy.

The priests thought they were chanting hosannahs upon Louis Bonaparte; they chanted a De profundis upon the clergy.

VII

THE FORM OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD

When God desires to destroy a thing, he entrusts its destruction to the thing itself.

Every bad institution of this world ends by suicide.

When they have weighed sufficiently long upon men, Providence, like the sultan to his viziers, sends them the bowstring by a mute, and they execute themselves.

Louis Bonaparte is the mute of Providence.

CONCLUSION--PART FIRST

PETTINESS OF THE MASTER--ABJECTNESS OF THE SITUATION

I

Never fear, History has him in its grip.

If perchance it flatters the self-love of M. Bonaparte to be seized by history, if perchance, and truly one would imagine so, he cherishes any illusion as to his value as a political miscreant, let him divest himself of it.

Let him not imagine, because he has piled up horror on horror, that he will ever raise himself to the elevation of the great historical bandits. We have been wrong, perhaps, in some pages of this book, here and there, to couple him with those men. No, although he has committed enormous crimes, he will remain paltry. He will never be other than the nocturnal strangler of liberty; he will never be other than the man who intoxicated his soldiers, not with glory, like the first Napoleon, but with wine; he will never be other than the pygmy tyrant of a great people. Grandeur, even in infamy, is utterly inconsistent with the

calibre of the man. As dictator, he is a buffoon; let him make himself emperor, he will be grotesque. That will finish him. His destiny is to make mankind shrug their shoulders. Will he be less severely punished for that reason? Not at all. Contempt does not, in his case, mitigate anger; he will be hideous, and he will remain ridiculous. That is all. History laughs and crushes.

Even the most indignant chroniclers will not help him there. Great thinkers take satisfaction in castigating the great despots, and, in some instances, even exalt them somewhat, in order to make them worthy of their rage; but what would you have the historian do with this fellow?

The historian can only lead him to posterity by the ear.

The man once stripped of success, the pedestal removed, the dust fallen, the tinsel and spangles and the great sabre taken away, the poor little skeleton laid bare and shivering,--can one imagine anything meaner and more pitiful?

History has its tigers. The historians, immortal keepers of wild beasts, exhibit this imperial menagerie to the nations. Tacitus alone, that great showman, captured and confined eight or ten of these tigers in the iron cage of his style. Look at them: they are terrifying and superb; their spots are an element in their beauty. This is Nimrod, the hunter of men; this, Busiris, the tyrant of Egypt; this, Phalaris, who

baked living men in a brazen bull, to make the bull roar; this, Ahasuerus, who flayed the heads of the seven Maccabees, and had them roasted alive; this, Nero, the burner of Rome, who smeared Christians with wax and pitch, and then set them alight as torches; this, Tiberius, the man of Capræa; this, Domitian; this, Caracalla; this, Heliogabalus; that other is Commodus, who possesses an additional claim to our respect in the horrible fact that he was the son of Marcus Aurelius; these are Czars; these, Sultans; these, Popes, among whom remark the tiger Borgia; here is Philip, called the Good, as the Furies were called the Eumenides; here is Richard III, sinister and deformed; here, with his broad face and his great paunch, Henry VIII, who, of five wives that he had, killed three, one of whom he disemboweled; here is Christiern II, the Nero of the North; here Philip II, the Demon of the South. They are terrifying: hear them roar, consider them, one after the other; the historian brings them to you; the historian drags them, raging and terrible, to the side of the cage, opens their jaws for you, shows you their teeth and their claws; you can say of every one of them: "That is a royal tiger." In fact, they are taken from all the thrones of the earth. History parades them through the ages. She prevents them from dying; she takes care of them. They are her tigers.

She does not mingle jackals with them.

She puts and keeps apart the disgusting beasts. M. Bonaparte will be with Claudius, with Ferdinand VII of Spain, with Ferdinand II of Naples, in the hyena cage.

He is a bit of a brigand, and a great deal of a knave. One is always conscious of the poor prince of industry, who lived from hand to mouth in England; his present prosperity, his triumph, his empire, and his inflation amount to nothing; the purple mantle trails over shoes down at heel. Napoleon the Little, nothing more, nothing less. The title of this book is well chosen.

The meanness of his vices prejudices the grandeur of his crimes. What would you have? Peter the Cruel massacred, but he did not steal; Henry III assassinated, but he did not swindle; Timour crushed children under horses' hoofs, much as M. Bonaparte exterminated women and old men on the boulevard, but he did not lie. Hear the Arabian historian: "Timour-Beg, Sahib-Keran (master of the world and of the age, master of the planetary conjunctions), was born at Kesch, in 1336; he slaughtered a hundred thousand captives; as he was besieging Siwas, the inhabitants, to mollify him, sent him a thousand little children, bearing each a Koran on its head, and crying, 'Allah! Allah!' He caused the sacred books to be removed with respect, and the children to be crushed beneath the hoofs of wild horses. He used seventy thousand human heads, with cement, stone, and brick, in building towers at Herat, Sebzvar, Tekrit, Aleppo, and Bagdad; he detested lying; when he had given his word, men could rely upon it."

M. Bonaparte is not of this stature. He has not that dignity which the great despots of the East and of the West mingle with ferocity. The

amplitude of the Cæsars is wanting in him. To bear one's self worthily and make a fair appearance among all the illustrious executioners who have tortured mankind in the course of four thousand years, one must not have any mental hesitation between a general of division and a bass-drummer on the Champs-Elysées; one must not have been a constable in London; one must not have undergone, with lowered eyes, in the Court of Peers, the haughty scorn of M. Magnan; one must not have been called "pickpocket" by the English newspapers; one must not have been menaced with Clichy; in a word, there must have been nothing of the sneak in the man.

Monsieur Louis Napoleon, you are ambitious, you aim high, but you must have the truth told you. Well, what would you have us do in the matter? In vain have you, by overturning the tribune of France, realized, after your fashion, the wish of Caligula: "I would that mankind had but one head, so that I might cut it off with a blow;" in vain have you banished the republicans by thousands, as Philip III expelled the Moors, and as Torquemada drove out the Jews; in vain have you dungeons like Peter the Cruel, hulks like Hariadan, dragonnades like Père Letellier, and oubliettes like Ezzelino III; in vain have you perjured yourself like Ludovic Sforza; in vain have you massacred and assassinated en masse like Charles IX; in vain have you done all this, in vain have you recalled all these names to men's minds when they think of your name,--you are nothing but a rogue. A man is not a monster for the wishing.

