

CHAP. I. its horrors and of the ruin which it had spread*. That immorality which a succession of vicious courts had encouraged by their example, was released by the revolution from all restraints of law and of external decorum. The religious sanction of marriage was destroyed, and the unbounded facility of divorce rendered the civil ceremony a mere form, which was no longer binding than till one of the parties might choose to throw off the engagement. The literature of France, always, to the disgrace of the nation, more licentious than that of any other country, became, under the perfect freedom of the press, obscene to a degree too loathsome for expression; the arts were prostituted to the same devilish purpose; and the line of distinction between vice and virtue, which can never be too strongly marked, was as completely effaced in general practice as in the theories of those sophists who have laboured to corrupt their fellow-creatures. Such things were beneath the consideration of a legislature which arrogated to itself the praise of philosophical liberality; or, rather, they accorded with the views of that foul philosophy, which, regarding man as a mere material machine, would degrade him to the condition of the beasts that perish. Gambling, also, which every government that regards the welfare of its subjects endeavours to check by salutary laws, was encouraged by authority in France. Every week two or three lotteries were drawn, in which the poorest of the poor were tempted to engage, there being shares as low as sixpence. Nor must it be supposed that this measure was defended upon

*Frequency
of divorces.*

*Obscene
publica-
tions.*

*Gaming-
houses esta-
blished by
government.*

* Of the persons who died in Paris in the year 1800, more than two-fifths expired in the hospitals: .. from this single fact some estimate may be formed of the numbers who were ruined by the revolution.

the specious ground that governments ought to regulate the vices which they cannot prevent, and therefore may allowably make them conducive to the advantage of the state. The French government legalized this vice in its fullest extent, took to itself a monopoly of the gaming houses, farmed them at one time, and afterwards administered them by agents of its own. This profligate measure originated with the Directory, and was continued by Buonaparte: whatever tended to make men prodigal and desperate accorded with the spirit of his system, and under that system every thing tended to that effect.

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Of all the previous measures of the revolutionists there was none which more entirely suited his views than the abolition of the law of primogeniture; that law, which perhaps, next to the institution of marriage, has produced more good, moral and political, than any other act of human legislation. The revolutionists were not mistaken when they believed that that structure of social order which it was their determination to destroy rested upon this basis; and they were too short-sighted to perceive that in breaking it up they were acting as pioneers to prepare the way for despotism. Buonaparte was thus enabled to surround himself with an aristocracy of his own making, who possessed no natural influence in the country, who represented none of its interests, who had no inheritance of honour to maintain and to bequeath, but were his mere creatures and dependents. In this respect the government of France under the Emperor Napoleon was assimilated to the barbarous despotisms of Persia and Turkey: and this was the direct consequence of a measure, which was intended to secure and perpetuate the triumph of liberty and equality! But it was not the only consequence: the evil extended throughout the whole middle class of society. The best motive whereby men

*Abolition
of primo-
geniture.*

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are induced to labour for the accumulation of wealth, the motive by which a propensity, mean in itself, is exalted and refined, was removed when the hope of building up a family was taken away. Mansions would not be erected, and domains ornamented and improved, when, upon the death of the proprietor, the estates were to be divided. There no longer existed the same means for that liberal expenditure which called forth ingenuity, encouraged the arts, and afforded employment to useful industry in all its branches. Properties were broken down, which in former times enabled the father to set his younger children fairly forward in the world, and the heads of families to assist their relatives, . . . from pride sometimes, if a kindlier principle were wanting. And as estates by this levelling act were divided into smaller and smaller portions at every descent, more adventurers were thrown upon the public with less parental aid. The political system of the revolutionists, like their godless philosophy, looked to the present alone, deriving no wisdom from the past, and having for the future neither care nor hope.

Barbarizing effects of this measure.

