FRANTZ FUNCK-BRENTANO

# LEGENDS OF THE BASTILLE

FRANTZ FUNCK-BRENTANO

# LEGENDS OF THE BASTILLE

**Frantz Funck-Brentano**

# Legends of the Bastille

EAN 8596547156734

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

# Table of Contents

# INTRODUCTION

Table of Contents

At the great Exhibition of 1889 I visited, in company with some friends, the reproduction of the Bastille, calculated to give all who saw it—and the whole world must have seen it—an entirely false impression.

You had barely cleared the doorway when you saw, in the gloom, an old man enveloped in a long white beard, lying on the "sodden straw" of tradition, rattling his chains and uttering doleful cries. And the guide said to you, not without emotion, "You see here the unfortunate Latude, who remained in this position, with both arms thus chained behind his back, for thirty-five years!"

This information I completed by adding in the same tone: "And it was in this attitude that he so cleverly constructed the ladder, a hundred and eighty feet long, which enabled him to escape."

The company looked at me with surprise, the guide with a scowl, and I slipped away.

The same considerations that prompted my intervention have suggested to M. Funck-Brentano this work on the Bastille, in which he has set the facts in their true light, and confronted the legends which everyone knows with the truth of which many are in ignorance.

For in spite of all that has been written on the subject by Ravaisson, in the introduction to his *Archives of the Bastille*, by Victor Fournel, in his *Men of the Fourteenth of July*, and by other writers, the popular idea of the internal administration of the Bastille in 1789 holds by the

description of Louis Blanc: “Iron cages, recalling Plessis-les-Tours[1] and the tortures of Cardinal La Balue![2]—underground dungeons, the loathsome haunts of toads, lizards, enormous rats, spiders—the whole furniture consisting of one huge stone covered with a little straw, where the prisoner breathed poison in the very air.... Enveloped in the shades of mystery, kept in absolute ignorance of the crime with which he was charged, and the kind of punishment awaiting him, he ceased to belong to the earth!”

If this Bastille of melodrama ever had any existence, the Bastille of the eighteenth century bore the least possible resemblance to it. In 1789, these dungeons on the ground floor of the fortress, with windows looking on the moats, were no longer reserved, as under Louis XV., for prisoners condemned to death, dangerous madmen, or prisoners who had been insolent, obstreperous, or violent; nor for warders guilty of breaches of discipline. At the time of Necker’s first ministry, the use of these dungeons had been abolished altogether.

The prisoner, put through an interrogation in the early days of his detention, was never left in ignorance of the “delinquency” with which he was charged, and had no reason to be concerned about the kind of punishment awaiting him; for there had been neither torture nor punishment of any kind at the Bastille for a hundred years.

Instead of a dungeon or a cage of iron, every prisoner occupied a room of fair size, its greatest defect being that it was rather poorly lighted by a narrow window, secured by bars, some of them projecting inwards. It was sufficiently

furnished; and there was nothing to hinder the prisoner from getting in more furniture from outside. Moreover, he could procure whatever clothing and linen he desired, and if he had no means to pay for them, money was supplied. Latude complained of rheumatism, and furs were at once given him. He wanted a dressing-gown of “red-striped calamanco”; the shops were ransacked to gratify him. A certain Hugonnet complained that he had not received the shirts “with embroidered ruffles” which he had asked for. A lady named Sauvé wanted a dress of white silk spotted with green flowers. In all Paris there was only a white dress with green stripes to be found, with which it was hoped that she would be satisfied.

Every room was provided with a fireplace or a stove. Firewood was supplied, and light; the prisoner could have as many candles as he pleased. Paper, pens, and ink were at his disposal; though he was deprived of them temporarily if he made bad use of them, like Latude, who scribbled all day long only to heap insults in his letters on the governor and the lieutenant of police. He could borrow books from the library, and was at liberty to have books sent in from outside. La Beaumelle had six hundred volumes in his room. He might breed birds, cats, and dogs—by no means being reduced to taming the legendary spider of Pellisson,[3] which figures also in the story of Lauzun,[4] and, indeed, of all prisoners in every age. Instruments of music were allowed. Renneville played the fiddle, and Latude the flute. There were concerts in the prisoners’ rooms and in the apartments of the governor.

