

# The Gleaner:

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"Nec arancorum sane texus vitio melior, quia ex sefila gignunt nec noster vitior qui ex alienis libamus ut apes."

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## THE GLEANER.

### EUROPE.

FROM BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE FOR JANUARY.

#### ON THE LATE REVOLUTION

It is a melancholy fact, verified by every days observation, that the experience of the past is totally lost both upon individuals and nations. A few persons indeed, who have attended to the history of former errors, are aware of the consequences to which they invariably lead; and lament the progress of national violence in the same way as they do the career of individual intemperance. But, upon the great mass of mankind, the young, the active, and the ambitious, such examples are wholly thrown away. Each successive generation plunges into the abyss of passion, without the slightest regard to the fatal effects which such conduct has produced upon their predecessors; and lament, when too late, the rashness with which they slighted the advice of experience, and stifled the voice of reason.

It is now sixty years since Mr. Hume closed the History of the English Revolution with these remarkable words: "All parties had now successively reaped the melancholy pleasure of seeing the injuries they had suffered, revenged on their enemies; and that, too, by the same arts which had been practised against themselves. The King had, in some instances, stretched his prerogative beyond the due bounds, and aided by the church, had well nigh put an end to the liberties of the nation. The Presbyterians checked the progress of the court and clergy, excited by cant and hyperisry the populace first to tumults, then to war, against the King, the Peers, and all the royalists. No sooner had they reached the pinnacle of grandeur, than the Independents, under the appearance of still greater sanctity, instigated the army against them, and reduced them to subjection. The Independents amidst their empty dreams of liberty, were oppressed by the rebellion of their own servants, and found themselves at once exposed to the insults of power and the hatred of the people. By recent, as well as all ancient example, it was become evident, that illegal violence, with whatever pretences it may be covered, and whatever object it may pursue, it must inevitably end at last in the arbitrary and despotic government of a single person."

Shortly after the publication of Mr. Hume's History, the French Revolution broke out. The lessons of ancient, as well as of modern experience were immediately forgotten—the enthusiasm of freedom overspread Europe—a new era in the political system was anticipated, and perfect virtue expected, during the tumults of faction, as if no such names as those of Marius and Sylla, of Pompey and Octavius, of Cæsar or Cromwell, had been known in the world.

Forty years elapsed—a generation passed away through the lapse of time, or were mown down by the sword—new causes of complaint arose in the French nation, and a second Revolution took place. The dear-bought experience of recent times was immediately forgotten—the horrors of 1793 were passed over in silence—a new era of social happiness was anticipated—revolutionary hopes were again awakened—democratic ambition of new arose—and the mass of the people shared in the joy at the supposed triumph of freedom, as if its past consequences had been obliterated from the book of Time—as if the efforts of patriotism had not been succeeded by the rise of wickedness—humane philanthropy by revolutionary cruelty—the conquests of freedom by the reign of Robespierre.

What is still more extraordinary, the recent Revolution was almost, by common consent, characterised as totally distinct from the former, in consequence of the BLOODLESS TRIUMPH by which it was said to be distinguished—the moderation displayed by the mob in the use of victory—the generous abstinence from pillage after the overthrow of the royalist troops—the absence of any judicial murders after the strife had ceased. These proceedings were exultingly contrasted with the savage ferocity of former times—the bloody annals of the reign of terror, with the pacific termination of the battles in Paris—the Dictatorship of Robespierre, with the constitutional throne of Louis Philippe.

Human nature, however, is still the same; a Revolution now is not different from what it was in 1793—the mob of 1830 is not more virtuous than that which stormed the Tuileries in 1792. The supposed difference between the two Revolutions vanishes where the great corrector of error, DATE, is brought into view; the superior virtue of the present time is only supported by SUPPRESSING THE PERIOD which elapsed between the overthrow of the King, and the bloody revenge of his antagonists.

The Bastille was stormed on July 14, 1689. The revolt of the French Guards, and the disaffection of the French troops round Paris, had previously destroyed the supports of the monarchy, and from that day the supreme power passed into the hands of the Constituent Assembly.

The mob of Paris immediately formed themselves into armed bands; 50,000 national guards were speedily organized with that rapidity and effect which have in all ages been the characteristic of the French populace; and from that time forward, the safety of the metropolis was exclusively intrusted to its insurrectionary force.