II

From every agglomeration of men, from every city, from every nation, there inevitably arises a collective force.

Place this collective force at the service of liberty, let it rule by universal suffrage, the city becomes a commune, the nation becomes a republic.

This collective force is not, of its nature, intelligent. Belonging to all, it belongs to no one; it floats about, so to speak, outside of the people.

Until the day comes when, according to the true social formula,--as little government as possible,--this force may be reduced to a mere street and road police, paving the streets, lighting the lamps, and looking after malefactors; until that day comes, this collective force, being at the mercy of many chances and many ambitions, needs to be guarded and protected by jealous, clear-sighted, well-armed institutions.

It may be subjugated by tradition, it may be surprised by stratagem.

A man may rush upon it, seize it, bridle it, quell it, and cause it to trample upon the citizens.

The tyrant is the man, who, born of tradition, like Nicholas of Russia, or of stratagem, like Louis Bonaparte, seizes for his own profit, and according to his caprice disposes of the collective force of a people.

This man, if he be by birth what Nicholas is, is the enemy of society; if he have done what Louis Bonaparte has done, he is a public robber.

The former has no account to settle with regular legal justice, with the articles of codes. He has behind him, spying upon and watching him, hatred in their hearts, and vengeance in their hands, Orloff in his palace, and Mouravieff among the people; he may be assassinated by one of his army, or poisoned by one of his family; he runs the risk of barrack conspiracies, of revolts of regiments, of secret military societies, of domestic plots, of sudden, mysterious maladies, of terrible blows, of great catastrophes. The other ought simply to go to Poissy.

The former has the wherewithal to die in the purple, and to end his life with pomp and royally, as monarchs end and tragedies. The other must live; live between four walls behind bars, through which the people can look at him, sweeping courtyards, making horse-hair brushes or list shoes, emptying buckets, with a green cap on his head, wooden

shoes on his feet, and straw in his shoes.

Ah! ye leaders of the old parties, ye men of absolutism, in France you voted en masse among 7,500,000; outside of France you applauded, taking this Cartouche for the hero of order. He is ferocious enough for it, I admit; but look at his size. Don't be ungrateful to your real colossi; you have cashiered your Haynaus and your Radetzkys too precipitately. Above all, weigh this comparison, which so naturally presents itself to the mind. What is this Mandrin of Lilliput beside Nicholas, Czar, Emperor, and Pope, a power half-Bible, half-knout, who damns and condemns, drills eight hundred thousand soldiers and two hundred thousand priests, holds in his right hand the keys of paradise, and in his left hand the keys of Siberia, and possesses, as his chattel, sixty millions of men--their souls as if he were God, their bodies as if he were the tomb!

III

If there should not be ere long a sudden, imposing, and overwhelming catastrophe, if the present situation of the nation should be prolonged and endure, the grand injury, the fearful injury, would be the moral injury.

The boulevards of Paris, the streets of Paris, the rural districts and the towns of twenty departments of France, were strewn on the 2nd of December with dead and dying citizens; there were seen, before their thresholds, fathers and mothers slaughtered, children sabred, dishevelled women in pools of blood, disemboweled by grape-shot; there were seen, in the houses, suppliants massacred, some shot in heaps in their cellars, others despatched by the bayonet under their beds, others struck down by a bullet on their own hearths. The impress of bloodstained hands of all sizes may be seen at this moment, here on a wall, there on a door, there in a recess; for three days after the victory of Louis Bonaparte, Paris walked in ruddy mire; a cap full of human brains was hung on a tree on Boulevard des Italiens. I, who write these lines, saw, among other victims, on the night of the 4th, near the Mauconseil barricade, an aged white-haired man, stretched on the pavement, his bosom pierced with a bayonet, his collar-bone broken; the gutter that ran beneath him bore away his blood. I saw, I touched with my hands, I helped to undress, a poor child seven years old, killed, they told me, on Rue Tiquetonne; he was pale, his head rolled from one

shoulder to the other while they were taking off his clothes; his half-closed eyes were fixed and staring, and as I leaned over his half-opened mouth, it seemed that I could still hear him murmur faintly, "Mother!"

Well, there is something more heart-rending than murdered child, more lamentable than that old man shot dead, more horrible than that cap full of human brains, more frightful than those pavements red with carnage, more irreparable than those men and women, those fathers and those mothers, stabbed and murdered,--it is the vanishing honour of a great people!

Assuredly those pyramids of dead bodies which one saw in the cemeteries, after the wagons from the Champ-de-Mars had emptied their contents; those immense open trenches, which they filled in the morning with human bodies, making speed because of the increasing light of day,--all this was frightful; but what is still more frightful is to think that, at this hour, the nations are in doubt; and that in their eyes France, that great moral splendour, has disappeared!

That which is more heart-rending than skulls cleft by the sword, than breasts riddled by bullets, more disastrous than houses pillaged, than murder filling the streets, than blood shed in rivers, is to think that now, among all the peoples of the earth, men are saying to one another: "Do you know that that nation of nations, that people of the 14th of July, that people of the 10th of August, that people of 1830, that

people of 1848, that race of giants which razed bastiles, that race of men whose faces cast a bright light, that fatherland of the human race which produced heroes and thinkers, those heroes who made all the revolutions and gave birth to all births, that France whose name meant liberty, that soul of the world, so to say, which shone resplendent in Europe, that light.... Well! some one has stepped upon it, and put it out. There is no longer a France. It is at an end. Look! everywhere darkness. The world is feeling its way."

Ah! it was so grand. Where are those times, those glorious times, interspersed with storms, but glorious, when all was life, when all was liberty, when all was glory? those times when the French people, awake before all others, and up before the light, their brows illumined by the dawn of the future already risen for them, said to the other nations, still drowsy and overborne, and scarcely able to shake their chains in their sleep: "Fear naught, I work for all, I dig the earth for all,--I am the workman of the Almighty!"

What profound grief! Regard that torpor where formerly there was such power! that shame, where formerly there was such pride! that noble people, whose heads were once held erect and are now lowered!

Alas! Louis Bonaparte has done more than kill persons, he has caused men's minds to dwindle, he has withered the heart of the citizen. One must belong to the race of the invincible and the indomitable, to persevere now in the rugged path of renunciation and of duty. An

indescribable gangrene of material prosperity threatens to cause public honesty to degenerate into rottenness. Oh! what happiness to be banished, to be disgraced, to be ruined,--is it not, brave workmen? Is it not, worthy peasants, driven from France, who have no roof to shelter you, and no shoes to your feet? What happiness to eat black bread, to lie on a mattress thrown on the ground, to be out at elbows, to be away from all this, and to those who say to you: "You are French!" to answer, "I am proscribed!"