The growth of that middle order was thus prevented in which the strength of civil society mainly consists; which is the most favourable to the development of our intellectual faculties, and to the improvement of our moral nature; to knowledge, and contentment, and virtue; to public freedom, individual happiness, and general prosperity. No measure could more certainly tend to perpetuate barbarous institutions than one by which property was thus divided in every generation: and the state of things among the Huns and Tartars of old scarcely operated more exclusively to form a military people than all the circumstances of France under its military Emperor. The conscription was as indiscriminate as the

plague, and less to be averted by any human means : it mattered not what might be the inclinations of the youth, nor what the wishes, principles, and feelings of the parents ; he must take the chance of the lot, and as Buonaparte became more eager in his ambition and more prodigal in his expenditure of life, there was scarcely a chance of escaping from it. The chief object of education was to train up the boys in military habits and propensities ; and the military was the only profession which offered any thing to their hopes. Commerce had been almost destroyed, less by the maritime war than by the tyranny of Buonaparte, who, in the vain desire of ruining Great Britain, cared not what injury he brought upon his own subjects and his dependent states. Few persons would engage in the study of the liberal professions, because it was not in their free choice to follow them. The official business of the state no longer offered, as in former times, a sure and honourable path to promotion and public esteem ; it was reduced to the wretched art of doing whatever the Emperor required, supplying immediate wants by temporary shifts, enforcing oppressive edicts, defending acts of perfidy, inhumanity, and flagrant wrong, and promoting a system of despotism and delusion by all the aids of systematic falsehood. And the Church was in a state of degradation as complete as that to which Julian would have reduced it ; it had been stripped of its respectability as well as of its wealth. Buonaparte had hardly condescended to treat its re-establishment as any thing more than a mere matter of expediency : and when the Pope was brought to Paris for the purpose of crowning a man who had publicly professed himself an enemy to the Cross, the ceremonies of his reception were performed in a spirit of mockery which it was scarcely attempted to conceal. The Bishops of the new establishment, indeed, were not wanting in endeavours to deserve the Emperor's favour ; they uttered their maledictions against England,

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Degradation of the church.

*To sing
organ*

CHAP. I. as Balaam would fain have done against the Israelites ; and in strains of blasphemous adulation they addressed Buonaparte as one whom the Lord had brought out of the land of Egypt to be the man of his own right hand, the Cyrus whom God had chosen for the accomplishment of his inscrutable designs in regard to the nations of the earth, the Christ of providence, the lion of the tribe of Judah ! But if this impious flattery gratified the tyrant to whom it was addressed, it contributed still farther to degrade the clerical character in public estimation. The constitutional clergy were regarded as little better than schismatics by those persons who retained a rooted attachment to the religion of their fathers : hence, in the interior, the churches were deserted by the devout as well as by the infidel ; and they who were near enough the frontier went to partake of the ordinances and receive confirmation, from a foreign clergy, because they had no reverence for their own. Public opinion being so decidedly against the national priests, and their stipends precarious in all places, and at the best barely sufficient for a decent maintenance, it followed, as a natural consequence, that a supply of ministers for the service of the altar could not be found. Thus while the laws made every youth look to a military life as the probable allotment of destiny from which he could not escape, the circumstances of France were such as to take away all desire for any other profession.

*State of
Europe.*

At the head of a nation whose whole activity and talents were thus directed to war as the only pursuit, Buonaparte had realised those schemes of ambition which Louis XIV. had been prevented from accomplishing by Marlborough's consummate abilities as a statesman and a general. He had effected all, and more than all that Louis had designed. The Austrian Netherlands, and all the German states as far as the Rhine, were annexed to France, and the European powers who were

most injured and endangered by this usurpation acquiesced in it with hopeless submission. Beyond the Rhine the French were in possession of many strong places, which gave them access into the heart of Germany. Buonaparte was King of Italy, as well as Emperor of France. One of his brothers had been made King of Holland, a second King of Naples, and a third King of Westphalia, all in immediate dependence upon him as the head and founder of the Napoleonic dynasty. The Holy German Empire, . . . the Empire, as by a prouder and exclusive title it claimed to be called, . . . that venerable and mighty body of which the complicated confusion had hitherto, so it was boasted, been divinely preserved, was dissolved by the defection of its members, and the abdication of its chief. The secondary, and all the inferior powers of which it had been composed, had contracted under the name of the Confederation of the Rhine, federatively and individually an alliance with the Emperor Napoleon, offensive and defensive, whereby they were virtually rendered so many feuds of France: the force which they were to bring into the field was determined; and to enable them to raise their respective contingents, the conscription was introduced into these states, as the accompanying curse of French alliance. This Confederacy was extended from Bavaria and the frontiers of Switzerland, to the banks of the Elbe. Switzerland acknowledged Buonaparte as its protector, and continued in peace, with something of the appearance, but little of the reality of independence, till it should suit his purpose to assume the sovereignty without disguise. Prussia, beaten, humbled and dismembered, seemed to exist only by his sufferance. Austria, after three struggles against revolutionary France, each more lamentably misconducted and more disastrous than the last, divorced from the empire, despoiled of the Netherlands, the Brisgaw, the Frickthal, the Vorarlberg, the Tyrol, and all its

