

CHAPTER III

THE CONSPIRACY OF BABEUF

Gracchus Babeuf—The Panthéonistes—Manifesto of the Equals—System of Babeuf—Plan of the Conspirators—The Great Day of the People—Discovery of the Plot—Execution of Babouvistes—Illuminism in England—Ireland—The United Irishmen—Bantry Bay—Illuminism in America.

FRANÇOIS NOËL BABEUF was born in 1762, and at the beginning of the Reign of Terror occupied the post of commissary in the Supply Department of the Commune, where he incurred the displeasure of the Comité de Salut Public by publishing a placard accusing the Committee of a plan to drive the people to revolt by means of a fictitious famine and so provide a pretext for killing them off.¹ For this offence Babeuf and his colleagues in the same department were thrown into prison at the Abbaye, but Babeuf, being apparently regarded as mentally irresponsible, was soon afterwards released, and once more proceeded to attack the party in power, which was no other than that of Robespierre, Couthon, and Saint-Just. This is the more remarkable since the political opinions of Babeuf were entirely in accord with those of the Triumvirate; for Robespierre's "Declaration of the Rights of Man" Babeuf entertained the warmest admiration. But where, at this point in his career, Babeuf joined issue with Robespierre was in the method by which this ideal system should be brought about; for the plan of reducing the population of France by some fifteen millions in order to be able to provide bread and work for the remainder, which Babeuf later described as "the immense secret" of the Terror, seemed to him too drastic, and in his pamphlet *Sur la dépopulation de la France*

¹ *Babeuf et le socialisme en 1796*, by Édouard Fleury, p. 20.

he denounced the *noyades*, *fusillades*, and *guillotina*des that had decimated the provinces—methods which he held should not have been adopted until pacific measures for winning the peasants over to Republicanism had at least been attempted.

But the régime that followed on the fall of Robespierre led Babeuf to readjust his views, for the Thermidoriens, with whom he had thrown in his lot, showed themselves to be Opportunists of the most flagrant description, and it was thus that after the Directory had been in power a few months Babeuf insulted Tallien and Fréron,¹ declared that the 9th of Thermidor had been an unmitigated disaster, and that the only hope for the people now lay in carrying out the unfinished plan of Robespierre for "the common happiness." Robespierre, he held, was the one "pure" revolutionary of his day;² all the rest—the Girondins, who had only wished to dethrone the King in order to usurp power and riches, the Orléanistes, led by Philippe Égalité and Danton, a faction "composed of men as monstrous as their chief . . . avid and prodigal of gold . . . audacious, liars, intriguers"³—had exploited the people for their own advantage; "Robespierre and his companions in martyrdom" alone had aspired to "the equal distribution of work and pleasure"⁴ which was the ideal of Babeuf. Accordingly, he now appealed to the people to rise against the Directory and maintain the Constitution of 1793 founded on Robespierre's "Declaration of the Rights of Man."

The publication of this call to insurrection led to the arrest of its author, and Babeuf was again thrown into prison, first at Plessis, then at Arras; but while in captivity he encountered a number of kindred spirits, with whose co-operation he was able to mature his plan for a further revolution—a social revolution for "the common happiness and true equality" (*le bonheur commun et l'égalité réelle*).⁵

M. Louis Blanc is no doubt right in pronouncing Babeuf to have been an Illuminatus, a disciple of Weishaupt, and

¹ Fleury, *op. cit.* p. 37.

² *Pièces saisies chez Babeuf*, i. 147.

³ *Ibid.* i. 98, 106.

⁴ *Conspiration pour l'égalité dite de Babeuf*, by Ph. Buonarotti, i. 88.