What a pitiful thing is this delight of self-interest and cupidity, wallowing in the slough of the 2nd of December! Faith! let us live, let us go into business, let us speculate in zinc and railway shares, let us make money; it is degrading but it is an excellent thing; a scruple less, a louis more; let us sell our whole soul at that rate. One runs to and fro, one rushes about, one cools his heels in anterooms, one drinks deep of every kind of shame, and if one cannot get a concession of railways in France or of lands in Africa, one asks for an office. A host of intrepid devotions besiege the Elysée, and collect about the man. Junot, beside the first Bonaparte, defied the splashing of shells, these fellows beside the second, defy the splashing of mud. What care they about sharing his ignominy, provided they share his fortune? The competition is to see who shall carry on this traffic in himself most cynically; and among these creatures there are young men with pure limpid eyes, and all the appearance of generous youth; and there are old men, who have but one fear, which is, that the office solicited may not reach them in time, and that they may not succeed in dishonouring

themselves before they die. One would sell himself for a prefecture, another for a collectorship, another for a consulate; one wants a tobacco license, another an embassy. All want money, some more, some less; for it is of the salary they think, not of the duties. Every one has his hand out. All offer themselves. One of these days we shall have to appoint an assayer of consciences at the Mint.

What! this is what we have come to! What! those very men who supported the coup d'état, those very men who recoiled from the red croquemitaine and the twaddle about Jacquerie in 1852; those very men to whom that crime seemed a good thing, because, according to them, it rescued from peril their consols, their ledgers, their money-boxes, their bill-books,--even they do not comprehend that material interest, surviving alone, would, after all, be only a melancholy waif in an immense moral shipwreck, and that it is a fearful and monstrous situation, when men say: "All is saved, save honour!"

The words independence, enfranchisement, progress, popular pride, national pride, French greatness, may no longer be pronounced in France. Hush! these words make too much noise; let us walk on tiptoe, and speak low; we are in a sick man's chamber.

Who is this man?--He is the chief, the master. Every one obeys him.--Ah! every one respects him, then?--No, every one despises him.--Oh! what a plight!

And military honour, where is it? Let us say no more, if you please, of what the army did in December, but of what it is undergoing at this moment, of that which is at its head, of that which is on its head. Do you think of that? Does it think of that? O army of the republic! army that had for captains, generals paid with four francs a day; army that had for leaders, Carnot, austerity, Marceau, unselfishness, Hoche, honour, Kléber, devotion, Joubert, probity, Desaix, valour, Bonaparte, genius! O, French army, poor, unfortunate, heroic army, gone astray in the train of these men! What will they do with it? whither will they lead it? how will they occupy it? what parodies are we destined to see and hear? Alas! what are these men who command our regiments, and who govern us? The master--we know him. This fellow, who had been a minister, was going to be "seized" on the 3rd of December; it was for that reason he made the 2nd. That other is the "borrower" of the twenty-five millions from the Bank. That other is the man of the gold ingots. To that other, before he was made minister, "a friend" said:--"I say! you are humbugging us about the shares in that affair; that won't go down with me. If there's any swindling going on, let me at least have a finger in it." That other, who wears epaulettes, has just been convicted of selling mortgaged property; that other, who also wears epaulettes, received, on the morning of the 2nd of December, 100,000 francs, for "emergencies." He was only a colonel; if he had been a general he would have had more. This man, who is a general, when he was a body-guard of Louis XVIII, being on duty behind the king's chair during mass, cut a gold tassel from the throne and put it in his pocket; he was expelled from the guards for that. Surely, to these men,

also, we might rear a column, ex aere capto, with the money they stole. This other, who is a general of division, "converted" 52,000 francs, to the knowledge of Colonel Caharras, in the construction of the villages of Saint André and Saint Hippolyte, near Mascara. This one, who is general-in-chief, was christened at Ghent, where he is known, le général Cinq-cents-francs. This one, who is Minister of War, has only General Rulhière's clemency to thank that he was not sent before a court-martial. Such are the men. No matter; forward! beat, drums, sound, trumpets, wave, flags! Soldiers, from the top of yon pyramids the forty thieves look down upon you!

Let us go farther into this mournful subject, and survey it in all its aspects.

The mere spectacle of fortune like that of M. Bonaparte, placed at the head of the state, would suffice to demoralize a people.

There is always, and it is the fault of our social institutions, that ought, above all, to enlighten and civilize, there is always, in a large population like that of France, a class which is ignorant, which suffers, covets, and struggles, placed between the brutish instinct which impels it to take, and the moral law which invites it to labour. In the grievous and oppressed condition in which it still is, this class, in order to maintain itself in probity and well-doing, requires all the pure and holy light that emanates from the Gospel; it requires that, on the one hand, the spirit of Jesus Christ, and, on the other,

the spirit of the French Revolution, should address to it the same manly words, and should never cease to point out to it, as the only lights worthy of the eyes of man, the exalted and mysterious laws of human destiny,--self-denial, devotion, sacrifice, the labour which leads to material well-being, the probity which leads to inward well-being; even with this perennial instruction, at once divine and human, this class, so worthy of sympathy and fraternity, often succumbs. Suffering and temptation are stronger than virtue. Now do you comprehend the infamous counsel which the success of M. Bonaparte gives to this class?

A poor man, in rags, without money, without work, is there in the shadow, at the corner of the street, seated on a stone; he is meditating, and at the same time repelling, a bad action; now he wavers, now he recovers himself; he is starving, and feels a desire to rob; to rob he must make a false key, he must scale a wall; then, the key made and the wall scaled, he will stand before the strong box; if any one wakes, if any one resists, he must kill. His hair stands on end, his eyes become haggard, his conscience, the voice of God, revolts within him, and cries to him: "Stop! this is evil! these are crimes!" At that moment the head of the state passes by; the man sees M. Bonaparte in his uniform of a general, with the cordon rouge, and with footmen in gold-laced liveries, dashing towards his palace in a carriage drawn by four horses; the unhappy wretch, hesitating before his crime, greedily gazes on this splendid vision; and the serenity of M. Bonaparte, and his gold epaulettes, and his cordon rouge, and

the liveries, and the palace, and the four-horse carriage, say to him: "Succeed."

