CHAPTER LXVI

EQUALITY AS KING

We are now to enter the presence of the last of the Bourbons who has sat on the throne of France. The great King, Louis XIV, had a brother, Philippe, whom, according to custom, he created Duke of Orleans. His great-grandson was Philippe Égalité, that Prince whose democracy was rewarded by the guillotine. The son of Philippe Égalité was King Louis Philippe. And he reigned from the year 1830 to the year 1848. Let Greville proceed:

December 26, 1847: Lamartine's *Histoire des Girondins* is the most successful book that has been published for many years. He is the Jenny Lind of literature; his book is on every table and in every mouth; it just suits the half informed and the idle, whom it dazzles, amuses, and interests; but his apparent partiality shocks the humanity of the age; and the generality of readers are unable to comprehend his philosophical analysis, and psychological theories of Robespierre's character. One of his [Lamartine's] most striking anecdotes is the conversation he gives between Louis Philippe and Danton, in which, according to Lamartine, Danton predicts to the young Duc de Chartres that he will one day be King, and tells him when that happens to remember the prophecy of Danton. I last night asked the Duc de Broglie if that anecdote is true. He said it was not true: the King indeed had had a conversation with Danton, when the latter said to him, "Young man, what do you do here? Your place is with the army." So much of it is true but the rest—the essential part, the prediction—is all false. The Duke told me he had read the King's own account of the conversation in his own journal, where it is recorded as he described. He said the King had kept a copious journal from a very early period. He afterward talked a great deal about him, of his great industry and activity, of the quantity he read and wrote, and that he read and commented upon all the documents submitted to him for his signature.

November 14, 1834: . . . Whatever may be the instability of this or any other administration, it is said that nothing can be more firm and secure than the King's tenure of his crown. He appears, in fact, to be the very man that France requires, and as he is in the vigour of life and has a reasonable prospect of a long reign, he will probably consolidate the interest of his family and extinguish whatever lingering chance there might be of the restoration of the old effete dynasty.

August 9, 1835: . . . My brother writes me from Paris very interesting details of the funeral of the victims of the assassination plot [the Fieschi Conspiracy] which was an imposing and magnificent ceremony, admirably arranged, and as it has produced a burst of enthusiasm for the King, and has brought round the clergy to him, it will serve to strengthen his throne. His undaunted courage ingratiates him with the French.

January 25, 1837: . . . The King is too civil; he has a fine head, and closely resembles the pictures of Louis XIV. The Queen is very gracious and dignified, Adelaide very good-humoured, and the Duke of Orleans extremely princely in his manners. This morning I went to the Tuileries by appointment, when he received me, kept me for a quarter of an hour talking about race horses, and invited me to breakfast on Saturday, and to go with him to Meudon to see his stud. . . .

I ended my day (the 25th)by going to a ball at the Tuileries, one of the great balls, and a magnificent spectacle indeed. The long line of light gleaming through the whole length of the palace is striking as it is approached, and the interior, with the whole suite of apartments brilliantly illuminated, and glittering from one end to the other with diamonds and feathers and uniforms, and dancing in all the several rooms, made a splendid display. The supper in the theatre was the finest thing I ever saw of its kind; all the women sup first, and afterward the men, the tables being renewed over and over again. There was an array of servants in gorgeous liveries, and the apartment was lit by thousands of candles (no lamps) and as light as day. The company amounted to between 3,000 and 4,000 from all the great people down to national guards, and even private soldiers. None of the Carlists were there, as they none of them choose to go to Court. The King retired before eleven; it was said that he had received anonymous letters warning him of some

intended attempt on his person, and extraordinary precautions were taken to guard against the entrance of any improper people.

January 26, 1837: Having seen all the high society the night before, I resolved to see all the low to-night, and went to Musard's ball—a most curious scene; two large rooms in the Rue St. Honoré almost thrown into one, a numerous and excellent orchestra, a prodigious crowd of people, most of them in costume, and all the women masked. There was every description of costume, but that which was the most general was the dress of a French post-boy, in which both males and females seemed to delight. It was well-regulated uproar and orderly confusion. When the music struck up they began dancing all over the rooms; the whole mass was in motion, but though with gestures the most vehement and grotesque, and a licence almost unbounded, the figure of the dance never seemed to be confused, and the dancers were both expert in their capers and perfect in their evolutions. Nothing could be more licentious than the movements of the dancers, and they only seemed to be restrained within limits of common decency by the cocked hats and burnished helmets of the police and gendarmes which towered in the midst of them. After quadrilling and waltzing away, at a signal given they began galloping round the room; then they rushed pellmell, couple after couple like Bedlamites broke loose, but not the slightest accident occurred. I amused myself with this strange and grotesque sight for an hour or more and then came home.

February 2, 1837: . . . Went to Hope's ball; his house is a sumptuous palace in miniature, all furnished and decorated with inconceivable luxury and *recherche;* one room hung with cachemires. Last night to a small ball at Court. Supper in the gallery de Diane—round tables, all the ladies supping first; the whole thing as beautiful and magnificent as possible, and making all our fêtes look pitiful and mean after it.

