

# **FRANCE AND HEREDITARY MONARCHY**

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France and hereditary monarchy by John Bigelow

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**JOHN BIGELOW**

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JOHN BIGELOW.

"Dic quibus in terris inscripti nomina regum  
Nascuntur flores."

—*Virg. Ec. iii. 106.*

"Say, Daphnis, say, in what glad soil appears  
A wondrous tree that esered monarchs bears."

—*POPE'S 1st Pastoral, Spring, 85.*



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1871.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE SECONDARY FRENCH REVOLUTION OF 1871— WHY THE THIERS DYNASTY IS RESISTED.

EVERY one has read the story of the pet monkey, who, profiting by the momentary absence of his mistress from the nursery, took her baby from the cradle, and ran off with it to the roof of the house. Of course the parents, when they discovered the peril of their child, were nearly distracted. Their first impulse was to club, stone, or shoot the monkey. The love they bore the child, however, counselled them to control their indignation, lest they should provoke the treacherous brute to seek safety or revenge by dropping it. CHAP. I.

Instead, therefore, of pursuing, with weapons and violence, the enemy who held in his hands such a priceless hostage, they proceeded to conciliate him, and finally persuaded him to restore their child to their arms. The process was somewhat humiliating to their pride; it seemed less than strict justice to the thievish monkey, but by sparing his, they saved another's life that to them was worth more than the lives of a wilderness of monkeys.



CHAP. I.

This familiar legend contains a profound political lesson. It shows how wise it may be to forego the strict assertion of our extreme rights, when their assertion would cost more than the rights themselves are worth ; that conflicts often arise, of which, through the wickedness, the perversity, or ignorance of both parties, a transaction is the only possible or, at least, wise solution. Every one commends the sober second thought of these prudent parents, and would have deemed them equally brutal with the monkey if they had subordinated the safety of their child to his chastisement.

Mr Thiers may never have heard this story ; if he has, he does not seem to have mastered the important lesson it teaches. He has deemed it more important to vindicate his authority, and the supremacy of the Versailles Government, than to save Paris. Instead of conciliating a population with a famous or infamous capacity for disorderly excesses, he refuses to treat with them in arms, he invites a foreign power to aid him in closing up all avenues for their escape, and drives to desperation a community which was in possession of a very large proportion of the most cherished and precious monuments of human art and civilisation, not to speak of living hostages, whose blood now cries up against him from the ground. With an army of French soldiers, and the connivance of foreign allies, the Chief Executive of France has conquered its capital, where he has asserted the supremacy of his authority at the expense of nearly everything

that rendered that capital the admiration of the world. CHAP. I.

What next? To what issues are all this bloodshed and devastation consecrated? Do they imply the return of the Age of Iron to France? Are Frenchmen henceforth to be ruled by force without reason, and by terror without love? Are the resources of modern statesmanship and eighteen centuries of Christian civilisation exhausted by the installation of Mr Thiers and his colleagues upon the smouldering ruins of the Tuilleries?

Mr Guizot, with a natural and patriotic desire to excuse the dissensions among his country people, permitted himself recently\* to say of Paris, that "the glory of the siege is followed by the disgrace of falling under the dominion of a violent and incapable mob, and becoming a prey to a detestable and absurd outbreak of demagogic fury." A mob from which prisoners are taken in lots of 25,000 at a time, and stands of arms in lots of 350,000 at a time, is something new in history. But might not Mr Guizot, with equal propriety, have characterised in as opprobrious terms the mobs which brought the heads of Louis XVI. and of Charles I. to the block; and yet the one put an end to the reign of royal favourites and courtesans in France, and the other saved England from a relapse to a double-headed sovereignty and an era of dragonnades.†

\* Letter to the *London Times*, April 13, 1871.

† With no disposition to extenuate the brutal crimes perpetrated on either side during the memorable seven days of May, I permit myself to cite an extract from a private letter of an intelligent observer

The illustrious historian adds in the next succeeding paragraph—

“The National Assembly elected during the crisis is the very reverse of revolutionary, and the French nation evidently identifies itself and sympathises with the National Assembly. Paris alone remains an alien to the national feeling, and has resigned herself to the will of an anarchical faction.”

To speak of Paris, the heart of France, which, by its measured beat, has circulated the civilisation of Europe for centuries; of Paris, with its press, its academies, its libraries, its professional organisations, its industries, with its two millions of people, and the favourite pilgrimage of all nations, as alien to the national feeling of France, as resigned to the will of a faction, curiously illustrates the sort of colour-blindness which is apt to appear among statesmen as the precursors or accompaniments of perplexing changes.

It is hard for us to estimate the many beneficent effects of a storm which has thrown down our chimneys, washed away our bridges, deluged our

who enjoys the rare distinction of having resided uninterruptedly in Paris since long previous to the commencement of the war with Germany. It is dated the 6th of June:—“The material destruction is much less, probably, than the newspapers have led you to suppose. . . . Heaven knows, and the other place, that the waste is bad enough. It does not need to be exaggerated. Take the whole of it for the last two months, and as much or more has been done by Versailles guns than by the Communeux. And it is well enough to remember—what most folks pay no heed to—this fact, that the latter did not fire a building or assassinate a hostage till after the Versaillais had begun executing prisoners; well enough to keep in mind that whatever the Communeux *might* have done, their *assassinations* were, to the Versaillais *executions*, less than one to ten, both assassinations and executions being of unarmed or disarmed persons.”