Every prisoner could work at embroidery, at the turning lathe, or the joiner's bench, at pleasure. All whose conduct was irreproachable were allowed to come and go, to pay each other visits, to play at backgammon, cards, or chess in their rooms; at skittles, bowls, or *tonneau*[5] in the courtyard. La Rouërie asked for a billiard table for himself and his friends, and he got it.

The prisoners were permitted to walk on the platform of the fortress, from which they could see the people passing up and down the Rue Saint-Antoine and the vicinity, and watch the animated crowds on the boulevard at the hours when fashionable people were accustomed to take their drives. By the aid of telescopes and big letters written on boards they were able to communicate with the people of the neighbourhood, and, like Latude, to keep up a secret correspondence with the grisettes of the district. Michelet, with too obvious a design, declares that under Louis XVI. the regulations of the prison were more severe than under Louis XV., and that this promenade on the platform was done away with. There is not a word of truth in it. The promenade was forbidden only to those prisoners who, like the Marquis de Sade, took advantage of it to stir up riots among the passers-by; and from the accession of Louis XVI. and the visitation of Malesherbes,[6] the rule of the prison grew milder day by day.

Certain of the prisoners were invited to dine with the governor, and to walk in his gardens, in excellent company. Some were allowed to leave the fortress, on condition of returning in the evening; others were even allowed to remain out all night!

Those who had servants could have them in attendance if the servants were willing to share their captivity. Or they had room-mates, as was the case with Latude and Allègre.

In regard to food, the prisoners are unanimous in declaring that it was abundant and good. “I had five dishes at dinner,” says Dumouriez, “and five at supper, without reckoning dessert.” The Provost de Beaumont declared that he had quitted the Bastille with regret, because there he had been able to eat and drink to his heart’s content. Poultier d’Elmotte says: “M. de Launey had many a friendly chat with me, and sent me what dishes I wished for.” Baron Hennequin, a hypochondriac who found fault with everything, confesses nevertheless that they gave him more meat than he could eat. The Abbé de Buquoy affirms that he fared sumptuously, and that it was the king’s intention that the prisoners should be well fed. The splenetic Linguet owns, in his pamphlet, that he had three good meals a day, and that meat was supplied to him in such quantities that his suspicions were aroused: “They meant to poison me!” he says. But he omits to say that de Launey sent him every morning the menu for the day, on which he marked down with his own hand the dishes he fancied, “choosing always the most dainty, and in sufficient quantities to have satisfied five or six epicures.”

In Louis XIV.’s time, Renneville drew up the following list of dishes served to him: “Oysters, prawns, fowls, capons, mutton, veal, young pigeons; forcemeat pies and patties; asparagus, cauliflower, green peas, artichokes; salmon, soles, pike, trout, every kind of fish whether fresh-water or salt; pastry, and fruits in their season.” We find Latude

complaining that the fowls given him were not stuffed! M. Funck-Brentano tells the amusing story of Marmontel's eating by mistake the dinner intended for his servant, and finding it excellent.

Mdlle. de Launay, afterwards Madame de Staal, who was imprisoned for complicity in the Cellamare[7] plot, relates that on the first evening of her sojourn in the Bastille, she and her maid were both terrified by the strange and prolonged sound, beneath their feet, of a mysterious machine, which conjured up visions of an instrument of torture. When they came to inquire, they found that their room was over the kitchen, and the terrible machine was the roasting-jack!

The prisoners were not only allowed to receive visits from their relations and friends, but to keep them to dinner or to make up a rubber. Thus Madame de Staal held receptions in the afternoon, and in the evening there was high play. "And this time," she says, "was the happiest in my life."

Bussy-Rabutin received the whole court, and all his friends—especially those of the fair sex. M. de Bonrepos—an assumed name—was so comfortable in the Bastille that when he was directed to retire to the Invalides,[8] he could only be removed by force.

"I there spent six weeks," says Morellet, "so pleasantly, that I chuckle to this day when I think of them." And when he left, he exclaimed: "God rest those jolly tyrants!"

Voltaire remained there for twelve days, with a recommendation from the lieutenant of police that he should be treated with all the consideration "due to his genius."

The objection may be raised that these cases are all of great lords or men of letters, towards whom the government of those days was exceptionally lenient. (How delightful to find writers put on the same footing with peers!) But the objection is groundless.