No pillage of private houses—no disorders of any kind, followed this triumph of the popular arms. With the exception of those killed during the combat, or by the populace in the first heat of revenge, no widows took place. The royal palaces were respected, and in a few days Paris wore its usual appearance, and but for the animated looks of its citizens, it could not have been discovered that any convulsion had taken place.

The excessive scarcity of provisions in the end of September, 1789, produced a popular convulsion, which led to the invasion of Versailles, and the inundation of the palace by an armed rabble, and had well nigh proved fatal to the royal family. Yet even on the trying occasion, when the horrors of famine were added to the natural excitement of a Revolution, and the very lowest classes, the POISSARDES and porters, headed the tumult, but little blood was shed; and with the exception of two of the guard du corps, who were killed in resisting the invasion of the royal apartments no lives were lost. The national guard, after the resistance had ceased, mingled with the revolutionary pikemen, and the body guard of Louis marched in procession on the following day with the forces of the populace, amidst the shouts of the multitude.

From the time that the royal family settled in Paris, on October 5, 1789, till the revolt of August 10, 1792, a period of nearly three years, hardly any bloodshed, and no pillage or confiscations, took place in Paris. With the exception of the baker Foulan, who was murdered in a mob, produced by the scarcity of provisions, and one or two other persons who fell victims to the same cause of popular excitement, no individual lost his life; and, excepting the Marquis de Favras, who was convicted of high treason by the Court of Chatelet, no person whatever was sent to the scaffold by the Constituent Assembly during more than two years that their power was unresisted in France.

Even on August 10, 1792, when the Faubourgs rose in open insurrection against the Throne and the Legislative Assembly, and the Monarch, with all his family, were made prisoners by the multitude, no greater violence was perpetrated than on the 27th July, 1830. On both occasions the Tuileries were plundered, and the Swiss guard defeated and massacred; but no general or indiscriminate violence took place. No plunder of private houses—no conflagration of the city ensued. So completely were the foremost of the assailants masters of their passions, that, after the Swiss guards were driven from the Place Carrousel through the Palace into the gardens of the Tuileries, the insurgents, fearful of injuring the marble statues with which that fine quarter is ornamented, by firing at the fugitives who had climbed upon them, pricked them with their pikes until they came down, and murdered them at their foot with their bayonets. On the following morning all Paris came out to view the scene of the conflict, and groups of well-dressed citizens, and inquisitive females were to be seen amidst the fragments of the strife, and on ground yet reeking with the blood of the unfortunate defenders of the throne.

It was not till the 2d September, 1792, three years after the storming of the Bastille, that the massacres in the prisons commenced, and that bands of ferocious ruffians, paid by the Municipality of Paris, murdered six thousand unoffending victims in the public places of confinement. Then, and not till then, began the reign of blood, and each successive convulsion brought a more sanguinary faction to the head of affairs. The Girondists, or humane republicans, who had aided the revolt in order to bring themselves into power, speedily fell beneath the swords of the Jacobins, and were led out to the scaffold, amidst the applauses of the people, whom they had so recently led to victory; the Jacobins, after deluging France with blood, yielded to the sanguinary rule of the Committee of Public Safety; and it, in its turn, crouched beneath the iron despotism of Robespierre.

What went on in the interval, from July 14, 1789, to Sept. 2, 1792? How were the people roused to the deeds of blood, which, after a tranquility of three years, commenced with such appalling energy, and continued with such merciless severity? What extinguished the human philosophers who instigated the Revolution, or swept off the generous republicans who strove to mitigate its fury? The answer is, in one word, AGITATION: During the whole intervening period, the demagogues never ceased to disturb the public mind. Absurd reports of danger, appeals to the spirit of Freedom, incessant abuse of the Aristocrats, continued flattery of the people, were the methods by which the character of the revolt was changed, by which the moderate measures of rational men were brought into discredit, and an appetite created for fresh convulsions and more sanguinary revenge.