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Italian territories, had no other consolation in the ignominious peace to which it had been forced than that of seeing the house of Brandenburg soon afterwards reduced to a state of greater humiliation. Denmark was in alliance with France, the government rather than the nation co-operating heartily with Buonaparte. Sweden, with an insane king, and a discontented people, maintained against him a war which was little more than nominal. Russia, the only country which seemed secure in its distance, its strength, and the unanimity of its inhabitants, . . . the only continental state to which the rest of Europe might have looked as to a conservative power, . . . Russia appeared to be dazzled by Buonaparte's glory, duped by his insidious talents, and blindly subservient to his ambition. Spain was entirely subject to his control, its troops and its treasures were more at the disposal of the French government than of its own. Portugal had hitherto been suffered to remain neutral, because Buonaparte from time to time extorted large sums from the Court as the price of its neutrality, and because the produce of the Spanish mines found their way safely through the British cruisers, under the Portugueze flag. England alone perseveringly opposed the projects of this ambitious conqueror, and prevented the possibility of his accomplishing that scheme of universal dominion, which had it not been for her interference he believed to be within his reach.

*State of
England.*

The situation of England in the year 1807 was more extraordinary than any that is exhibited in the history of former times. After a war, which with the short interval of the peace of Amiens had continued fifteen years, and at the commencement of which all Europe had been leagued with her against revolutionary France, her last reliance upon the continental governments had failed ; most of her former allies were leagued against her, and it was manifest that the few states which still

preserved a semblance of neutrality, would soon in like manner be compelled into a confederacy with France. The French army and the English navy, two more tremendous powers than old times had ever seen, were opposed to each other without the possibility of coming in conflict. Masters as the French were on the continent, all thoughts of attacking them by land were at an end, and neither they nor their allies dared show their flag upon the sea. England could not in any way lessen the power of France, neither could France subdue, nor in any way weaken England. The threat of invasion had been laid aside: it had been seriously intended by Buonaparte, but the spirit with which the English people flew to arms, intimidated him, and his gun-boats were left to rot in the harbours where with so much cost and care they had been collected. Secured against any such evil by our fleets, and still more by our internal strength, we were carrying on the war equally without fear and without hope.

The state of our home politics was not less remarkable. For the first time Great Britain was under an administration without a name; its ostensible head the Duke of Portland never appeared in parliament, and was neither spoken of, nor thought of by the public. He deserves, however, an honourable memorial in British history, for having accepted office in a time of peculiar and extreme difficulty, and thereby enabled the King to form a ministry whose opinions were in unison with his own principles and feelings, and with the wishes and true interests of his people. The other ministers held their places less by their own strength than by the weakness of their opponents, for of all administrations, that to which they had succeeded, had been the most unpopular. From their want of influence in the country, the powerful families being mostly with the opposition, it was thought that they depended too much upon the personal favour of the sovereign, and were more literally the King's servants

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*Duke of
Portland's
administra-
tion.*