He attaches himself to this apparition, he follows it, he runs to the Élysée; a gilded mob rushes in after the prince. All sorts of carriages pass under that portal, and he has glimpses of happy, radiant men! This one is an ambassador; the ambassador looks at him, and says: "Succeed." This is a bishop; the bishop looks at him and says: "Succeed." This is a judge; the judge looks at him, and smiles on him, and says: "Succeed."

Thus, to escape the gendarmes,--therein consists henceforth the whole moral law. To rob, to pillage, to poignard, to assassinate, all this is criminal only when one is fool enough to allow himself to be caught. Every man who meditates a crime has a constitution to violate, an oath to break, an obstacle to destroy. In a word, take your measures well. Be adroit. Succeed. The only guilty actions are the coups that fail.

You put your hand in the pocket of a passer-by, in the evening, at nightfall, in a lonely place; he seizes you; you let go; he arrests you, and takes you to the guard-house. You are guilty; to the galleys! You do not let go: you have a knife about you, you bury it in the man's throat; he falls; he is dead; now take his purse, and make off. Bravo! capitally done! You have shut the victim's mouth, the only witness who could speak. Nobody has anything to say to you.

If you had only robbed the man, you would have been in the wrong; kill him, and you are right.

Succeed, that is the point.

Ah! this is indeed alarming!

On the day when the human conscience shall lose its bearings, on the day when success shall carry the day before that forum, all will be at an end. The last moral gleam will reascend to heaven. Darkness will be in the mind of man. You will have nothing to do but to devour one another, wild beasts that you are!

With moral degradation goes political degradation. M. Bonaparte treats the people of France like a conquered country. He effaces the republican inscriptions; he cut down the trees of liberty, and makes firewood of them. There was on Place Bourgogne a statue of the Republic; he puts the pickaxe to it; there was on our coinage a figure of the Republic, crowned with ears of corn; M. Bonaparte replaces it by the profile of M. Bonaparte. He has his bust crowned and harangued in the market-places, just as the tyrant Gessler made the people salute his cap. The rustics in the faubourgs were in the habit of singing in chorus, in the evening, as they returned from work; they used to sing the great republican songs, the Marseillaise, the Chant du Depart; they were ordered to keep silent; the faubourgers will sing no more; there is amnesty only for obscenities and drunken songs. The triumph is so

complete, that they no longer keep within bounds. Only yesterday they kept in hiding, they did their shooting at night; it was shocking, but there was still some shame; there was a remnant of respect for the people; they seemed to think that it had still enough life in it to revolt, if it saw such things. Now they show themselves, they fear nothing, they guillotine in broad day. Whom do they guillotine? Whom? the men of the law, and the law is there! Whom? the men of the people! and the people is there! Nor is this all. There is a man in Europe, who horrifies Europe: that man sacked Lombardy, he set up the gibbets of Hungary; he had a woman whipped under the gibbet upon which hung her husband and her son; we still remember the terrible letter in which that woman recounts the deed, and says: "My heart has turned to stone."

Last year this man took it into his head to visit England as a tourist, and, while in London, he took it into his head to visit a brewery, that of Barclay and Perkins. There he was recognized; a voice whispered: "It is Haynau!"--"It is Haynau!" repeated the workmen!--It was a fearful cry; the crowd rushed upon the wretch, tore out his infamous white hair by handfuls, spat in his face, and thrust him out. Well, this old bandit in epaulettes, this Haynau, this man who still bears on his cheek the immense buffet of the English people, it is announced that "Monseigneur the Prince-President invites him to visit France." It is quite right; London put an affront on him, Paris owes him an ovation. It is a reparation. Be it so. We will be there to see. Haynau was cursed and hooted at the brewery of Barclay and Perkins, he will receive bouquets at the brewery of Saint-Antoine. The Faubourg

Saint-Antoine will receive an order to conduct itself properly. The Faubourg Saint-Antoine, mute, motionless, impassive, will see them pass, triumphant and conversing together, like two friends, through its old revolutionary streets, one in French, the other in Austrian uniform,--Louis Bonaparte, the murderer of the boulevard, arm-in-arm with Haynau, the whipper of women! Go on, add insult to insult, disfigure this France of ours, fallen flat on the pavement! make her unrecognizable! crush the faces of the people with your heels!

Oh! inspire me, seek for me, give me, invent for me a means, whatever it may be, short of a poignard, which I repudiate,--a Brutus for that man! bah! he is not worthy of even a Louvel!--find me some means of laying that man low, and of delivering my country! of laying that man low, that man of craft, that man of lies, that man of success, that man of evil! Some means, the first that offers,--pen, sword, paving-stone, émeute,--by the people, by the soldier; yes, whatever it be, so it be honourable, and in open day, I take it, we all take it, we proscribed, if it can re-establish liberty, set free the republic, deliver our country from shame, and drive back to his dust, to his oblivion, to his cloaca, this imperial ruffian, this prince pick-pocket, this gypsy king, this traitor, this master, this groom of Franconi's! this radiant, imperturbable, self-satisfied governor, crowned with his successful crime, who goes and comes, and peacefully parades trembling Paris, and who has everything on his side,--the Bourse, the shopkeepers, the magistracy, all influences, all guarantees, all invocations, from the Nom de Dieu of the soldier to the Te Deum of

the priest!

Really, when one has fixed one's eyes too long on certain aspects of this spectacle, even the strongest minds are attacked with vertigo.

But does he, at least, do himself justice, this Bonaparte? Has he a glimmering, an idea, a suspicion, the slightest perception, of his infamy? Really, one is driven to doubt it.

Yes, sometimes, from the lofty words he uses, when one hears him make incredible appeals to posterity, to that posterity which will shudder with horror and wrath at him; when one hears him speak coolly of his "legitimacy," and his "mission," one is almost tempted to think that he has come to take himself into high consideration, and that his head is turned to such a degree that he no longer perceives what he is, nor what he does. He believes in the adhesion of the poor, he believes in the good-will of kings, he believes in the fête of eagles, he believes in the harangues of the Council of State, he believes in the benedictions of the bishops, he believes in the oath that he has forced people to take, he believes in the 7,500,000 votes!

He is talking now, feeling in the humour of Augustus, of granting amnesty to the proscribed. Usurpation granting amnesty to right! treason to honour! cowardice to courage! crime to virtue! He is to that degree embruted by his success that he thinks this all very simple.

