

**LIFE OF GENERAL LAFAYETTE,  
WITH A CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF  
HIS CHARACTER AND PUBLIC  
ACTS, IN TWO VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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Life of General Lafayette, with a Critical Estimate of His Character and Public Acts, In Two Volumes, Vol. II by Bayard Tuckerman

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BY  
BAYARD TUCKERMAN

*IN TWO VOLUMES*

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# LIFE OF GENERAL LAFAYETTE.

## CHAPTER I.

Work of the Assembly. — Lafayette's Excessive Spirit of Innovation. — His Relations with the Court. — With Mirabeau. — Management of the National Guard. — Political Position. — Insurrection the most holy of Duties. — The Federation.

IN October began the second emigration, and for two years the nobility continued to oppose the progress of the Revolution by going into voluntary exile. Only an honorable few remained with the king to share his trials, or took part in the efforts of the Assembly to establish a constitutional monarchy.

Abandoned by what should have been the conservative element in the community, the French people continued the work of building up a new State as different as possible from the old. The Assembly had become the sole authority in France, but its incapacity for the exercise of executive power was evident from the first. The great number of its members, the extreme disorder, lack of system, and excitability of its meetings, interfered fatally with the progress of business. Ridiculous interruptions continually took place, and silly deputations broke in on the most serious discussions with long addresses. The specta-

tors in the galleries frequently dictated the subjects to be considered and influenced the votes by applause and threats. For some months almost nothing was attempted but to destroy what remained of the old *régime*; and the destruction went on so precipitately as to involve the good with the bad. A vast number of monopolies, injurious privileges, restrictions on trade, and unjust taxes were done away with. The oppressive laws against the Protestants were repealed, and an effort made to reform the criminal system; but the changes were too sudden and sweeping. With other ancient institutions went the Church, whose property was confiscated and worship interfered with, leaving the people without a religious, as it was already without a political, guide. The passion for innovation pervaded the whole nation. A general demand called for the destruction of everything old, but no two men could agree upon the necessary substitutes.

Two distinct parties formed in the Assembly. On the right, under the leadership of Cazalès, the Abbé Maury, and the Comte de Montlosier, sat the conservative deputies who wished to establish on a sound basis the reforms already begun, and who opposed further innovations. On the left, Charles de Lameth, Barnave, Duport, and Talleyrand led the more radical party, whose opinions, though advanced, were conservative compared to those destined in the future to rule that side of the house. Mirabeau belonged at first to the left; but he was the only man of eminent

abilities to appreciate the dangers toward which the country was drifting, and this foresight inclined him more and more to take the conservative side.

During the winter of 1789-90, Lafayette's duties as the commander of the National Guard, and as the virtual chief of police, prevented his taking any important part in the deliberations of the Assembly. For the task of preserving order, he was much more fitted than for that of making a constitution. Like the rest of his countrymen, he was unfamiliar with the principles of practical statesmanship. He had never had any mental training likely to assist him in the solution of political problems. His education had been that of a *gentilhomme* and a soldier. His enthusiasm for free institutions, untempered by experience, caused him to follow easily in the rush for innovation. He fully sympathized in the work of the Assembly, and had unbounded confidence in the constitution then framing. The genuineness of his republican principles, and the precipitancy with which he was ready to adopt new measures in accordance with them, is illustrated by a scene in the Assembly in which he took a prominent part. The deputies, as usual, were discussing a trivial matter, while important ones remained untouched. The subject was the removal of some figures of slaves from the base of the statue of Louis XIV. A deputy named Lambel suddenly interrupted the discussion by shouting that not only should all statues be removed, but all monuments of pride, such as titles of nobility. The suggestion