In 1847, Greville saw Louis Philippe at the Tuileries. He was "very civil."

January 19, 1847: . . . The King looks very well, and is grossly caricatured by *Punch;* he is a very good-looking old gentleman, and seems to have many years of life in him still.

Despite these hospitalities, Greville would say of Paris (January 26, 1847) that he felt there like "a fish out of water." Compared with London, it was "there all fire—here all ice."

Still, he could meet Mme. de Lieven in Paris—she who as usual held "a very agreeable position."

Paris, January 19, 1837: . . . She receives every night, and opens her house to all comers. Being neutral ground, men of all parties meet there, and some of the most violent antagonists have occasionally joined in amicable and curious discussion.

After Lord Beauvale's death, writes Greville:

January 28, 1857: . . . She proposed to me to succeed him as her correspondent, and for the last two or three years our epistolary commerce was intimate and unbroken.

Thiers assumed a further intimacy. Said he:

January 10, 1847: . . . "*Vous l'avez beaucoup connue, vous avez été son amant, n'est-ce pas?*" I defended myself from the imputation, and assured him that though she had had lovers when first she came to England I never had had the honour of being one of them.

They would have "another furious set-to." Says he, "She is the most imprudent woman I ever saw, but we always part friends."

Lady Palmerston and Mme. de Lieven continued to be (December 14, 1842) "dear friends who hate one another cordially." There was a success in the East and the Palmerstonians, though Peel was in office, were "screaming themselves hoarse in their endeavours to get the credit." Mme. de Lieven quietly wrote Lady Palmerston "that she was sure, setting all party feelings aside, she must rejoice" at these achievements of the Ministry in power:

December 14, 1842: . . . The other lady replied that she did not know what she meant, and that all the merit of the success was due to Palmerston and the late Government. To this Madame de Lieven responded as follows: "*Je vous demande bien pardon de ma légèreté, mais je vous assure que moi et toutes les personnes que je vois, ont été assez niaises pour croire que les grands succès de l'Orient étaient dus à Sir Robert Peel et*

à son gouvernement. Apparemment nous nous sommes trompés et je vous demande mille excuses de notre légèreté."

With her many intimacies, Princess Lieven was ready to stake even her reputation in the game of intrigue. In Paris, "she was at one time very intimate with Thiers."

Of Thiers, Greville saw a good deal:

September 10, 1833: . . . Dined on Friday with Talleyrand, a great dinner to M. Thiers, the French Minister of Commerce, a little man, about as tall as Shiel, and as mean and vulgar looking, wearing spectacles, and with a squeaking voice. He was editor of the *National*, an able writer, and one of the principal instigators of the Revolution in July. It is said that he is a man of great ability and a good speaker, more in the familiar English than the bombastical French style. Talleyrand has a high opinion of him. He wrote a history of the Revolution, which he now regrets; it is well done, but the doctrine of fatalism which he puts forth in it he thinks calculated to injure his reputation as a statesman.

London, November 16, 1845: . . . He was extremely civil and disposed to talk to me, though unfortunately the extraordinary rapidity of his utterance and the thickness of his articulation, added to my deafness, rendered half of what he said unintelligible. He was very agreeable and very loquacious, talking with a great appearance of *abandon* on every subject, politics general and particular, and his own History, which he was ready to discuss, and to defend against all objections and criticisms with great good-humour.

Greville introduced Thiers to the Foreign Minister, Lord Aberdeen:

London, November 16, 1845: . . . He [Aberdeen] thought him very agreeable, but not so fair to Guizot as Guizot was to him, for the latter always spoke handsomely of Thiers, while Thiers spoke very disparagingly of him; in fact, Thiers speaks of Guizot with the greatest contempt. He says he is great in the tribune, but good for nothing elsewhere, neither a statesman nor a man of business, which is certainly doing his great antagonist much less than justice.

"With a self-delusion which is marvellous if sincere," Thiers was convinced that, in his History, he had dealt out "ample Justice to England." He attributed Napoleon's Spanish War —as Greville thought wrongly—to Talleyrand, of whom he spoke "with great bitterness." And as for England:

London, November 16, 1845: . . . Nothing would persuade him that our government had not been implicated in Georges' conspiracy and his plots of assassination, but he entertains the most vulgar and mistaken notions about us, our affairs, and our national character. I take it, however, that he was not more surprised than pleased at his reception here, so frank, cordial, and dignified, received and entertained at Whig and Tory houses with equal cordiality, with the attention due to his celebrity as a writer and a statesman, and without the slightest appearance of resentment (or anything but the most perfect indifference) at his anti-English prejudices and violence. All this must have struck him with no small respect as well as wonder. I have heard since that the Queen said she should have been glad to receive him if he had expressed any desire to be presented to her; that she was not in the habit of receiving foreigners (passing through) at Windsor, but would have made an exception in his favour.

Between Thiers and Guizot, there was—alas for Mme. de Lieven—"an intense hatred." And as "by far her first object" became Guizot, he had to put up with "a complete estrangement" from Thiers. After all, Guizot "called on her regularly three times a day," and "every moment" that he "could snatch from the Foreign Office and the Chamber" was "devoted" to her.