I have referred to Renneville and Latude, prisoners of very little account. The one was a spy; the other a swindler. In the three-volume narrative left us by Renneville, you hear of nothing but how he kept open house and made merry with his companions. They gambled and smoked, ate and drank, fuddled and fought, gossiped with their neighbours of both sexes, and passed one another pastry and excellent wine through the chimneys. How gladly the prisoners in our jails to-day would accommodate themselves to such a life! Renneville, assuredly, was not treated with the same consideration as Voltaire; but, frankly, would you have wished it?

As to Latude—who was supplied with dressing-gowns to suit his fancy—the reader will see from M. Funck-Brentano's narrative that no one but himself was to blame if he did not dwell at Vincennes[9] or in the Bastille on the best of terms—or even leave his prison at the shortest notice, by the front gate, and with a well-lined pocket.

For that was one of the harsh measures of this horrible Bastille—to send away the poor wretches, when their time was expired, with a few hundred livres in their pockets, and to compensate such as were found to be innocent! See what M. Funck-Brentano says of Subé, who, for a detention of eighteen days, received 3000 livres (£240 to-day), or of others, who, after an imprisonment of two years, were

consoled with an annual pension of 2400 francs of our reckoning. Voltaire spent twelve days in the Bastille, and was assured of an annual pension of 1200 livres for life. What is to be said now of our contemporary justice, which, after some months of imprisonment on suspicion, dismisses the poor fellow, arrested by mistake, with no other indemnity than the friendly admonition: “Go! and take care we don’t catch you again!”

Some wag will be sure to say that I am making out the Bastille to have been a palace of delight. We can spare him his little jest. A prison is always a prison, however pleasant it may be; and the best of cheer is no compensation for the loss of liberty. But there is a wide difference, it will be granted, between the reality and the notion generally held—between this “hotel for men of letters,” as some one called it, and the hideous black holes of our system of solitary confinement. I once said that I should prefer three years in the Bastille to three months at Mazas.[10] I do not retract.

Linguet and Latude, unquestionably, were the two men whose habit of drawing the long bow has done most to propagate the fables about the Bastille, the falsity of which is established by incontrovertible documents. Party spirit has not failed to take seriously the interested calumnies of Linguet, who used his spurious martyrdom to advertise himself, and the lies of Latude, exploiting to good purpose a captivity which he had made his career.

Let us leave Linguet, who, after having so earnestly urged the demolition of the Bastille, had reason to regret it at the Conciergerie at the moment of mounting the revolutionary tumbril, and speak a little of the other, this

captive who was as ingenious in escaping from prison, when locked up, as in hugging his chains when offered the means of release.

For the bulk of mankind, thirty-five years of captivity was the price Latude paid for a mere practical joke: the sending to Madame de Pompadour of a harmless powder that was taken for poison. The punishment is regarded as terrific: I do not wonder at it. But if, instead of relying on the gentleman's own fanfaronades, the reader will take the trouble to look at the biography written by M. Funck-Brentano and amply supported by documents, he will speedily see that if Latude remained in prison for thirty-five years, it was entirely by his own choice; and that his worst enemy, his most implacable persecutor, the author of all his miseries was—himself.

If, after the piece of trickery which led to his arrest, he had followed the advice of the excellent Berryer, who counselled patience and promised his speedy liberation, he might have got off with a few months of restraint at Vincennes, where his confinement was so rigorous that he had only to push the garden gate to be free!

That was the first folly calculated to injure his cause, for the new fault was more serious than the old. He was caught; he was locked in the cells of the Bastille: but the kind-hearted Berryer soon removed him. Instead of behaving himself quietly, however, our man begins to grow restless, to harangue, to abuse everybody, and on the books lent him to scribble insulting verses on the Pompadour. But they allow him an apartment, then give him a servant, then a companion, Allègre. And then comes the famous escape.

One hardly knows which to wonder at the most: the ingenuity of the two rogues, or the guileless management of this prison which allows them to collect undisturbed a gimlet, a saw, a compass, a pulley, fourteen hundred feet of rope, a rope ladder 180 feet long, with 218 wooden rungs; to conceal all these between the floor and the ceiling below, without anyone ever thinking to look there; and, after having cut through a wall four and a half feet thick, to get clear away without firing a shot!