⁵ Fleury, *op. cit.* p. 45.

it was thus in accordance with the custom of the sect that he had adopted a classical pseudonym, renouncing his Christian names of François Noël in favour of Gracchus,¹ just as Weishaupt had assumed the name of Spartacus, the Illuminatus Jean Baptiste Cloutz had elected to be known as Anacharsis, and Pierre Gaspard Chaumette as Anaxagoras. The plan of campaign devised by Babeuf was therefore modelled directly on the system of Weishaupt, and on his release from prison—which was brought about by the amnesty of the “Treize Vendémiaire”—he gathered his fellow-conspirators around him and formed an association on masonic lines by which propaganda was to be carried on in public places, the confederates recognizing each other by secret signs and passwords.² At the first meeting of the Babouvistes—amongst whom were found Darthé, Germain, Bodson, and Buonarotti—all swore to “remain united and to make equality triumph,” and the project was then discussed of establishing a large popular society for the inculcation of Babeuf’s doctrines. In order to escape the vigilance of the police it was decided to assemble henceforth in a small room in the garden of the Abbaye de Sainte Geneviève lent by one of the members who had rented part of the building; later the society moved to the refectory of the Abbey, or, on nights when this hall was required for other purposes, meetings were held in the crypt, where, seated on the ground, by the light of torches, the conspirators discussed the great plan for overthrowing society. The proximity of this building to the Panthéon led to their being known under the name of the *Panthéonistes*.³

Unfortunately the confusion of mind prevailing amongst the advocates of “Equality” was so great that the meetings—which before long consisted of two thousand people—became “like a Tower of Babel.”⁴ No one knew precisely what he wanted and no decisions could be reached; it was therefore decided to supplement these huge assemblies by small secret committees, the first of which held its sittings at the house of Amar—one of the most ferocious members

¹ Fleury, *op. cit.* p. 38.

² *Ibid.* pp. 69, 70.

³ *Ibid.* p. 69.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 71.

of the Comité de Sûreté Générale during the Terror—and here the scheme of social revolution was elaborated. Starting from the premise that all property is theft, it was decided that the process known in revolutionary language as “expropriation”¹ must take place; that is to say, all property must be wrested from its present owners by force—the force of an armed mob. But Babeuf, whilst advocating violence and tumult as the means to an end, in no way desired anarchy as a permanent condition; the State must be maintained, and not only maintained but made absolute, the sole dispenser of the necessities of life.² “In my system of Common Happiness,” he wrote, “I desire that no individual property shall exist. The land is God’s and its fruits belong to all men in general.”³ Another Babouviste, the Marquis d’Antonelle, formerly a member of the Revolutionary Tribunal, had expressed the matter in much the same words: “The State of Communism is the only just, the only good one; without this state of things no peaceful and really happy societies can exist.”⁴

But Babeuf’s activities had again aroused the attention of the Directory, and during the winter of 1795–6 the apostle of Equality was obliged to retire into hiding. Nevertheless from his retreat Babeuf still contrived, with the aid of his twelve-year-old son Émile, to edit his papers *Le Tribun du Peuple* and *Le Cri du Peuple*, and to direct the movement. At one of the meetings of the Panthéonistes, however, Darthé incautiously read the last number of *Le Tribun du Peuple* aloud, and this time no less a personage than General Bonaparte himself descended on the “den of brigands,”⁵ as it was known to the police, and, after ordering it to be closed down before his eyes, went off with the key of the building in his pocket.

Babeuf then decided that a “Secret Directorate” must be formed,⁶ of which the workings bear a curious resemblance

¹ This word was first coined by Thouret, a member of the National Assembly, in a debate on the goods of the clergy in 1790.

² Fleury, *op. cit.* p. 111.

³ *Ibid.* p. 173.

⁴ Antonelle in the *Orateur Peùbelen*, No. 9. See *Pièces saisies chez Babeuf*, ii. 11.

⁵ Buonarotti, *op. cit.* i. 107.

⁶ *Ibid.* i. 114, 115.

to those of the Illuminati. Thus Weishaupt had employed twelve leading adepts to direct operations throughout Germany, and had strictly enjoined his followers not to be known even to each other as Illuminati; so Babeuf now instituted twelve principal agents to work the different districts of Paris, and these men were not even to know the names of those who formed the central committee of four, but only to communicate with them through intermediaries partially initiated into the secrets of the conspiracy. Like Weishaupt also Babeuf adopted a domineering and arrogant tone towards his subordinates, and any whom he suspected of treachery were threatened, after the manner of the secret societies, with the direst vengeance. "Woe to those of whom we have cause to complain!" he wrote to one whose zeal he had begun to doubt; "reflect that true conspirators can never relinquish those they have once decided to employ."¹

By April 1796 the plan of insurrection was complete, and the famous *Manifesto of the Equals* drawn up ready for publication.

