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LITERARY REVIEW.

The Substance of some Letters written by an Englishman resident at Paris, during the last reign of the Emperor Napoleon; with an Appendix of original Documents. Two vols. 8vo. pp. 950. London, 1816.

CONTINUED.

We cannot help observing, that the anecdote relating to a plot proposed to the duke of Orleans, and disclosed by that prince to the king, does not appear to us probable, and at any rate ought not to have been inserted by our author, upon such information as disappointment and jealousy are too likely to have furnished upon such a subject.

The 6th letter contains a concise and interesting account of the progress of Napoleon from Porto Ferrajo to Paris; and the 8th describes the royal court in its expiring moments.

A question, by no means uninteresting, suggests itself at the close of this period, viz. Whether a successful resistance could have been made at any, and at what moment, to the advance of Napoleon. It is manifest, we think, from the facts and observations contained in this work, and from subsequent events, that neither the popularity of Napoleon with the people, nor the attachment of the army, would of themselves have been sufficient to give him so conspicuous a triumph over a rival in possession of the crown and the capital. If any one will call to mind the opprobrious usage Bonaparte met with but one year before in the very provinces which now hailed his return, he will be convinced that hatred to the royal house which now governed them, rather than attachment to their ancient chief, obtained from the people of France their ready acquiescence in his designs.—The existence of a previous conspiracy in his favour is no longer asserted; and the government of France has ineffectually attempted to give the colour of such a charge to any one of the trials which have already taken place at Paris. As to the army, it is notorious that their allegiance had been offered to other persons, and that the conspiracy of Drouet and Lesvevre Desnouettes, (the only one which broke out during the eleven months,) had not only no connexion with Bonaparte, but had avowedly another chief in view. By comparing dates, it will be found that neither did the commanders swerve, nor the regiments revolt, until the conviction of the perfidy and imbecility of the government which they had served when it most needed their assistance, had become irresistible in the whole body. It is true the disgust was universal; but, on the first intimation of the approaching danger, the leaders of the constitutional opposition, among whom our author particularly cites M. Constant and the author of the *Censeur*, rallied round the throne, from a conviction, no doubt, that liberty had more to fear from the power of Napoleon, than from the feebleness of the Bourbons; and, in the hope of profiting by the difficulties of the sovereign, to extend the rights, and to confirm the liberties of the people.

Wise and liberal councils were undoubtedly recommended; and the unimpeachable virtue of Lafayette and D'Argenson was offered to mediate between the king and his people. It may be doubted, indeed, whether this reconciliation would then have been an available defence, but there is no question, that although a seeming acquiescence was given in the councils proposed, and although the king was made to appear eager to embrace a constitutional system, yet no act of popular conciliation—no symptom of repentance appeared. Chateaubriand prayed—and Lalley Tollaendal wept—and Laine recanted; but the insincerity and weakness of the court counteracted the effect of their protestations, and paralyzed the efforts of their more able and patriotic supporters. With us, indeed, it is a matter of serious doubt, whether the priests and nobles, and, in general, those who surrounded the person of the monarch, did not, upon calculation, prefer flight, and the chance of return with foreign arms, to such a reconciliation with the people as would have alone secured its cooperation in that terrible crisis. There are, however, among those who displayed the most noble energy in that moment, persons eminently qualified to satisfy the world upon those transactions; and to them we look with confidence for a narrative, illustrating the character of the nation, which demanded liberty, and of the court, which hated it too much to purchase its own safety at such a price.

In the night of the 19th of March, the king leaves his capital; and on the following evening, Napoleon arrives.

Paris, on the entry of Napoleon, presented but a mournful spectacle. The crowd which went out to meet the emperor, remained in the outskirts of the city; the shops were shut—no one appeared at the windows—the Boulevards were lined with a multitude collected about the many mountebanks, tumblers, &c. which, for the two last days, had been placed there in greater numbers than usual by the police, in order to divert the populace. There was no noise, nor any acclamations; a few low murmurs and whispers were alone heard, when the spectators of these open shows turned round to look at the string of six or eight carriages, which preceded the imperial troops. The regiments then passed along, and cried out, vive l'empereur;—not

a word from any one. They tried the more popular and ancient exclamation, vive Bonaparte; all still silent. The patience of the dragoons was exhausted; some brandished their swords, others drew their pistols, and rode into the alleys, amidst the people, exclaiming, "Crie donc, vive l'empereur!" but the crowd only gave way, and retreated, without uttering a word. l. p. 179.