They were not the first to get across those old walls. Renneville mentions several escapes, the most famous being that of the Abbé de Buquoy.[11] But little importance seems to have been attached to them.

With Allègre and Latude it was a different matter. The passers-by must have seen, in the early morning, the ladder swinging from top to bottom of the wall, and the escape was no longer a secret. The Bastille is discredited. It is possible, then, to escape from it. The chagrined police are on their mettle. There will be laughter at their expense. The fugitives are both well known, too. They will take good care to spread the story of their escape, with plenty of gibes against the governor, the lieutenant of police, the ministry, the favourite, the king! This scandal must be averted at any cost; the fugitives must be caught!

And we cannot help pitying these two wretches who, after a flight so admirably contrived, got arrested so stupidly: Allègre at Brussels, through an abusive letter written to the Pompadour; Latude in Holland, through a letter begging help from his mother.

Latude is again under lock and key, and this time condemned to a stricter confinement. And then the hubbub begins again: outcries, demands, acts of violence, threats! He exasperates and daunts men who had the best will in the world to help him. He is despatched to the fortress of Vincennes, and promised his liberty if he will only keep quiet. His liberation, on his own showing, was but a matter of days. He is allowed to walk on the bank of the moat. He takes advantage of it to escape again!

Captured once more, he is once more lodged at Vincennes, and the whole business begins over again. But they are good enough to consider him a little mad, and after a stay at Charenton,[12] where he was very well treated, he at last gets his dismissal, with the recommendation to betake himself to his own part of the country quietly. Ah, that would not be like Latude! He scampers over Paris, railing against De Sartine, De Marigny; hawking his pamphlets; claiming 150,000 livres as damages!—and, finally, extorting money from a charitable lady by menaces!

This is the last straw. Patience is exhausted, and he is clapped into Bicêtre[13] as a dangerous lunatic. Imagine his fury and disgust!

Let us be just. Suppose, in our own days, a swindler, sentenced to a few months' imprisonment, insulting the police, the magistrates, the court, the president; sentenced on this account to a longer term, escaping once, twice, a third time; always caught, put in jail again, sentenced to still longer terms: then when at last released, after having done his time, scattering broadcast insulting libels against the chief of police, the ministers, the parliament, and insisting

on the President of the Republic paying him damages to the tune of 150,000 francs; to crown it all, getting money out of some good woman by working on her fears! You will agree with me that such a swaggering blade would not have much difficulty in putting together thirty-five years in jail!

But these sentences would of course be public, and provide no soil for the growth of those legends to which closed doors always give rise. Yet in all that relates to the causes and the duration of the man’s imprisonment, his case would be precisely that of Latude—except that for him there would be no furs, no promenading in the gardens, no stuffed fowls for his lunch!

Besides some fifty autograph letters from Latude, addressed from Bicêtre to his good angel, Madame Legros, in which he shows himself in his true character, an intriguing, vain, insolent, bragging, insupportable humbug, I have one, written to M. de Sartine, which Latude published as a pendant to the pamphlet with which he hoped to move Madame de Pompadour to pity, and in which every phrase is an insult. This letter was put up at public auction, and these first lines of it were reproduced in the catalogue:—

“I am supporting with patience the loss of my best years and of my fortune. I am enduring my rheumatism, the weakness of my arm, and a ring of iron around my body for the rest of my life!”

A journalist, one of those who learn their history from Louis Blanc, had a vision of Latude for ever riveted by a ring of iron to a pillar in some underground dungeon, and exclaimed with indignation: “A ring of iron! How horrible!”

And it was only a linen band!

That fabulous iron collar is a type of the whole legend of the unfortunate Latude!

Everything connected with the Bastille has assumed a fabulous character.

What glorious days were those of the 13th and 14th of July, as the popular imagination conjures them up in reliance on Michelet, who, in a vivid, impassioned, picturesque, dramatic, admirable style, has written, not the history, but the romance of the French Revolution!

Look at his account of the 13th. He shows you all Paris in revolt against Versailles, and with superb enthusiasm running to arms to try issues with the royal army. It is fine as literature. Historically, it is pure fiction.