Singular effect of intoxication! Optical illusion! In his eyes that thing of the 14th of January appears all golden and glorious and radiant, that constitution defiled with mud, stained with blood, laden with chains, dragged amid the hooting of Europe by the police, the Senate, the Corps Législatif and the Council of State, all newly shod. He takes as a triumphal car, and would drive under the Arc de l'Étoile, that sledge, standing on which, hideous, with whip in hand, he parades the ensanguined corpse of the republic!

CONCLUSION--PART SECOND

FAITH AND AFFLICTION

I

Providence brings to maturity men, things, and events, by the single fact of universal life. To cause the disappearance of an old world it is sufficient that civilization, ascending majestically towards its solstice, should shine upon old institutions, upon old prejudices, upon

old laws, and upon old customs. This radiation burns and devours the past. Civilization enlightens, this is the visible fact; and at the same time it consumes, this is the mysterious fact. Under its influence, gradually and without a shock, that which should decline declines, and what should grow old grows old; wrinkles appear upon things condemned, on castes, on codes, on institutions, and on religions. This work of decrepitude is, in some sort, self-acting. A fruitful decrepitude, under which germinates the new life. Little by little the ruin progresses; deep crevices, which are not visible, ramify in the darkness, and internally reduce to powder the venerable structure, which still appears a solid mass without; and suddenly, some fine day, this ancient ensemble of worm-eaten things, of which decaying societies are composed, becomes shapeless, the nails come out, the structure becomes disjointed, and overhangs. Then it no longer has any solidity. Let one of those giants peculiar to revolutions appear; let him raise his hand, and all is said. There was a moment in history when a nudge of Danton's elbow would have shaken all Europe to its foundations.

The year 1848 was such a moment. Ancient Europe, feudal, papal, and monarchical, replastered so disastrously for France, in 1815, tottered. But there was no Danton. The crash did not take place.

It has often been said, in the commonplace phraseology used on similar occasions, that 1848 opened a gulf. Not at all. The corpse of the past lay upon Europe; it lies there still at this moment. The year 1848

opened a grave wherein to throw that corpse. It is this grave that has been taken for a gulf.

In 1848 all that still held to the past, all that still survived of the body, had a close view of this grave. Not only the kings upon their thrones, the cardinals under their hats, the judges in the shadow of their guillotines, the captains on their war-horses, were thrown into commotion; but he who had any interest whatever in what was about to disappear; he who was cultivating for his own profit a social fiction, and had an abuse to let out on hire; he who was guardian of some falsehood, doorkeeper of some prejudice, or farmer of some superstition; he who was taking advantage of another, or dealing in usury, oppression and falsehood; he who sold by false weights, from those who falsify a balance to those who falsify the Bible; from the cheating merchant to the cheating priest; from those who manipulate figures to those who traffic in miracles,--all, from the Jew banker who feels that he is more or less Catholic, to the bishop who becomes more or less of a Jew,--all the men of the past inclined their heads towards one another and trembled.

This grave, which was gaping, and into which had nearly fallen all the fictions--their treasure--which have weighed upon men for so many ages, they resolved to fill up. They determined to wall it up, to pile rocks and stones upon it, and to erect upon the pile a gibbet, and to hang upon this gibbet, all bleeding and dejected, that mighty culprit, Truth.

They determined, once for all, to make an end of the spirit of freedom and emancipation, and to drive back and repress for ever the upward tendency of mankind.

The enterprise was formidable. What the nature of it was we have already indicated, more than once, in this book and elsewhere.

To undo the labour of twenty generations; to kill in the nineteenth century, by strangulation, three centuries, the sixteenth, the seventeenth, and the eighteenth, that is to say, Luther, Descartes, and Voltaire, religious scrutiny, philosophical scrutiny, universal scrutiny; to crush throughout all Europe this immense vegetation of free thought, here a tender blade, there a sturdy oak; to marry the knout and the holy-water-sprinkler; to put more of Spain in the South, and more of Russia in the North; to resuscitate all they could of the Inquisition, and to stifle all they could of intelligence; to stultify youth, in other words to brutalize the future; to make the world a witness of the auto-da-fé of ideas; to throw down the tribune, to suppress the newspaper, the placard, the book, the spoken word, the cry, the whisper, the breath; to make silence; to pursue thought into the case of the printer, into the composing-stick, into the leaden type, into the stereotype, into the lithograph, into the drawing, upon the stage, into the street-show, into the mouth of the actor, into the copy-book of the schoolmaster, into the hawker's pack; to hold out to each man, for faith, for law, for aim in life, and for God, his selfish

interest; to say to nations: "Eat and think no more;" to take man from the brain, and put him in the belly; to extinguish individual initiative, local life, national impulse, all those deep-rooted instincts which impel man to that which is right; to annihilate that ego of nations which is called the fatherland; to destroy nationality among partitioned and dismembered peoples, constitutions in constitutional states, the republic in France, and liberty everywhere; to plant the foot everywhere upon human effort.

In one word, to close that abyss which is called Progress.

Such was the plan, vast, enormous, European, which no one conceived, for not one of those men of the old world had had genius for it, but which all followed. As for the plan in itself, as for that all-embracing idea of universal repression, whence came it? who could tell? It was seen in the air. It appeared in the past. It enlightened certain souls, it pointed to certain routes. It was a gleam issuing from the tomb of Machiavelii.

At certain moments of human history, from the things which are plotted and the things which are done, it would seem that all the old demons of humanity, Louis XI, Philip II, Catherine de Medicis, the Duke of Alva, Torquemada, are somewhere or other in a corner, seated around a table, and taking counsel together.

We look, we search, and instead of the colossi, we find abortions.

Where we expected to see the Duke of Alva, we find Schwartzenberg; where we expected to see Torquemada we find Veuillot. The old European despotism continues its march, with these little men, and goes on and on; it resembles the Czar Peter when travelling:--"We relay with what we can find," he wrote; "when we had no more Tartar horses, we took donkeys." To attain this object, the repression of everything and everybody, it was necessary to pursue an obscure, tortuous, rugged, difficult path; they pursued it. Some of those who entered it, knew what they were doing.

Parties are kept alive by watchwords; those men, those ringleaders, whom 1848 frightened and assembled, had, as we have said above, adopted theirs: religion, family, property. With that commonplace adroitness which suffices when one speaks to fear, they exploited certain obscure aspects of what was called socialism. It was a question of "saving religion, property, and the family."--"Save the flag!" they exclaimed. The vulgar herd of terrified selfish interests threw themselves into the current.