CHAP. I. than is consistent with the spirit of the constitution. Their talents had not been put fairly to the proof, and the nation had not as yet learned to appreciate the cool clear judgement of Lord Hawkesbury, the finished oratory of Mr. Canning, and the activity and intrepidity of Mr. Perceval, always ready and always right-minded. While Pitt and Fox were living, every man believed either in one or in the other; one party was perfectly satisfied that all the measures of the minister were right, and the other as confidently expected that notwithstanding the evil consequences of his mispolicy and his misfortunes, the country was to be saved as soon as their political redeemer came into power. From this comfortable state, wherein faith supplied the place of reason, they were disturbed by the death of both these leaders, neither of whom left a successor, but both exaggerated reputations. It became the general complaint that there was no man or set of men in whom the nation had any confidence. Some persons apprehended from this a dangerous indifference in the public toward parliament itself. Others hoped that as the people were weary of factious debates, parliament would no longer be made a theatre of faction, but that measures would be discussed with a view to the common weal, and no longer solely with reference to the party by which they were brought forward.

The opposition consisted of the most heterogeneous and discordant materials. The Grenville party had a just view of the dangers of the country, and a right feeling for its honour. They were sincerely attached to the monarchy, to the Church of England, and to the existing constitution of the state: therefore they steadily and manfully resisted the measures of pretended reform which were brought forward sometimes by mistaken, sometimes by designing men, as leading with sure tendency to a mob-government and all its certain horrors. They knew also that hopeless as the war might seem, it was our safest position, and

that peace could not be made without disgrace and imminent danger, so long as the continent of Europe was under the control of France. But while they thus entirely agreed with the government in the fundamental principles of its policy foreign and domestic, they opposed it in all the details of administration with a factious animosity, which seemed to show how deeply they resented their dismissal from power: and thus they lost with the nation much of that weight which they must otherwise have possessed by reason of their acknowledged ability, their constitutional principles, and their high personal character. Still, however, they were regarded with a certain degree of respect, which was not the case with the remains of Mr. Fox's party. The Foxites, from the beginning of the war, through all its changes had uniformly taken part against their country; consistent in this and in nothing else, they had always sided with the enemy, pleading his cause, palliating his crimes, extolling his wisdom, magnifying his power, vilifying and accusing their own government, depreciating its resources, impeding its measures, insulting its allies, calling for disclosures which no government ought to make, and forcing them sometimes from the weakness and the mistaken liberality of their opponents. Buonaparte, as Washington had done before him, relied upon their zeal and virulence; and they by their speeches and writings served him more effectually upon the continent and in France itself, than all the manifestoes of his ministers, and the diatribes of his own press. In future ages it will be thought a strange and almost incredible anomaly in politics, that there should have existed in the legislature of any country a regular party, organised and acknowledged as such, whose business it was to obstruct the proceedings of government, and render it by every possible means contemptible and odious to the people; a party always in semi-alliance with the enemy, who in times of difficulty

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The Foxites.

CHAP. and danger prophesied nothing but failure, disgrace, and ruin ;
 I. and whose systematic course of conduct, if it had been intended
 to bring about the fulfilment of their predictions, could not have
 been more exactly adapted to that object.

*Attempts to
 raise a cry
 for peace.*

The Foxites, before they were admitted into office, had pertinaciously insisted upon the practicability and ease of making peace ; this opinion could not be maintained while they were in power, and their dismissal was at this time so recent, that it could not as yet decently be resumed. Attempts, however, to raise a popular cry for peace were made by certain manufacturers whose trade was at a stand : they were assisted by many of those persons who in strict adherence to the phraseology as well as the principles of the puritans, call themselves religious professors, and by some other conscientious but inconsistent men, who while they admit that the necessity of war must be allowed in just cases, exclaim in all cases against the practice, setting their compassionate feelings in array against reason, and against the manlier virtues. A superstition concerning Buonaparte was mingled with this womanish sensibility. They who had not lost sight of his enormities doubted whether he were the Beast, whose number they contrived to discover in his name ; . . or Antichrist himself. Others whom he had in some degree conciliated by his various aggressions upon the papal power, forgave him his crimes because the Whore of Babylon happened to be among those whom he had plundered : they rather imagined him to be the Man upon the White Horse. In this, however, they were all agreed, that Providence had appointed him for some great* work : and it was an easy con-

*Superstition
 concerning
 Buonaparte.*

* “ The most serious and thinking people among all denominations begin to see something more than an ordinary providence in the recent overthrow of state after