The Parisians were assuredly devoted to the “new ideas,” that is, the suppression of the abuses and the privileges specified in the memorials of the States General; in a word, to the reforms longed for by the whole of France. But they had no conception of gaining them without the concurrence of the monarchy, to which they were sincerely attached. That crowd of scared men running to the Hôtel de Ville to demand arms, who are represented by the revolutionary writers as exasperated by the dismissal of Necker and ready to undermine the throne for the sake of that Genevan, were much less alarmed at what was hatching at Versailles than at what was going on in Paris. If they wished for arms, it was for their own security. The dissolution of the National Assembly, which was regarded as certain, was setting all minds in a ferment, and ill-designing people took advantage of the general uneasiness and agitation to drive matters to the worst extremities, creating disorder everywhere. The

police had disappeared; the streets were in the hands of the mob. Bands of ruffians—among them those ill-favoured rascals who since the month of May had been flocking, as at a word of command, into Paris from heaven knows where, and who had already been seen at work, pillaging Réveillon's[14] establishment—roamed in every direction, insulting women, stripping wayfarers, looting the shops, opening the prisons, burning the barriers. On July 13 the electors of Paris resolved on the formation of a citizen militia for the protection of the town, and the scheme was adopted on the same day by every district, with articles of constitution, quoted by M. Funck-Brentano, which specify the intentions of the signatories. It was expressly in self-defence against the "Brigands," as they were called, that the citizen militia was formed: "To protect the citizens," ran the minutes of the Petit-Saint-Antoine district, "against the dangers which threaten them each individually." "In a word," says M. Victor Fournel, "the dominating sentiment was fear. Up till the 14th of July, the Parisian middle-classes showed far more concern at the manifold excesses committed by the populace after Necker's dismissal than at the schemes of the court." And M. Jacques Charavay, who was the first to publish the text of the minutes in question, says not a word too much when he draws from them this conclusion: "The movement which next day swept away the Bastille might possibly have been stifled by the National Guard, if its organization had had greater stability."

All that was wanting to these good intentions was direction, a man at the helm, and particularly the support of Besenval. But his conduct was amazing! He left Versailles

with 35,000 men and an order signed by the king—obtained not without difficulty—authorizing him “to repel force by force.” Now let us see a summary of his military operations:—

On the 13th, towards four o’clock in the afternoon, a skirmish of the German regiment on the Place Vendôme, where it came into collision with the “demonstration”—as we should say to-day—which was displaying busts of Necker and the Duke of Orleans, and dispersed it.

At six o’clock, a march of the same horse soldiers to the swinging-bridge of the Tuileries, where they had five or six chairs thrown at their head; and the massacre, by M. de Lambesc, of the legendary grey-beard who, an hour after, was describing his tragic end at the Palais-Royal!

At nine o’clock, a military promenade of the same regiment along the boulevards. A volley from the Gardes Françaises slew two of their number, and the regiment beat a retreat without returning fire, to the great surprise of M. de Maleissye, officer of the Guards. For, by his own confession, if the cavalry had charged, it would easily have routed the Gardes Françaises “in the state of drunkenness in which they then were.”

And Besenval, terrified at such a resistance, assembled all his troops, shut himself up with them in the Champ de Mars, and did not move another step!

We ask ourselves, “Was he a fool? or was he a traitor?” He was a fool, for he thought he had “three hundred thousand men” in front of him, took every excited person for a rebel, and did not understand that out of every hundred

Parisians there were ninety who were relying on him to bring the mutineers to reason.

He had no confidence in his troops, he said.

It was rather for them to have no confidence in him, and to lose heart utterly at such a spectacle of cowardice. But he was slandering them. One solitary regiment showed disloyalty. And if he had only given the Swiss the word to march, their conduct on August 10 gives ample proof that they could have been depended on.

“And then,” says he again, “I was fearful of letting loose civil war!”

Indeed! And so a soldier going to suppress a revolt is not to run the risk of fighting!

Last reason of all: “I requested orders from Versailles—and did not get them!”

What, then, had he in his pocket?

Finally, after having sent word to Flesselles and De Launey to maintain their position till he arrived, and after having allowed the arms of the Invalides to be looted under his eyes without a single effort to save them, he waited till the Bastille was taken before making up his mind to leave the Champ de Mars, and to return quietly to Versailles with his 35,000 men, who had not fired a shot!