True it is, that although the Bourbons fled from their palace, unpitied and unregretted, yet the return of the adventurer was marked by gloom, and he was saluted by fewer acclamations than had greeted him in the smallest town. It was difficult to say, that the royalist faction was the predominant one in Paris; for never did a sovereign receive less consolation than did Louis, when he invited the national guard to defend his faithful city. But passion had since given way to reflection. The fugitive dynasty appeared by its weakness to offer more satisfactory chances to the lovers of freedom, than the return of a conqueror, strengthened by a popularity to which he had long been a stranger, and who, by the unauthorized resumption of a title which he had forfeited, and by the violent tenor of his proclamations from Lyons, seemed to seek the recovery of his throne, in the same spirit which had formerly deprived him of it.

Our limits prevent us from entering into any detail of the public acts of that short lived reign, or following our author in those numerous disquisitions with which he has, we think, somewhat overloaded the narrative of that interesting period. Suffice it to say, that his style, rather wordy and diffuse—his arrangement prejudicial to the story—and an eagerness of opinion, rather dangerous in the historian, are amply compensated by the able and honest spirit of his political views, and, above all, by his industrious and impartial relation of the measures and faults of the imperial government, during the hundred days of its duration. The usurpation of power—the return to despotic passions—the appeal to public feeling and national vanity on the part of the monarch—the menial vassalage and submission of a corrupt aristocracy—the crouching repentance of the *ancienne noblesse* on the one hand; on the other, the resistance of popular feeling—the manly spirit of the public bodies—the license of the press—the unanimous devotion of literary men to the cause of liberty—the republican spirit, the constitutional jealousy of the people, and the submission of the crown—the desire of peace, even in the army—and the general will in the nation to be free, are alternately offered in the great picture which no common industry or skill have here presented to our observation.

We shall offer but one or two remarks upon the character of the government and the nation, during that unparalleled crisis.

Confidently as we maintain the privilege of discussing the character and conduct of all those who fill the eye of the world, and influence its destinies, we desire not at all to enter into competition with those of our contemporaries, who, in a loathsome recapitulation of private vices, endeavor to complete the portrait which they sketch in ignorance and passion; nor can we admire their patriotic distrust of the national feeling, which they seem to think cannot be made sufficiently adverse to a defeated and degraded monarch, without heaping on his head imputations of a nature only to be gathered in converse with the basest of human beings. For us it is sufficient that he was ambitious, and a hater of liberty; and by all that we can collect from this work, and from other sources of information, we doubt whether his disposition was in the smallest degree altered, in this respect, by his year of mortification. Like many others, corrupted by high station, he seems always to have been willing to extend the promise of freedom on the peril of the moment; but never to have been satisfied of its actual advantage to the people, or of its being compatible with the existence of a powerful government. In all the conversations which he held with the eminent persons then labouring to extort from him concessions to the people, he is said to have manifested a total insensibility on this point. And in the council of state, held to discuss the subject of confiscation, he was so irritated at the attempt to deprive the crown of this power, that he exclaimed, "Je vois bien ce que vous voulez, Messieurs; mais cela ne sera pas. Il faut encore le bras, le vicaire bras de l'Empereur!—et vous le sentirez."

Neither had his misfortunes destroyed that entire confidence in himself, nor that belief in the superior intelligence which guided him, and made it impossible for him to share his power. His insensibility to reproach can only be accounted for by this favourite belief, which, indeed, appears at all times to have relieved his conscience from the torment of self-accusation. It is reported, and, we believe, with perfect truth, that when the suicide of Berthier was related to him by one of his ministers, he replied, "See the power of conscience! Berthier left France with his family, and all his fortune; but he had betrayed me, and he could not survive it—while I have never for one night been deprived of sleep!"

By far the most interesting and important part of this book, is the account given of the last of the three periods into which we divided it, in the commencement of this article; and it would, we presume, be difficult to obtain a more accurate, detailed, and impartial narration of the unparalleled crisis which took place after the return of Bonaparte to Paris, than is given by this anonymous writer, who seems, indeed, to be eminently qualified, by his general accomplishments, the opportunities he enjoyed, and the time he has since had to correct his first impressions, to settle our belief as to the leading events of that memorable period. We have already stated, that there are many matters of opinion

upon which we entirely disagree with him; and although we give him credit for a most faithful relation of all the outward acts of the French authorities during this struggle, must be allowed to differ with him in the confidence with which it would rather seem that certain characters had inspired him. We own, that several of those persons, to whom our author inclines to attribute virtues of a higher order, appear to us to have been feeble or treacherous; nor can we join with him, in attributing great merit to Lanjuinais, the president of an assembly, which is so well described in the following passage, that we cannot refuse to insert it.