"PEOPLE OF FRANCE," this proclamation announced, "for fifteen centuries you have lived in slavery and consequently in unhappiness. For six years (*i.e.* during the course of the Revolution) you have hardly drawn breath, waiting for independence, for happiness, and equality. Equality! the first desire of Nature, the first need of Man and the principal bond of all legal association! . . .

"Well! We intend henceforth to live and die equal as we were born; we wish for real equality or death, that is what we must have. And we will have this real equality, no matter at what price. Woe to those who interpose themselves between it and us! . . .

"The French Revolution is only the forerunner of another revolution, very much greater, very much more solemn, which will be the last! . . . What must we have more than equality of rights? We must have not only that equality transcribed in the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen,' we must have it in our midst, on the roofs of our houses. We will consent to anything for that, to make a clean sweep so as to hold to that only. Perish if necessary all the arts provided that real equality is left to us! . . .

¹ *Pièces saisies chez Babeuf*, ii. 163.

" The agrarian law and the division of lands were the momentary wish of a few soldiers without principle moved by instinct rather than by reason. We tend to something more sublime and equitable, the *Common Happiness or the Community of Goods*. No more private property in land, the land belongs to no one. We claim, we wish for the communal enjoyment of the fruits of the earth: the fruits of the earth belong to every one.

" We declare that we can no longer endure that the great majority of men should work and sweat in the service and for the good pleasure of an extreme minority. Long enough and too long have less than a million individuals disposed of what belongs to more than twenty millions of their fellowmen, of their equals. Let it cease at last, this great scandal in which our nephews will not be able to believe. Vanish at last, revolting distinctions of rich and poor, of great and small, of masters and servants, of governors and governed. Let there be no other difference between men than that of age and sex. Since all have the same needs and the same faculties, let there be only one education, one kind of food. They content themselves with one sun and air for all; why should not the same portion and the same quality of food suffice for each of them? . . .

" PEOPLE OF FRANCE, we say to you: the holy enterprise that we are organizing has no other object but to put an end to civil dissensions and to public misery. Never has a more vast design been conceived and executed. From time to time a few men of genius, a few sages have spoken in a low and trembling voice. Not one of them has had the courage to tell the whole truth. The moment for great measures has arrived. The evil is at its height; it covers the face of the earth. Chaos under the name of politics has reigned for too many centuries. . . . The moment has come to found the Republic of the Equals, the great hostel open to all men. . . . Groaning families, come and seat yourselves at the common table set up by Nature for all her children. . . .

" PEOPLE OF FRANCE, Open your eyes and heart to the plenitude of happiness; recognize and proclaim with us the REPUBLIC OF THE EQUALS."¹

This document was destined, however, not to be displayed to the eyes of the public, for the Secret Committee finally decided that it would be inexpedient to admit the people into the whole plan of the conspiracy; particularly did they judge it inadvisable to publish the phrase which

¹ Buonarotti, *op. cit.* ii. 130-134.

had been expressed in almost identical language by Weishaupt: "Perish all the arts, provided that real equality is left to us!" The people of France were not to know that a return to barbarism was contemplated. Accordingly a second proclamation was framed under the title of "ANALYSIS OF THE DOCTRINE OF BABEUF"—a far less inspiring appeal than the former Manifesto, and mainly unintelligible to the working-classes, yet, as M. Fleury remarks, "the veritable Bible or Koran of the despotic system known as Communism."¹ For herein lies the crux of the matter. No one reading these two documents of the Babouvistes can fail to recognize the truth of certain of their strictures on society—the glaring disparity between poverty and riches, the uneven distribution of work and pleasure, the injustice of an industrial system whereby, owing largely at this period to the suppression of trade unions by the revolutionary leaders, employers could live in luxury by sweated labour—but the point is: how did Babeuf propose to redress these evils? Briefly, then, his system, founded on the doctrine "Community of goods and of labour,"² may be summarized as follows:

Every one must be forced to work so many hours a day in return for equal remuneration; the man who showed himself more skilful or industrious than his fellows would be recompensed merely by "public gratitude."³ This compulsory labour was in fact not to be paid for in money but in kind, for, since the right to private property constituted the principal evil of existing society, the distinction of "mine" and "thine" must be abolished⁴ and no one should be allowed to possess anything of his own. Payment could therefore only be made in the products of labour, which were all to be collected in huge communal stores and doled out in equal rations to the workers.⁵ Inevitably commerce would be entirely done away with, and money was no longer to be coined or admitted to the country; foreign trade must therefore be carried on by coin now in

¹ *Babeuf et le socialisme en 1796*, by Edouard Fleury.

² Buonarotti, *op. cit.* i. 87.

³ *Analyse de la doctrine de Babeuf*, Buonarotti, *op. cit.* ii. 146.

⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 145.

⁵ *Ibid.* i. 213.

circulation, and when that was exhausted, by a system of barter.¹

Only work of essential utility was to be undertaken, and in order to ensure the requisite number of hands for each industry boys were no longer to be allowed to choose their professions but must be trained for whatever work was most urgently needed. The workers would then be drafted off in gangs to perform the labour assigned them "according to the needs of the nation and the supreme principle of equality."

Since in France agriculture was of the first importance, the greater number of inhabitants, both boys and girls, would be sent out to till the soil;² and it was hoped that by degrees Paris and all the large towns of France would disappear, for it was in towns that wage-slavery flourished and that "big capitalists" were able to surround themselves with luxury and display.³ The hosts of parasites who had hitherto contributed to their enjoyment—shopkeepers, domestic servants, poets, painters, actors, dancers—would all now be obliged to seek a livelihood in the fields, and villages consisting of salubrious houses "remarkable for their elegant symmetry" would spring up all over France.⁴

The better to ensure a hardy race of toilers, children were to be given over to the State at birth and trained in institutions.

"In the social order conceived by the Committee," wrote Buonarrotti, "the country seizes upon the individual at birth (*s'empare de l'individu naissant*) in order only to relinquish it at death. It watches over his first moments, assures him the milk and the care of her who gave him birth, keeps him from all that would injure his health or weaken his body, preserves him from false tenderness and conducts him by the hand of his mother to the national house where he will acquire virtue and the enlightenment necessary to a true citizen."⁵

¹ Buonarrotti, *op. cit.* i. 238, 271, ii. 318.

² *Ibid.* i. 208-211.

³ *Ibid.* i. 221. Note here the theory of "wage-slavery" again formulated: "From the perpetual exchange of services and salaries there arises on one side the habit of authority and of commanding, and on the other that of submission and servitude" (p. 222).

⁴ Buonarrotti, *op. cit.* i. 221-224.

⁵ *Ibid.* i. 282. "Plus d'éducation domestique, plus de puissance paternelle" (*ibid.* i. 288).

In order to replace family affection by civic virtue in the mind of the child, it was further proposed to forbid him to bear the name of his father unless he were a man who had distinguished himself by great virtues.¹

His education was to be of course only of the most primitive kind: reading, writing, enough arithmetic to enable him to work in a Government office if required; history—but only that relating to the evils ended by the Republic and the blessings of which it was a source—and such knowledge of law, geography, and natural history as would give him an idea of the wisdom of the institutions under which he lived. In order to embellish the fêtes arranged by the Government he should also be versed in music and dancing.²

Beyond this all avenues of knowledge were to be closed to him, for it was feared that “men might devote themselves to sciences,” and thereby grow vain and averse from manual labour.³ Had not Weishaupt declared the sciences to be “the complicated needs of a state contrary to Nature, the inventions of vain and empty brains”?

Such, then, was the scheme of Babeuf⁴ for the liberation of the French people, and it is difficult to see wherein it differed from the serfdom under which their forefathers had groaned during the Middle Ages. There is in fact nothing to be said for Communism that does not equally apply to serfdom; in both the means of subsistence are assured, the spectre of unemployment is dispelled, in both the taskmaster may be kind or cruel, and in neither can the worker call his body or his soul his own. Was not then Babeuf's remedy worse than the disease? Were not even “the revolting distinctions of rich and poor” preferable to a dead level of slavery from which the one inspiring emotion of human life—hope—would be for ever removed?