Ah! those were the days for rioting!

“On July 13,” says Michelet, “Paris was defending herself.” (Against whom?) “On the 14th, she attacked! A voice wakened her and cried, ‘On, and take the Bastille!’ And that day was the day of the entire People!”

Admirable poetry; but every word a lie!

Listen to Marat, who is not open to suspicion, and who saw things at closer quarters. “The Bastille, badly defended, was captured by a handful of soldiers and a gang of wretches for the most part Germans and provincials. The Parisians, those everlasting star-gazers, came there out of curiosity!”

In reality, Michelet’s “entire people” reduces itself to a bare thousand assailants, of whom three hundred at most took part in the fight: Gardes Françaises and deserters of all arms, lawyers’ clerks, and citizens who had lost their heads: fine fellows who thought themselves engaged in meritorious work in rushing on these inoffensive walls; bandits attracted by the riot which promised them theft and murder with impunity. And a number of mere spectators—spectators above all!

“I was present,” says Chancellor Pasquier, “at the taking of the Bastille. What is called the fight was not serious. The resistance was absolutely nil. The truth is, that this grand fight did not cause an instant’s alarm to the spectators, who had flocked up to see the result. Among them there were many ladies of the greatest elegance. In order to get more easily to the front they had left their carriages at a distance. By my side was Mdlle. Contat, of the Comédie Française. We stayed to see the finish, and then I escorted her on my arm to her carriage in the Place Royale.”

“The Bastille was not taken; truth must be told, it surrendered.” It is Michelet himself who makes this statement, and he adds: “what ruined it was its own evil conscience!”

It would be too simple to acknowledge that it was the incapacity of its governor.

There is no connoisseur in old prints but is acquainted with those last-century views which represent the taking of the Bastille. The platform of the fortress bristles with cannon all firing together, “belching forth death,”—without the slightest attention on the part of the assailants, for all the balls from this artillery, passing over their heads, would only kill inoffensive wayfarers without so much as scratching a single one of the besiegers!

And the Bastille did not fire a single shot in self-defence!

In the morning, at the request of Thuriot de la Rozière, De Launey had readily consented to the withdrawal of the fifteen cannon of the platform from their embrasures, and had blocked up the embrasures with planks. Of the three guns which later on he ranged batterywise before the entrance gate, not one was effective, and the discharge attributed to one of them came from a piece of ordnance on the wall.

He placed such absolute reliance on succour from Besenval that, on evacuating the arsenal and getting the whole garrison together into the Bastille—eighty-two Invalides and M. de Flue’s thirty-two Swiss—he had forgotten to increase his stock of provisions. Now, the Bastille had no reserve of provisions. Every morning, like a good housewife, it received the goods ordered the night before, brought by the different purveyors; on this day, they were intercepted. So it happened that at three o’clock in the afternoon the garrison was without its usual rations, and the Invalides, who had been for a week past going in and out of

all the inns in the neighbourhood, and were disposed to open the doors to their good friends of the suburbs, used the scantiness of their rations as a pretext for mutiny, for refusing to fight, and for muddling the brains, never very clear, of the unhappy De Launey.

“On the day of my arrival,” says De Flue, “I was able to take this man’s measure from the absolutely imbecile preparations which he made for the defence of his position. I saw clearly that we should be very poorly led in case of attack. He was so struck with terror at the idea of it that, when night came on, he took the shadows of trees for enemies! Incapable, irresolute, devoting all his attention to trifles and neglecting important duties—such was the man.”

Abandoned by Besenval, instead of cowing his Invalides into obedience by his energy, and maintaining his position to famishing point behind walls over which the balls of the besiegers flew without killing more than one man, De Launey lost his head, made a feint of firing the powder magazine, capitulated, and opened his gates to men who, as Chateaubriand says, “could never have cleared them if he had only kept them shut.”