"Thus the king, amongst the other benefits which must make his name dear to Frenchmen, may join that of having brought to a close the labors of a representation as moderate, as enlightened, and as truly national, as it is possible to assemble in France; a representation less tinged, perhaps, than might be expected, with the faults incident to popular bodies—and developing, each day, in circumstances of unparalleled difficulty and danger, qualities both of the head and heart, which will reflect honor on their labours, and, however unsuccessful, will not be wholly lost; for they will serve as an incitement and example for those whose future efforts shall meet with a more deserved and a better fate. The king himself, as well as his nation, must be considered infinitely their debtor, as the resolution of the secret committee, on the 22d of June, compelled Napoleon to abdicate, and saved his capital, if not his crown. It redounds, however, to their glory, that none of them made any merit of this action, as if performed in his favor, or from any other motive than that of saving their country from extremities. The royalists would not have had the requisite courage, which, in France, is to be found only amongst the friends of freedom. These partisans insult them with surviving their functions, and ridicule M. Manuel's quotation from Mirabeau, with a spite which shows how happy they would have been to witness the extirpation of the patriots. Their spirit has been already sufficiently displayed. They did not die on their curule chairs, it is true; but personal exposure is rendered respectable and useful by the time in which it is employed. The senators of Rome who were massacred by Brennus had a very different fate with posterity from those who were whipped naked in the squares by the German Otho, yet the courage of both and their cause were the same. The representatives would not have been shot, but sent to jail."—Vol. II. p. 168.

We believe a more accurate investigation would have informed the writer of these letters, that great suspicion attaches to the character of Lanjuinais, for having adjourned the assembly on the 7th of July, contrary to the remonstrances of many of its members; and by those who had formerly most confidence in his fidelity, it is generally believed that he was informed of the determination to obstruct their reassembling.—But the chief point upon which we would warn our readers against the excessive charity of this acute writer, is the character of Fouché, duke of Otranto, *the real sovereign of France during that eventful time*, and to whom he gives credit for many more virtues than, upon a fair examination of the facts, we can ever think him entitled to. His repeated reflections on this subject, indeed, and the very prominent figure which the personage in question makes in this extraordinary crisis, have induced us to attempt a short sketch of his life and character, taken from a pretty careful observation of his public acts during the manifold changes of the last quarter of a century.

He plunged into the revolution at an early age; and, either from enthusiasm or fear, very soon became attached to the violent party in the convention—assisted it in overturning the Girondine faction—and finally executed, and boasted of having executed, against that party and the royalists at Lyons, cruelties which would have done honor to Fobespierre himself, to whose ruin, after the murder of Danton, he especially contributed, on the 9th Thermidor.—From that hour, Fouché seems to have sought reconciliation with the moderate party—but in vain. He was, with the rest of the jacobins, expelled the convention—his arrest was decreed—and he escaped only by flight. In his concealment, he published an address to the convention, which, in place of justifying himself, accused that assembly of having authorized and provoked all the violent measures of which he had been the organ.

From that period to the year 1796, he was an object of suspicion as a terrorist. Whenever a jacobin conspiracy was discovered, he uniformly disappeared from the scene, and only reappeared when the attacks of the royalist party drove the directory to seek aid from the jacobins. In every such crisis, he resumed their principles, and sought eagerly for employment, from which he was only excluded by his former bad reputation. In 1797 he was sent on a mission to Italy—reappeared on the 18th of Fructidor, and was proposed for the ministry of police—but again rejected; and it was not until the revolution which took place in the directory in 1798, that he obtained that ministry. Syeyes then prevailed through the aid of the jacobins, but immediately became their enemy; and Fouché, who, as in 1794, hoped to reconcile himself with the nation, gave to his administration a very mild character, although he secretly protected the jacobins, and with difficulty escaped himself from the vengeance of the wily director. Upon the return of Bonaparte, whom Syeyes unwillingly associated to his designs of overturning the directory, Fouché conducted himself with such address, that, although known to be the friend of the jacobins, and himself under the

surveillance of Thurot, his chief secretary, who had orders to arrest him upon the first symptom of treachery, he outrode the storm; and, upon the 18th Brumaire, he remained in office, and without delay attached himself to Bonaparte.