They coalesced, they made a stand, they formed in mass. They had a crowd around them. This crowd was composed of diverse elements. The landed proprietor entered it because his rents had fallen; the peasant, because he had paid the forty-five centimes; he who did not believe in God thought it necessary to save religion, because he had been forced to sell his horses. They extracted from this crowd the force it contained, and made use of it. They made everything contribute to

repression: the law, despotism, the assemblies, the tribune, the jury, the magistracy, the police; in Lombardy the sabre, at Naples the convict prison, in Hungary the gibbet. To remuzzle men's intellects, to replace the fetters on men's minds, these runaway slaves, to prevent the past from disappearing, to prevent the future from being born, to remain kings, powerful, privileged and happy, all means were good, all just, all legitimate. For the exigencies of the struggle, they manufactured and spread throughout the world a sort of ambuscade-morality against liberty, which Ferdinand put in action at Palermo, Antonelli at Rome, Schwartzenberg at Milan and at Pesth, and later, at Paris, those wolves of state, the men of December.

There was a nation among the nations, which was a sort of elder brother in this family of the oppressed, a prophet in the human tribe. This nation took the initiative of the whole human movement. It went on, saying, "Come!" and the rest followed. As a complement to the fraternity of men, in the Gospel, it taught the fraternity of nations. It spoke by the voice of its writers, of its poets, of its philosophers, of its orators, as by a single mouth, and its words flew to the extremities of the earth, to rest, like tongues of fire, upon the brow of all nations. It presided over the communion of intellects. It multiplied the bread of life to those who were wandering in the desert. One day it was enveloped in a tempest; it marched over the abyss, and said to the frightened nations: "Why are you afraid?" The wave of the revolutions it had excited subsided under its footsteps, and, far from engulfing it, increased its glory. The suffering, infirm,

and diseased nations pressed around it; one was limping, for the chain of the Inquisition, riveted to its foot for three centuries, had lamed it; to this one it said, "Walk!" and it walked. Another was blind, the old Roman papistry had filled its eyes with mist and darkness; to this one it said, "Receive thy sight!" it opened its eyes and saw. "Throw away your crutches, that is to say, your prejudices," it said; "throw away your bandages, that is to say, your superstitions; stand upright, raise your head, look at the sky, look at God. The future is yours. O nations! you have a leprosy, ignorance; you have a plague, fanaticism; there is not one of you but is afflicted with that frightful malady called a despot; go, march, break the bonds of evil; I deliver you, I cure you!" Throughout the earth a grateful clamour arose among the nations which these words made sound and strong. One day it accosted dead Poland; it raised its finger, and exclaimed, "Arise!" and dead Poland arose.

This nation, the men of the past, whose fall it announced, dreaded and hated. By dint of stratagem, of tortuous patience, and of audacity, they ended by seizing it, and succeeded in throttling it.

For three years and more, the world has witnessed a tremendous agony and a frightful spectacle. For three years and more, the men of the past, the scribes, the Pharisees, the publicans, the princes of the priests, have crucified, in presence of the human race, the Christ of nations, the French people. Some furnished the cross, others the nails, others the hammer. Falloux placed upon its forehead the crown of

thorns. Montalembert placed upon its mouth the sponge, dipped in gall and vinegar. Louis Bonaparte is the miserable soldier who struck his lance into its side, and caused it to utter the supreme cry: Eli! Eli! Lama Sabachthani!

Now it is all over. The French nation is dead. The great tomb is about to open.

For three days!

II

Let us have faith.

No, let us not be cast down. To despair is to desert.

Let us look to the future.

The future,--no one knows what tempests still separate us from port, but the port, the distant and radiant port, is in sight; the future, we repeat, is the republic for all men; let us add, the future is peace with all men.

Let us not fall into the vulgar error, which is to curse and to dishonour the age in which we live. Erasmus called the sixteenth century "the excrement of the ages," fex temporum. Bossuet thus qualified the seventeenth century: "A wicked and paltry age." Rousseau branded the eighteenth century, in these terms: "This great rottenness amidst which we live." Posterity has proved these illustrious men in the wrong. It has said to Erasmus: "The sixteenth century was great;" it has said to Bossuet: "The seventeenth century was great;" it has said to Rousseau: "The eighteenth century was great."

Even had the infamy of those ages been actual, those great men would have been wrong to complain. The man who thinks should accept simply and calmly the surroundings in which Providence has placed him. The splendour of human intelligence, the loftiness of genius, shine no less by contrast than by harmony with the age. The stoic and profound philosopher is not diminished by an external debasement. Virgil, Petrarch, Racine are great in their purple; Job is still greater on his dunghill.

But we can say, we men of the nineteenth century, that the nineteenth century is not the dunghill. However deep the shame of the present, whatever blows we receive from the fluctuation of events, whatever the apparent desertion or the momentary lethargy of mental vigour, none of us, democrats, will repudiate the magnificent epoch in which we live, the virile age of mankind.

Let us proclaim it aloud, let us proclaim it in our fall and in our defeat, this is the greatest of all ages! and do you know the reason why? because it is the mildest. This age, the immediate issue, the firstborn offspring, of the French Revolution, frees the slave in America, raises from his degradation the pariah in Asia, abolishes the suttee in India, and extinguishes in Europe the last brands of the stake, civilizes Turkey, carries the Gospel into the domain of the Koran, dignifies woman, subordinates the right of the strongest to that of the most just, suppresses pirates, mitigates sentences, makes the galleys healthy, throws the red-hot iron into the sewer, condemns the penalty of death, removes the ball and chain from the leg of the convict, abolishes torture, degrades and brands war, stifles Dukes of Alva and Charles the Ninths, and extracts the claws of tyrants.

This age proclaims the sovereignty of the citizen, and the inviolability of life; it crowns the people, and consecrates man.

In art, it possesses all varieties of genius,--writers, orators, poets, historians, publicists, philosophers, painters, sculptors, musicians; majesty, grace, power, force, splendour, colour, form, style; it renews its strength in the real and in the ideal, and bears in its hand the two thunderbolts, the true and the beautiful. In science it accomplishes unheard-of miracles; it makes of cotton saltpetre, of steam a horse, of the voltaic battery a workman, of the electric fluid a messenger, of the sun a painter; it waters itself with subterranean

streams, pending the time when it shall warm itself with the central fire; it opens upon the two infinites those two windows, the telescope upon the infinitely great, the microscope upon the infinitely little, and it finds stars in the first abyss, and insects in the second, which prove to it the existence of God. It annihilates time, it annihilates space, it annihilates suffering; it writes a letter from Paris to London, and has an answer in ten minutes; it cuts off a man's leg, the man sings and smiles.