The wicked men, who are ultimately dangerous, do not appear in the commencement of public disturbances. Resistance against oppression is generally begun and headed by generous minds; men who put their lives in peril to save their country, and run the danger of the scaffold, to secure the liberties of their fel-

low-citizens. Such were Hamden and Sydney in the English; Bailly and Rowland in the French Revolution. There is an aversion too, to blood in the commencement of civil dissensions; the last stages of violence are not reached in the outset of strife, and the better feelings of our nature frequently prevail in the first triumphs of the arms of freedom. It is, accordingly remarkable, as Guizot has observed,\* with how much humanity the English Cavaliers and Roundheads behaved towards each other in the beginning of the Civil Wars; and it was not till its later stages, that the exasperation arising from mutual injury, rendered the practice common, of making prisoners of those who were taken in battle. In France, in like manner in 1789, equally as 1830, all was humanity and gentleness in the commencement of the Revolution; the horror evinced at Baruaue for his celebrated expression on the death of Berthier, "Was then the blood which has been shed so very pure?" was such that he never recovered the good opinion of the Public; and the President of the Constituent Assembly faintly when he read the letter containing the details of the massacre of Avignon; and that celebrated body evinced from first to last, even according to the admission of the royalist historians, a constant repugnance to the shedding of blood.†

But after the first ebullition of virtuous feeling, the bad passions come into play which have been stirred up in the public contentions. Vulgar ambition is roused from its lethargy, Poverty is deprived of its employment, the populace become habituated to the intoxication of flattery, public credit shaken by the convulsions of the state, rapidly falls, and the multitudes who are thrown out of work by the stoppage of commercial enterprise, assemble in tumultuous hordes, and demand some benefit from the dangers they have incurred. Human wickedness speedily takes advantage of the passions which have arisen, the public suffering is ascribed to the faults of government, and starving multitudes lend a ready ear to the flattering tale, that their ranks are alone immaculate, and that tyranny and corruption universally prevail in the higher classes of the state.

In this way, from good beginnings ensue bad consequences; to virtuous resolution succeeds guilty ambition; to the gilded anticipation of hope, the sad realities of despair. This progress rapidly took place in France, immediately after the revolution. The public revenue, which, in 1789, was £24,900,000 sterling, fell, in 1790, to £17,000,000;‡ and the distress which ensued among the people infinitely exceeded any thing which had been experienced before the popular rule commenced. The ablest of the republican historians§ confess, that one quarter of the evils which assailed the Republic would have crushed the Monarchy.

Nothing, accordingly, can be more instructive than the character of the different classes who successively rose to eminence during the progress of the French Revolution. First appeared the Constituent Assembly, headed by Lafayette, Bailly, and Mirabeau, ardent patriotism, courageous in resolution, firm in the love of freedom, but the decided friends of order, and attached to a constitutional monarchy. So long as they headed the populace, all was harmony in the ranks of freedom; but when the King's flight to Varennes had shaken the public mind, the republican leaders appeared; an insurrection took place, planned by Brisot and the Girondists, and the friends of the Constitutional throne headed by Lafayette, engaged and defeated the forces of the populace in the Camp de Mars. Instantly, Lafayette, Bailly, and the early leaders of the revolution, fell into obliquity; and the latter was doomed to a cruel and ignominious death, by the people whose liberties his firmness had saved; and the former only owed his life to his captivity in an Austrian dungeon. The Girondists then rose to eminence; republican in principle, humane in intention, gentle in character, but destitute of the audacity to seize, or the firmness to command success. Their reign, as that of all good men, in public convulsions, was short; they supported the insurrection of August 10th, which overturned the throne, and immediately became the victims of the Jacobins, and set more daring, more sanguinary, less scrupulous than themselves. Then came the reign of Blood; the unrelenting sway of revolutionary Cruelty and plebeian Revenge. A merciless sword waved over France, mowing down alike the dignity of rank, the splendour of opulence, the lustre of talent, and the graces of beauty.

Such is the natural progress of revolution. Its counterpart may be traced in the successive sway of the Presbyterians, the Independents, and the Fifth-Monarchy men, in the English Rebellion. Each successive faction which rises to the head of affairs is more extravagant, more cruel, more tyrannical, than that which preceded it. Liberty is totally destroyed during the struggle for power, and her name invoked only as the means of rousing the people to new exertions, and to the support of more sanguinary ambition.

These truths are familiar to every one acquainted with the History of Revolution; but they seem to have been TOTALLY FORGOTTEN in the public estimation of the late French Revolution. When the leaders of the opposition

\* Hist. de la Rev. de l'Angleterre, vol. i.

† Lacretelle, vol. viii.

‡ Arthur Young i. 584.

§ Mignet, vol. 1.

\* Mignet, chap. 1.

† Lacretelle, vol. vii.

\* Hume, chap. lx. ad finem.