It is at any rate impossible to imagine a system more distasteful to the French character than the labour colony thus devised by Babeuf. That the people of France, of all people the most acquisitive and the most retentive of their

¹ Buonarotti, *op. cit.* p. 219.

² *Ibid.* i. 286-287.

³ *Ibid.* i. 293.

⁴ See summing up of system by Babeuf himself (*ibid.* ii. 220) in which he describes it as a “plan enchanteur.”

possessions—the natural consequence of their inherent thrift and industry—should be willing to renounce the right to possess anything ; that the pleasure-loving Parisians, to whom amidst all their privations the gay whirl of streets and *spectacles* was as the breath of life, should submit to be driven forth to seek a living on the desolate plains of the provinces, with no amusements to vary the monotony but the *fêtes* provided by the Republic—at which they were not to be allowed to wear festive attire, but to attend in their working clothes¹ for fear of violating the principle of absolute equality ; that the nation distinguished for its poets and painters, its *savants* and *beaux-esprits*, should consent to become a race of unpaid manual labourers ; above all, that a people who for six years had thrilled to the cry of “ Liberty ! ” should now meekly place its neck under a yoke far more oppressive than that from which it had been relieved, would be grotesque if it were not so tragic.

But when one realises the misery of the people at this crisis and the countless disillusionments through which they had passed, one can feel nothing but burning indignation at the charlatans who thus set out to exploit their sufferings. For if these men had dealt honestly with the people, laying before them the real plan they had framed for their relief, the people would only have had themselves to blame if the conspirators had succeeded in carrying out their design.

But the people were not in the secret of the movement. Just as in the great outbreaks of the Revolution the mob of Paris had been driven blindly forward on false pretexts supplied by the agitators, so once again the people were to be made the instruments of their own ruin. The “ Secret Committee of Direction ” well knew that Communism was a system that would never appeal to the people ; they were careful, therefore, not to admit their dupes among the working-classes into the whole of their programme, and believing that it was only by an appeal to self-interest and covetousness they could secure a following,² they skilfully

¹ Buonarotti, *op. cit.* i. 225.

² *Ibid.* i. 97: “ It was impossible to inspire the people with energy without talking to them of their interests and their rights.”

played on the people's passions, promising them booty they had no intention of bestowing on them. Thus in the "Insurrectional Act" now drawn up by the Committee it was announced that "the goods of the *émigrés*, of the conspirators (*i.e.* the Royalists), and of the enemies of the people were to be distributed to the defenders of the country and the needy";¹ they did not tell them that in reality these things were to belong to no one, but to become the property of the State administered by themselves. Buonarotti in his naïve account of these manœuvres justifies the deception by observing that "the great point was to succeed," and so the Secret Directory judged it advisable to "fix the attention and sustain the hopes of the working-classes" by the promise to divide everything up amongst them.² The people then were not to be allowed to know the truth about the cause in which they were asked to shed their blood—and that they would be obliged to shed it in torrents no sane man could doubt.

It is here perhaps that Babeuf lays himself most open to the charge of mental irresponsibility. At one moment we find him declaring that the process can be carried out by perfectly pacific methods, at the next inciting the populace to violence of the most fearful kind. Thus when d'Antonelle suggested that, however urgent it might be to establish absolute equality, this ideal condition could only be brought about "by brigandage and the horrors of civil war, which would be a dreadful method,"³ Babeuf indignantly replied: "What do you mean by saying that one could only achieve real equality by brigandage? Is it really Antonelle who defines brigandage after the manner of the patriciate? Any movement, any proceeding that would bring about, if only partially, the disgorging of those who have too much for the profit of those who have not enough would not, it seems to me, be brigandage, it would be the beginning of a return to justice and real order."⁴ As to d'Antonelle's further contention that in the confusion following on general pillage it would be impossible to carry out any scheme of redistribution, Babeuf was equally

¹ Buonarotti, *op. cit.* ii. 252.