It has now only to realize--and it has nearly done it--a progress which is nothing compared to the miracles it has already wrought; it has only to find the means of directing through a mass of air a bubble of lighter air; it has already obtained the bubble of air, and keeps it imprisoned; it has now only to find the impulsive force, only to cause a vacuum before the balloon, for instance, only to burn the air before the aerostat, as the rocket does before itself; it has only to solve this problem in some way or other; and it will solve it, and do you know what will happen then? At that instant frontiers will vanish, all barriers will be swept away; everything that constitutes a Chinese wall round thought, round commerce, round industry, round nationalities, round progress, will crumble; in spite of censorships, in spite of index expurgatorius, it will rain books and journals upon every country under the sun; Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, will fall like hail upon Rome, Naples, Vienna, St. Petersburg; the human word is manna, and the serf will gather it in the furrows; fanaticism will die, oppression will be impossible; man dragged himself along the ground,--he will

escape; civilization changes itself into a flock of birds, and flies away, and whirls about and alights joyously at the same moment upon every point of the globe. Lo! yonder it passes; aim your cannons, old despotisms, it disdains you; you are only the bullet, it is the lightning; no more hatreds, no more mutually devouring interests, no more wars; a sort of new life, composed of concord and light, pervades and soothes the world; the fraternity of nations soars through space, and holds communion in the eternal azure; men mingle in the skies.

While we await this final progress, let us consider the point to which this age had brought civilization.

Formerly there was a world in which people walked slowly, with bent back, and eyes cast down; in which the Comte de Gouvon was served at table by Jean-Jacques; in which the Chevalier de Rohan belaboured Voltaire with a stick; in which Daniel Defoe was placed in the pillory; in which a city like Dijon was separated from a city like Paris by the necessity of making one's will, by robbers at every corner, and ten days by stage; in which a book was a sort of infamy and filth which the hangman burned upon the steps of the Palais de Justice; in which superstition and ferocity shook hands; in which the Pope said to the Emperor: "Jungamus dexteras, gladium gladio copulemus;" in which one met at every step crosses hung with amulets, and gibbets hung with men; in which there were heretics, Jews, and lepers; in which houses had battlements and loop-holes; in which streets were closed with a chain, rivers with a chain, and even camps with a chain (as at the

battle of Tolosa), cities with walls, kingdoms with prohibitions and penalties; in which, with the exception of force and authority, which stuck tightly together, everything was penned up, distributed, divided, cut into fragments, hated and hating, scattered and dead; men were as dust, power a solid block. But now we have a world in which everything is alive, united, combined, coupled, mingled together; a world in which thought, commerce, and industry reign; in which politics, more and more firmly fixed, tends to an intimate union with science; a world in which the last scaffolds and the last cannon are hastening to cut off their last heads and to vomit forth their last shells; a world in which light increases every instant; a world in which distance has disappeared, in which Constantinople is nearer to Paris than Lyons was a hundred years ago, in which Europe and America pulsate with the same heart-throb; a world all circulation and all love, of which France is the brain, the railroads the arteries, and the electric wires the fibres. Do you not see that simply to set forth such a state of affairs is to explain, to demonstrate, and to solve everything? Do you not feel that the old world had an aged soul, tyranny, and that into the new world is about to descend, necessarily, irresistibly, and divinely, a youthful soul, liberty?

This was the work that the nineteenth century had done among men, and was continuing in glorious, fashion to do,--that century of sterility, that century of domination, that century of decadence, that century of degradation, as it is called by the pedants, the rhetoricians, the imbeciles, and all that filthy brood of bigots, of knaves, and of

sharpers, who sanctimoniously slaver gall upon glory, who assert that Pascal was a madman, Voltaire a coxcomb, and Rousseau a brute, and whose triumph it would be to put a fool's-cap upon the human race.

You speak of the Lower Empire; are you serious? Had the Lower Empire behind it John Huss, Luther, Cervantes, Shakespere, Pascal, Molière, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Mirabeau? Had the Lower Empire behind it the taking of the Bastile, the Federation, Danton, Robespierre, the Convention? Did the Lower Empire possess America? Had the Lower Empire universal suffrage? Had the Lower Empire those two ideas, country and humanity: country which enlarges the heart, humanity which expands the horizon? Do you know that, under the Lower Empire, Constantinople fell in ruins, and finally had only thirty thousand inhabitants? Has Paris fallen so low? Because you have witnessed the success of a pretorian coup de main, you liken yourselves to the Lower Empire! 'Tis quickly said, and meanly thought. But reflect, if you can. Had the Lower Empire the compass, the electric battery, the printing press, the newspaper, the locomotive, the electric telegraph? So many wings to bear man aloft, which the Lower Empire did not possess! The nineteenth century soars, where the Lower Empire crawled. Are you aware of this? What! Shall we see once more the Empress Zoé, Roman Argyrio, Nicephorus Logothetes, Michael Calafates? Nonsense! Do you imagine that Providence repeats itself so tamely? Do you believe that God keeps repeating himself?

Let us have faith! Let us speak with decision! Self-irony is the

beginning of baseness. It is by speaking with decision that we become good, that we become great. Yes, the enfranchisement of intellects, and the consequent enfranchisement of nations, this was the sublime task that the nineteenth century was performing in conjunction with France; for the twofold providential work of the time and of men, of maturation and of action, was blended in the common labour, and the great epoch had for its true home the great nation.

O my country! it is at this moment, when I see you bleeding, inanimate, your head hanging, your eyes closed, your mouth open, and no words issuing therefrom, the marks of the whip upon your shoulders, the nails of the executioner's shoes imprinted upon your body, naked and ashamed, and like a thing deprived of life, an object of hatred, of derision, alas! it is at this moment, my country, that the heart of the exile overflows with love and respect for you!