Inevitably, "some people" considered that "their liaison was mysterious." Greville was convinced, however, that it was "entirely social and political."

On one famous occasion Mme. de Lieven brought her favourite rivals into the same room:

London, August 7, 1845: . . . She sent for Thiers, to speak to him about some mention he had made of the Empress Dowager of Russia in his history, which was unfair and inexact. He came, and then she ordered her doors to be closed to everybody while he was there. He asked why she did so, and why Guizot, who

was always let in, should be excluded. She said it was on his account. He repeated, "Why, as he did not object." After some talk, she said, "If you really wish it, I will withdraw my order. He said he saw no reason why she should retain it. She then desired him to ring the bell, and said, "I am at home to nobody but M. Guizot." Presently Guizot came, not knowing Thiers was there. He started with amazement; she burst out laughing; Thiers laughed; Guizot laughed too. This hilarity ended, she told Guizot for what object she had sent for Thiers, and then they talked over the book, and the subject of the meeting. This ended, there was a pause, when she said to Thiers, "I have had a message to carry to you from M. Guizot. He says he has behaved better to you than you have done to him, for you threw M. Molé between his legs, and he has disembarrassed you of M. Molé, and now there are only two political possibilities left, You and Himself." Guizot said, "Yes, it is true; I begged the Princess to say so." They then began to talk politics, and discussed persons and things, external and internal policy, peace and war, all contingencies and probabilities. Thiers asked Guizot, "Are you determined to remain Minister?" He said, "Decidedly yes." Then they discussed everything, and on every point were agreed, except on that of peace and war; Guizot maintaining that peace might be preserved, and Thiers insisting that in the long run it could not, and that difference of opinion was what alone made them the representatives of opposite principles, and influenced their conduct accordingly. She says they talked over everything, very frankly, very civilly, and that it was impossible for anything to be more interesting and more curious than such a conversation between two such men, or more worth writing down, if there had been a possibility of reporting it. She told me Thiers' book was not thought much of in France, that the style was criticized, and it was such a continual panegyric of Napoleon as to be rather an apology than a history.

On her deathbed, it was Guizot that Mme. de Lieven remembered:

January 28, 1857: . . . She made her son Paul and Guizot leave her room a few hours before she died, that they might be spared the agony of witnessing her actual dissolution, and only three

or four hours before the supreme moment, she mustered strength to write a note in pencil to Guizot with these words: "*Merci pour vingt années d'amitié et de bonheur. Ne m'oubliez pas, adieu, adieu!*" It was given to him after her death.

Centuries of intermittent war between England and France had developed a certain mentality:

September 10, 1833: . . . He [King William IV] hates Louis Philippe and the French with a sort of Jack Tar animosity. The other day he gave a dinner to one of the regiments at Windsor, and as usual he made a parcel of foolish speeches, in one of which, after descanting upon their exploits in Spain against the French, he went on: "Talking of France, I must say that whether at peace or at war with that country, I shall always consider her as our natural enemy, and whoever may be her King or *ruler*, I shall keep a watchful eye for the purpose of repressing her ambitious encroachments." If he was not such an ass that nobody does anything but laugh at what he says, this would be very important. Such as he is, it is nothing. "What can you expect" (as I forget who said) "from a man with a head like a pineapple?" His head is just of that shape.

At Apsley House, one day, Greville found the Duke in "a talkative humour":

Bretby, September 8, 1844: . . . He has been for some time urging the Government to make themselves stronger; and very much in consequence of his advice, measures had been in rapid progress for equipping ships and preparing a formidable force at sea. The Duke said that the disposition of the French was to insult us whenever and wherever they thought they could do so with impunity, and that the only way to keep at peace with them was to be stronger in every quarter of the globe than they were; that he had told Lord Melbourne so when he was in office, and that this was his opinion now. Wherever they had ships we ought to have a naval force superior to theirs; and we might rely on it, that as long as that was the case we should find them perfectly civil and peaceable; and wherever it was not the case, we should find them insolent and troublesome.

Britons like Lord Grey did not entirely trust the placidity of the French people:

September 20, 1831: . . . He replied he did not think there would now be a *bouleversement*, but a Ministry of Lafayette, Lamarque, and all that party who were impatient to plunge France into war. I said I did not think France could look to a successful war, for the old alliance would be reformed against her.

Over an "outrage perpetrated on Pritchard at Tahiti" (September 8, 1844) "it was a toss-up whether we went to war or not." Peel used "very lofty language" and demanded "an ample reparation," while Guizot replied, "*Je ne rappellerai personne.*" For the British case—

Bretby, September 8, 1844: . . . was one of much perplexity and difficulty, for Pritchard had been turbulent and mischievous, and had, with the sectarian zeal of a missionary, given all the trouble and embarrassment he could to the French; they, therefore, had a case against him, though the French officers were by no means justified in the violence they exercised.

The Duke of Wellington (August 24, 1833) "talked of France as our 'natural enemy' and of the importance of maintaining our influence in Spain which so long as we did we should have nothing to fear from France."

Here then were neighbours whose love for one another was as the affection of flint for steel.