² *Pièces saisies chez Babeuf*, ii. 16.

³ *Ibid.* i. 155, 156.

⁴ *Ibid.*

incredulous. "What will they do after the upheaval, you will say; will they be capable of erecting the august temple of Equality?" Babeuf anticipated no difficulty here; they had only to read Diderot to discover how easy it would be to provide for the needs of a multitude of citizens; "all that is only a simple affair of numbering things and people, a simple operation of calculation and combinations, and consequently susceptible of a very fine degree of order."¹

But when it came to organizing the required insurrection Babeuf adopted a very different kind of language. In fact the former denouncer of Robespierre's "system of depopulation" now asserted that not only Robespierre's aims but his methods were to be commended.

I confess to-day that I bear a grudge against myself for having formerly seen the revolutionary government and Robespierre and Saint-Just in such black colours. I think these men alone were worth all the revolutionaries put together, and that their dictatorial government was devilishly well thought out. . . . I do not at all agree . . . that they committed great crimes and made many Republicans perish. Not so many, I think. . . .² The salvation of twenty-five millions of men must not be weighed against consideration for a few equivocal individuals. A regenerator must take a wide outlook. He must mow down everything that thwarts him, everything that obstructs his passage, everything that can impede his prompt arrival at the goal on which he has determined. Rascals or imbeciles, or presumptuous people or those eager for glory, it is all the same, *tant pis pour eux*—what are they there for? Robespierre knew all that, and it is partly what makes me admire him.³

But where Babeuf showed himself the intellectual inferior of Robespierre was in the way he proposed to overcome resistance to his plan of a Socialist State. Robespierre, as he well knew, had spent fourteen months "mowing down those that obstructed his passage," had kept the guillotine unremittingly at work in Paris and the

¹ *Pièces saisies chez Babeuf*, ii. 23.

² It should be noted that in his pamphlet on *Le Système de la dépopulation* Babeuf had estimated the victims of the Terror at no less than a million.

³ *Pièces saisies chez Babeuf*, ii. 52.

provinces, yet even then had not succeeded in silencing objectors. But Babeuf hoped to accomplish his purpose in one day—that “*great day of the people*”¹ wherein all opposition should be instantly suppressed, the whole existing social order annihilated, and the Republic of Equality erected on its ruins. If, however, the process were to be brief it must necessarily be all the more violent, and it was thus with none of the calm precision of Robespierre marking down heads for destruction that Babeuf set about his task. When writing out his plans of insurrection, his secretary Pillé afterwards related at his trial, Babeuf would rush up and down the room with flaming eyes, mouthing and grimacing, hitting himself against the furniture, knocking over the chairs whilst uttering hoarse cries of “To arms ! to arms ! The insurrection ! the insurrection is beginning !” —it was an insurrection against the chairs, said Pillé drily. Then Babeuf would fling himself upon his pen, plunge it into the ink, and write with fearful rapidity, whilst his whole body trembled and the perspiration poured from his brow. “It was no longer madness,” added Pillé, “it was frenzy !”² This frenzy, Babeuf explained, was necessary in order to work himself up to the required degree of eloquence, and in his appeals to insurrection it is difficult to see where his programme differed from the brigandage and violence he had deprecated in his reply to d’Antonelle.

“Why,” he wrote in *Le Tribun du Peuple*, “does one speak of laws and property ? Property is the share of usurpers and laws are the work of the strongest. The sun shines for every one, and the earth belongs to no one. Go then, my friends, and disturb, overthrow, and upset this society which does not suit you. Take everywhere all that you like. Superfluity belongs by right to him who has nothing. This is not all, friends and brothers. If constitutional barriers are opposed to your generous efforts, overthrow without scruple barriers and constitutions. Butcher without mercy tyrants, patricians, the Gilded Million, all those immoral beings who would oppose your common happiness. You are the People, the true People, the only People worthy to enjoy the good things of this world ! The justice of the People is great and majestic as the People itself ; all that it does is legitimate, all that it orders is sacred !”³

¹ *Pièces saisies chez Babeuf*, ii. 21.

² Fleury, *op. cit.* p. 244.