You lie there motionless. The minions of despotism and oppression laugh, and enjoy the haughty illusion that you are no longer to be feared. Fleeting joy! The peoples that are in the dark forget the past; they see only the present, and despise you. Forgive them, they know not what they do. Despise you! Great Heaven! despise France? And who are they? What language do they speak? What books have they in their hands? What names do they know by heart? What is the placard pasted on the walls of their theatres? What forms do their arts assume, their laws, their manners, their clothing, their pleasures, their fashions? What is the great date for them, as for us? '89! If they take France from out

their hearts, what remains to them? O my people! Though it be fallen and fallen for ever, is Greece despised? Is Italy despised? Is France despised? Look at those breasts, they are your nurse; look at that womb, it is your mother.

If she sleeps, if she is in a lethargy, silence, and off with your hat.
If she is dead, to your knees!

The exiles are scattered; destiny has blasts which disperse men like a handful of ashes. Some are in Belgium, in Piedmont, in Switzerland, where they do not enjoy liberty; others are in London, where they have no roof to shelter them. One, a peasant, has been torn from his native field; another, a soldier, has only a fragment of his sword, which was broken in his hand; another, an artisan, is ignorant of the language of the country, he is without clothes and without shoes, he knows not if he shall eat food to-morrow; another has left behind him a wife and children, a dearly loved group, the object of his labour, and the joy of his life; another has an old mother with grey hairs, who weeps for him; another an old father, who will die without seeing him again; another is a lover,--he has left behind him some adored being, who will forget him; they raise their heads and they hold out their hands to one another; they smile; there is no nation that does not stand aside with respect as they pass, and contemplate with profound emotion, as one of the noblest spectacles which destiny can offer to men, all those serene consciences, all those broken hearts.

They suffer and are silent; in them the citizen has sacrificed the man; they look with firmness on adversity, they do not cry out even under the pitiless rod of misfortune: Civis Romanus sum! But at eve, when one dreams,--when everything in the strange city of the stranger is involved in melancholy, for what seems cold by day becomes funereal in twilight,--but at night, when sleep does not close one's eyes, hearts the most stoical open to mourning and dejection. Where are the little ones? who will give them bread? who will give them their father's kiss? where is the wife? where is the mother? where is the brother? where are they all? And the songs which at eventide they used to hear, in their native tongue, where are they? where is the wood, the tree, the forest path, the roof filled with nests, the church tower surrounded by tombs? Where is the street, the faubourg, the lamp burning bright before the door, the friends, the workshop, the trade, the customary toil? And the furniture put up for sale, the auction invading the domestic sanctuary! Oh! these eternal adieux! Destroyed, dead, thrown to the four winds, that moral existence which is called the family hearth, and which is composed not only of loving converse, of caresses and embraces, but of hours, of habits, of friendly visits, of joyous laughter, of the pressure of the hand, of the view from certain windows, of the position of certain furniture, of the arm-chair where the grandsire used to sit, of the carpet on which the first-born used to play! Flown away for ever are those objects which bore the imprint of one's daily life! Vanished are the visible forms of one's souvenirs! There are in grief private and secret recesses, where the most lofty courage bends. The Roman orator put forth his head without flinching to the knife of the

centurion Lenas, but he wept when he thought of his house demolished by Clodius.

The exiles are silent, or, if they complain, it is only among themselves. As they know one another, and are doubly brothers, having the same fatherland and sharing the same proscription, they tell one another their sufferings. He who has money shares it with those who have none, he who has firmness imparts it to those who lack it. They exchange recollections, aspirations, hopes. They turn, their arms extended in the darkness towards those they have left behind. Oh! how happy they who think no more of us! Every man suffers and at times waxes wroth. The names of all the executioners are engraven in the memory of all. Each has something to curse,--Mazas, the hulk, the dungeon, the informer who betrayed, the spy who watched, the gendarme who arrested him, Lambessa, where one has a friend, Cayenne, where one has a brother; but there is one thing that is blessed by all, and that is thou, France!

Oh! a complaint, a word against thee, France! No! no! one's country is never so deeply fixed in the heart as when one is torn from it by exile.

They will do their whole duty, with a tranquil brow and unshaken perseverance. Never to see thee again is their sorrow, never to forget thee their joy.

Ah, what grief! And after eight months it is in vain that we say to ourselves that these things are so; it is in vain that we look around us and see the spire of Saint-Michael's instead of the Pantheon, and Saint-Gudule instead of Notre-Dame,--we cannot believe it.

It is, however, true, it cannot be denied, we must admit it, we must acknowledge it, even though we expire of humiliation and despair,--that which is lying there, on the ground, is the nineteenth century, is France!

And it is this Bonaparte who has caused all this ruin!

And it is in the very centre of the greatest nation upon earth! it is in the midst of the greatest century of all history, that this man has suddenly risen and has triumphed! To seize upon France as his prey, great Heaven! What the lion would not dare to do, the ape has done! what the eagle would have dreaded to seize in his talons, the parrot has taken in his claws! What! Louis XI failed! Richelieu destroyed himself in the attempt! Even Napoleon was unequal to it! In a single day, between night and morning, the absurd became the possible! All that was axiomatic has become chimerical. All that was false has become living fact. What! the most brilliant concourse of men! the most magnificent movements of ideas! the most formidable sequence of events! a thing that no Titian could have controlled, that no Hercules could have turned aside,--the human flood in full course, the French wave sweeping onward, civilization, progress, intelligence, revolution,

liberty,--he stopped it all one fine morning, stopped it short, he, this mask, this dwarf, this aborted Tiberius, this nothing!

God was advancing. Louis Bonaparte, his plume on his head, blocked his path and said to God: "Thou shalt go no farther!"

God halted.

And you fancy that this is so! and you imagine that this plebiscite exists, that this constitution of some day or other in January exists, that this Senate exists, that this Council of State and this Corps Législatif exist! You fancy that there is a lackey who is called Rouher, a valet who is called Troplong, a eunuch who is called Baroche, and a sultan, a pacha, a master who is called Louis Bonaparte! You do not see, then, that all this is a chimera! you do not see that the 2nd of December is nothing but an immense illusion, a pause, a breathing-space, a sort of drop-curtain behind which God, that marvellous scene-shifter, is preparing and constructing the last act, the supreme, triumphal act of the French Revolution! You gaze stupidly at the curtain, at the things painted on the coarse canvas, this one's nose, that one's epaulettes, the great sabre of a third, those belaced venders of eau de Cologne whom you call generals, those poussahs whom you call magistrates, those worthy men whom you call senators, this mixture of caricatures and spectres, and you take them all for realities! And you do not hear beyond them, in the shadow, that hollow sound! you do not hear some one going and coming! you do not see that

curtain quiver in the breath of Him who is behind!

THE END.