If this poor creature had done his duty, and Besenval had done his, things would have had quite a different complexion. That is not to say that the Revolution would have been averted—far from it! The Revolution was legitimate, desirable, and, under the generous impulse of a whole nation, irresistible. But it would have followed another bent, and would have triumphed at a slighter cost, with less ruin and less bloodshed. The consequences of the 14th of July were disastrous. The mere words, “The Bastille is

taken!” were the signal for the most frightful disorders throughout France. It seemed as though those old walls were dragging down with them in their fall all authority, all respect, all discipline; as though the floodgates were being opened to every kind of excess. Peasants went about in bands, ravaging, pillaging, firing the châteaux, the burghers’ houses, and burning alive those who fell into their hands. The soldiers mutinied, insulted their chiefs, and fell to carousing with the malefactors whom they set free. There was not a town or village where the mob did not put on menacing airs, where decent people were not molested by the brawlers of the clubs and the street-corners. Such violence led to a rapid reaction, and there were numerous defections—of men who, on the very eve of the outbreak, among the magistracy, the army, the clergy, the nobility, though sympathizing with the new ideas, abruptly cut themselves loose from the movement, like the good Duke de la Rochefoucauld, who exclaimed, “Liberty is not entered by such a door as this!” Hovering between the desire and the fear of granting the promised reforms, urged on one side to resistance, on the other to submission, and more than ever destitute of all political acumen and all will power, the king went to Paris, and, bending before the revolt, approved of the assassination of his most faithful servants—and took, on that fatal day, his first step towards the scaffold! Henceforth, under the pressure of the populace, to whom its first success had shown the measure of its strength, and who became every day more exacting, more threatening, the Revolution was to go on in its perverse course, stumbling at every step, until it came to the orgy of

’93, which, properly speaking, was only the systematizing of brigandage. Malouet was right indeed: what we symbolize in our festival of the 14th of July is not the rising sun, the dawn of Liberty; it is the first lurid lightning flash of the Terror!

Doctor Rigby, after having walked up and down the whole afternoon in the Jardin Monceau without the least idea of what was going on in the Suburb Saint-Antoine, returned in the evening to his house near the Palais-Royal. He saw the mob reeling in drunkenness. Men and women were laughing, crying, and embracing one another: “The Bastille is taken! At last we are free!” And not the least enthusiastic were those very men of the citizen militia who, ready yesterday to fight the insurrection, were to-day hailing its triumph! The first sabre brandished by the first national guard was in point of fact that of Joseph Prudhomme![15]

All at once this delirious crowd shudders, parts asunder with cries of horror!

Down the Rue Saint-Honoré comes a yelling mob of wine-soaked malefactors, bearing along, at the ends of two pikes, the still bleeding heads of De Launey and De Flesselles!

And the silly folk, so madly rejoiced by the fall of an imaginary tyranny which has not even the wits to defend itself, go their several ways, struck dumb with consternation.

For here the Real is making its entrance!

Do not fancy that because the Bastille has opened its gates, the legends which give it so cruel a name are going to vanish into thin air, like the phantoms of an ancient château when light is let in.

While Michelet's "entire Paris" is making short work of the Invalides who surrendered the place; cutting in pieces the man who prevented its blowing up; slaughtering Major de Losme, the friend and benefactor of the prisoners; torturing the hapless De Launey, who, from the Bastille to the Hôtel de Ville, stabbed, slashed, hacked with sabres and pikes and bayonets, is finally decapitated by the aid of a short knife—an episode which Michelet skilfully slurs over—while all the criminals of the district, crowding along in the wake of the combatants, are rushing to the official buildings, looting, smashing, throwing into the moats furniture, books, official papers, archives, the remnants of which will be collected with such difficulty—some good people are saying to themselves: "But come now, there are some prisoners! Suppose we go and set them free?"

Here let us see what Louis Blanc has to say:—

"Meanwhile the doors of the cells" (he insists on the cells) "were burst in with a mighty effort; the prisoners were free! Alas! for three of them it was too late! The first, whose name was the Comte de Solages, a victim for seven years of the incomprehensible vengeance of an implacable father, found neither relatives who would consent to acknowledge him, nor his property, which had become the prey of covetous collateral heirs! The second was called Whyte. Of what crime was he guilty, accused, of, at any rate, suspected? No one has ever known! The man himself was questioned in vain. In the Bastille he had lost his reason. The third, Tavernier, at the sight of his deliverers, fancied he saw his executioners coming, and put himself on the defensive. Throwing their arms round his neck they