³ *Ibid.* p. 77.

Inevitably Babeuf secured a certain following amongst the working-classes—the call to violence must ever find an answering echo in the minds of the despairing, and the people of Paris at this crisis had good cause for despair. Food—owing to four years of war and seven of revolution—was at famine prices, the destruction of commerce carried on by the emissaries of the Comité de Salut Public in the manufacturing towns of France had raised all the commodities of life to the same prohibitive level and created vast unemployment; meanwhile the newly rich—the war profiteers, the army contractors, the adventurers who had made their fortunes out of the Revolution—revelled in luxury, their wives and mistresses swathed in pearls and diamonds, and little else besides, flaunted their charms and opulence before the hungry eyes of the poor. What wonder, then, that the soldiers cried out their “rulers were all rascals, all murderers of the people, that they were ready to exterminate them,” or that the wretched inhabitants of the faubourgs declared all their ills “were to be attributed to the Revolution and that they were happier under the Old Régime” ?¹

To a people in such a mood as this it was easy to make the counsel of despair which consisted in smashing everything appear to be the simplest solution of all difficulties, and the agents of Babeuf, versed in all the methods of the Secret Societies for stirring up popular fury, succeeded in winning over a number of working-men to their views. One ingenious plan consisted in pasting up large incendiary placards around which accomplices known as *groupeurs*—or, as we might say, “crowd-collectors”—were employed to assemble as if by accident, and then to read the words aloud, pointing out the most important passages with their fingers.² The *Analyse de Babeuf* thus exposed met with much applause from the working-men, who could but dimly understand its real purport. At the same time inflammatory pamphlets dilating on the greed of the tradesmen and the infamies of the Government were circulated in the faubourgs, where the women of the people eagerly read them aloud to

¹ *Pièces saisies*, ii. 164.

² Fleury, *op. cit.* pp. 74, 131; *Pièces saisies*, ii. 106.

their men-folk whilst at work. So great was the enthusiasm thus created that the Babouvistes entertained no doubt of being able to enlist the whole proletariat in the movement, and by the beginning of May it was estimated that an army of no less than 17,000 people would assemble on the day of insurrection.¹ These forces included 4500 soldiers and 6000 of the police, who by lavish promises of booty had been won over to the conspiracy.

The following programme for the "Great Day" was now drawn up by the Secret Directory: at a given moment the revolutionary army was to march on the Legislative Assembly, on the headquarters of the Army, and on the houses of the Ministers. The best-trained troops were to be sent to the arsenals and the munition factories, and also to the camps of Vincennes and Grenelle in the hope that the 8000 men encamped there would join in the movement. Meanwhile orators were to hold forth to the soldiers, and women were to present them with refreshment and civic wreaths. In the event of their remaining proof against these seductions the streets were to be barricaded, and stones, bricks, boiling water, and vitriol thrown down on the heads of the troops.² All supplies for the capital were then to be seized and placed under the control of the leaders; at the same time the wealthier classes were to be driven from their houses, which were immediately to be converted into lodgings for the poor.³ The members of the Directory were then to be butchered, likewise all citizens who offered any resistance to the insurgents.⁴ The insurrection thus "happily terminated," as Babeuf naïvely expressed it,⁵ the whole people were to be assembled in the Place de la Révolution⁶ and invited to co-operate in the choice of their representatives. "The plan," writes Buonarotti, "was to talk to the people without reserve and without digressions, and to render the most impressive homage to its sovereignty."⁷ But lest the people perchance, blinded to its truest interests, might fail to recognize its saviours in the persons of the conspirators, the Babouvistes proposed to follow up their

¹ Buonarotti, *op. cit.* i. 189.

² *Ibid.* i. 194.

³ *Ibid.* i. 196.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* i. 197.

⁶ *Ibid.* i. 156.

⁷ *Ibid.* i. 200.

homage of the people's sovereignty by demanding that "executive power should be exclusively confided to themselves"; for, as Buonarotti observed, "at the beginning of the revolution it is necessary, even out of respect for the real sovereignty of the people, to occupy oneself less with the wishes of the nation than to place supreme authority in strongly revolutionary hands."¹ Once in these hands it would of course remain there, and the Babouvistes with all the civil and military forces at their back would be able to impose their system of State serfdom on the submissive people.