Now, for the first time, his repentance could manifest itself in an effectual manner;—the minister supported his master in organizing a mitigated despotism; and, profiting by the violence of Bonaparte, he obtained for himself the reputation of a protector of all parties, and, spite of his former crimes, his name became universally popular in France. Nothing, indeed, was so easy as this manœuvre to those who knew Bonaparte. The emperor issued a violent decree—Fouché made the nature of it known before it was promulgated—blamed it in conversation—then only half executed it. The emperor was angry—the minister executed it entirely.—But in the mean time he was known to to have blamed it, and to have retarded its execution. Sometimes, too, the emperor was persuaded, in the interval, to mitigate its severity, so that, even by the delay, Fouché, no doubt, contributed to preserve the lives and fortunes of many of his countrymen.

Bonaparte soon perceived his minister's game—but the fear of his influence, and the power of his agents, was such, that he did not send him away till the end of three years. At last the blow was struck. Fouché quitted his first ministry, and although he had transported one hundred and thirty republicans for a conspiracy, in which he declared they were not concerned, and conducted to the scaffold four Frenchmen for a plot of which he denied the existence,—although he had let many royalists be shot, and had banished many more,—he had universally, on his retirement, the character of being a staunch friend both of the royalists and of the republicans.

The government of his successor, Regnier, was distinguished by the trial of Pichegru and Moreau, and the murder of the duke d'Enghien. In that season of gloom and terror, Fouché was again longed for; and Napoleon, in spite of his suspicions, found it prudent to replace him. He continued to practise again his old game—delay—bold and mysterious conversation—blame of his master's plans—which he nevertheless executed, when resignation was the alternative.

In 1810, Bonaparte suddenly abused him in council; obliged him to accept the government of Rome; then dismissed him from the ministry; sent him from Paris, and arrested him on the road. Fouché threatened discoveries, and escaped into banishment and obscurity, where he remained until the first abdication of the emperor. Fouché at first dreaded the counter-revolution; but seeing M. de Talleyrand in possession of the government, he not only took courage, but aspired to complete his whitewashing, by becoming the minister of Louis XVIII.

His conduct during the eleven months of that reign was conformable to this project. To the patriots, he insisted on the necessity of a popular ministry. To the princes, with whom he continually intrigued, he promised the consolidation of the monarchy, as he had effected that of Napoleon, and expressed sincere contrition for the death of Louis XVI. To the jacobins, he declared his adherence, and promoted their projects and conspiracies. His conversation was of a piece. He abused the Bourbons—then said they might be saved by making him a minister;—occasionally announced a plot—which he assured the royalists he endeavored to prevent for the sake of the king,—and the jacobins, to save their heads. A little treachery towards all parties heightened the zest, and proved the authenticity of his communications—and increased the anxiety which was to make his assistance valuable.

When Napoleon landed, Fouché offered himself to the court. The princes negotiated with him; but after the first conference, orders were given to arrest him. Some have thought that this arrest was a stratagem, to insure the employment of Fouché by the usurper; and the conduct of the former to Bonaparte, and the indiscretion of the royalists, who never ceased to count upon him, and to quote the proofs of their intelligence with him, might seem to warrant this notion; but we are more apt to attribute to the habitual distrust and weakness of that family, an act which, after all, could never conceal from Napoleon the constant intrigues of Fouché with the discarded dynasty. It is well known that he had said to one of the emigrating royalists, "Sauvez le Monarque—Je repends de la monarchie." This, it is true, may be attributed to the habitual lightness of his conversation, which is so great, that it is well known that when the duke of Wellington reproached him with having asserted to the chamber, in his message from the government, that the allies insisted on the restoration of the king, and challenged him to prove the truth of the assertion, he replied, "Que voulez-vous de plus? Le Roi, n'est-il pas dans son Palais? C'est tout ce qu'il faut."

Bonaparte, dependent and timid as he was at his last return, had no option about employing Carnot and Fouché; and the conduct of the latter from that moment became problematical. On the one hand, he used all means to attach to the imperial government, all those whose popularity gave strength to it. It is equally certain, that if he meditated at that time the overthrow of Napoleon; he did not confide his project to those friends of liberty whom he had rallied round the eagle, although many of them were his intimate friends. On the other hand, he did not fail to revert to his old tactics. In conversation, he blamed and treated with ridicule and contempt the projects of the emperor, whose government, he said, ran great risks. He allowed