

The Gleaner:

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"Nec aranearum sane texus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt nec noster vilior quia ex alienis libamus ut apes."

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THE GLEANER.

SPECIMEN OF THE TONE OF THE POLITICAL ARTICLES IN
BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

DUMONT'S RECOLLECTIONS OF MIRABEAU.

"It is a melancholy fact," says Madame de Stael, "that while the human race is continually advancing by the acquisitions of intellect, it is doomed to move perpetually in the same circle of error, from the influence of the passions." If this observation was just, even when this great author wrote, how much more is it now applicable, when a new generation has arisen, perfectly blind to the lessons of experience, and we in this free and prosperous land, have yielded to the same passions, and been seduced by the same delusion, which three-and-forty years ago, actuated the French people, and have been deemed inexcusable by all subsequent historians, even in its enslaved population!

It would appear inconceivable, that the same errors should thus be repeated by successive nations, without the least regard to the lessons of history; that all the dictates of experience, all the conclusions of wisdom, all the penalties of weakness should be forgotten, before the generation which has suffered under their neglect, is cold in their graves: that the same vices should be repeated, the same criminal ambition indulged, to the end of the world; if we did not recollect that it is the very essence of passion, whether in nations or individuals, to be insensible to the sufferings of others, and to pursue its own headstrong inclinations, regardless alike of the admonitions of reason, and the experience of the world.

It would seem that the vehemence of passion in nations, is as little liable to be influenced by considerations of prudence, or the slightest regard to the consequence, as the career of intemperance in individuals; and that in like manner as every successive age beholds multitudes who, in the pursuit of desire, rush headlong down the gulf of perdition, so every successive generation is doomed to witness the sacrifice of national prosperity, or the extinction of natural existence, in the insane pursuit of democratic ambition. Providence has appointed certain trials for nations as well as individuals; and for those who, disregarding the admonitions of virtue, and slighting the dictates of duty, yield to the temper, certain destruction is appointed in the inevitable consequences of their criminal desires, not less in the government of empires, than in the paths of private life.

Forty years ago, the passion for innovation seized a great and powerful nation in Europe, illustrious in the paths of honour, grown grey in the years of renown: the voice of religion was discarded, the lessons of experience rejected: visionary projects were entertained, chimerical anticipations indulged: the ancient institutions of the country were not amended, but destroyed: a new constitution introduced, amidst the unanimous applause of the people: the monarch placed himself at the head of the movement, the nobles joined the commons, the clergy united in the work of reform: all classes by common consent, conspired in the demolition and reconstruction of the constitution. A new era was thought to have dawned on human affairs; the age of gold to be about to return from the regeneration of mankind.

The consequence, as all the world knows, was ruin, devastation, and misery, unparalleled in modern times, the king, the queen, the royal family were beheaded, the nobles exiled or guillotined, the clergy confiscated and banished, the fundholders starved and ruined, the merchants exterminated, the landholders beggared, the people decimated. The wrath of heaven needed no destroying angel to be the minister of its vengeance: guilty passions of men worked out their own and well-

deserved punishment. The fierce passion of democracy was extinguished in blood, the Reign of terror froze every heart with horror: the tyranny of the Directory destroyed the very name of freedom; the ambition of Napoleon visited every cottage with mourning, and doomed to tears every mother in France; and the sycophancy of all classes, the natural result of former license, so paved the way for military despotism, that the haughty Emperor could only exclaim with Tiberius—"O homines ad servitutem parati!" * * *

Forty years after, the same unruly and reckless spirit seized the very nation who had witnessed these horrors, and bravely struggled for twenty years to avert them from her own shores; the passion of democracy became general in all the manufacturing and trading classes; a large portion of the nobility were deluded by the infatuated idea, that by yielding to the torrent, they could regulate its movements; the ministers of the Crown put themselves at the head of the movement, and wielded the royal prerogative to give force and consistency to the ambition of the multitude; political fanaticism again reared its hydra head; the ministers of religion became the objects of odium; every thing sacred every thing venerable, the subject of opprobrium; and, by yielding to this tempest of passion and terror, enlightened men seriously anticipated, not a repetition of the horrors of the French Revolution, but the staying of the fury of democracy, the stilling of the waves of faction, the calming the ambition of the people.

In Aug. 1788, Louis, in obedience to the wishes of the nation, agreed to assemble the States-General, which had not met in France since 1614.

In September, 1789, the King, by the advice of Neckar, by a royal ordinance, doubled the number of the representatives of the Tiers Etat; in other words, he doubled the House of Commons of France, while those of the clergy and nobles were left at their former amount.

The elections in April 1789 were conducted with the utmost favour to the popular party. No scrutiny of those entitled to vote took place; after the first few days, every person decently dressed was allowed to vote, without asking any questions.

When the States-General met in May 6, 1789, the King and his Minister Neckar were received with cold and dignified courtesy by the nobles and clergy, but rapturous applause by the Tiers Etat, who saw in them the authors of the prodigious addition which the number and consequence of their order had received.

May 9. No sooner had the States-General proceeded to business, than the Tiers Etat demanded that the nobles and clergy should sit and vote with them in one Chamber; a proceeding unexampled in French history, and which it was foreseen would give them the complete ascendancy, by reason of their numerical superiority to those of both the other orders united. May 10 to June 9. The nobles and clergy resisted for a short while this prodigious innovation, and insisted that, after the manner of all the States-General which had assembled in France from the foundation of the monarchy, the orders should sit and vote by separate chambers; and that this was more especially indispensable since the recent duplication of the Tiers Etat had given that body a numerical superiority over the two other orders taken together. June 17. The Tiers Etat declared themselves the National Assembly of France, a designation, says Dumont; which indicated their intention to usurp the whole sovereignty of the State.

June 21. The King, terrified at the thoughts of a collision with the Commons, and thinking to put himself at the head of the movement, first persuaded, and

at length, through the medium of Marshal Luxembourg, commanded the nobles to yield to this demand of the Tiers Etat. The nobles and clergy gradually yielded. On the 19th June 1789, one hundred and forty-seven of the clergy joined the Tiers Etat, and on the 25th, the Duke of Orleans, with forty-seven of the nobles, also deserted their order, and adhered to the opposite party. The remainder finding their numbers so seriously weakened, and urged on by their Reforming Sovereign, also joined the Tiers Etat, and sat with them in one assembly on the 27th June. "On that day (says Dumont) the Revolution was completed." On the 23rd June 1789, the King held a solemn meeting of the whole estates in one assembly, and while he declared the former proceedings of the Tiers Etat unconstitutional, granted such immense concessions to the people, as never, says Mirabeau, were before granted by a King to his subjects. All the objects of a Revolution, says Mignet, were gained by that royal ordinance. July 13 The king ordered the troops, who had been assembled in the vicinity of the capital, to be withdrawn, and sanctioned the establishment of National Guards. July 14. The Bastille taken, and all Paris in an insurrection. July 16. The King appointed Lafayette commander of the National Guard, and Bailly, the President of the assembly, mayor of Paris. July 17. The King visited Paris in the midst of a mob of 200,000 revolutionary democrats. Aug. 4. The whole feudal rights, including tithes, abandoned in one night by the nobility, on the motion of the Duke de Noailles. Aug. 13. Decree of the Assembly declaring all ecclesiastical estates national property. Aug. 20. The declaration of the Rights of man issued. Aug. 23. Freedom of religious opinions proclaimed. Aug. 24. The unlimited freedom of the press established. Aug. 25. Dreadful disturbances in Paris on account of famine. Sep. 13. A new decree on account of the extreme suffering at Paris. Oct. 5. Versailles invaded by a clamorous mob. The King and Queen nearly murdered, and brought captives by a ferocious mob to Paris. Nov. 2. Decree passed, on the motion of the Bishop of Autun, for the confiscation and disposal of all ecclesiastical property. Feb. 24, 1790. Tithes of honour abolished. Feb. 26. New division of the Kingdom into departments; and all appointments civil and military, vested in the people. March 17. Sale of 400 millions of the national domains authorized, and assignats, bearing a forced circulation, issued, to supply the immense deficiency of the revenue.

It is unnecessary to go farther. Here it appears, that within two months of the meeting of the States-General, the union of the orders in one chamber, in other words the annihilation of the House of Peers, was effected, the feudal rights abolished, and the entire sovereignty vested in the National Assembly. In three months, the church property was confiscated, the Rights of Man published, titles annihilated, and the unlimited freedom of the press proclaimed. In five months, the King and royal family were brought prisoners to Paris. In six months, the distress naturally consequent on these convulsions had attracted the constant attention of the Assembly, and spread the utmost misery among the people; and in ten months, the total failure of the revenue had rendered the sale of church property, and the issuing of assignats bearing a forced circulation, necessary, which it is well known soon swallowed up property of every description throughout France. We do not know what the reformers consider as tardy concessions of the nobility and throne; but when it is recollected that all these proceedings were agreed to by the King, and passed by the Legislature at the dates here specified, it is conceived that a