It is fearful to imagine what blood might once again have reddened the streets of Paris if an unforeseen obstacle had not arisen in the path of the conspirators—namely, a traitor in the camp. This man, called Grisel, was a soldier in the 33rd Brigade who had been drawn against his will into the conspiracy. Strolling one April evening on the Quai des Tuileries, Grisel had encountered an old friend, a tailor named Mugnier, who was an enthusiastic Babouviste. Mugnier, convinced that he would find a sympathizer in Grisel, proceeded to pour forth complaints against the Government, and ended by introducing him to several of his fellow-conspirators. A few days later one of these men met Grisel in a café, and becoming loquacious under the influence of drink, confided to him part of the plan of the conspiracy. Grisel, fearing to make an enemy of so dangerous a man, dared not express his disapproval, and his new associates, encouraged by his apparent agreement with their views, invited him to one of their meetings at the café of the "Bains Chinois," whither they had removed after the closing down of the so-called "Panthéon." Here Grisel found himself in the thick of the conspiracy; violent speeches were made—both by men and women—revolutionary songs were sung, amongst others a dirge on the death of Robespierre. Meanwhile wine and cider flowed freely, and Grisel, invited to take part in the "orgy" as he afterwards described it, was hailed as an acquisition to the cause. One of the conspirators then handed him some of Babeuf's pamphlets for distribution amongst the soldiers and asked him to

¹ Buonarotti, *op. cit.* i. 134.

compose others for the same purpose. Grisel realized that it was too late to draw back, for the conspirators, having taken him into their confidence, would certainly dispose of him by a dagger-thrust if he now disassociated himself from their designs. Accordingly he set himself to the task assigned him, but not without first consulting his battalion-commander, who advised him to continue in his rôle of Babouviste. Grisel, warming to the work, thereupon composed a violent letter entitled *Franco-Libre à son ami La Terreur*, inciting the troops to rebellion, and in which he was careful to imitate the pompous and meaningless phraseology of the conspirators. This effusion met with the heartiest applause at the "Bains Chinois," and Grisel, who had hitherto been only partly initiated into the details of the insurrection, now found himself received into the inner councils of the leaders. At the first of these meetings, consisting only of five members—Babeuf, Germain, Buonarotti, Didier, and Darthé—Grisel saw the leader of the conspiracy for the first time, and looking at him with some curiosity noticed with surprise that Babeuf, of whose genius he had heard so much, presented an appearance of "extreme mediocrity," whilst his behaviour showed him to be more eccentric than original. In fact the whole band seemed to the newcomer a party of maniacs, and his first feeling was one of remorse at the idea of giving over the victims of mere mental disorder to justice. When, therefore, Babeuf unfolded his scheme of insurrection, entailing the wholesale massacre of the Government, the wealthy, and all existing authorities, Grisel, overcome with horror, ventured to expostulate, pointing out the terrible consequences of overthrowing the Government: "What will you put in its place? . . . Will there not be an interval between the fall of the Government . . . and that which you will put in its place? It will be complete anarchy; all the restraints of law will be broken. I pray you think it over. . . ." ¹

This moderation nearly proved fatal to Grisel, and seeing the threatening glances directed towards him, he hastily repaired his error by plunging into a violent harangue in which he proposed to burn down all the châteaux round

¹ Fleury, *op. cit.* pp. 175, 176.

Paris before falling on the members of the Directory. The suggestion did not, however, find favour with the conspirators, who saw in the destruction of the châteaux an end to their hopes of booty; nevertheless Grisel had now regained their good opinion and was admitted to further meetings of the committee. At one of these, Darthé read aloud the finished plan of insurrection, to which further atrocious details had been added—every one attempting to exercise any authority was instantly to be put to death, the armourers were to be forced to give up their arms, the bakers their supplies of bread, and those who resisted hoisted to the nearest lantern; the same fate was reserved for all wine and spirit merchants who might refuse to provide the brandy needed to inflame the populace and drive them into violence.¹ “All reflection on the part of the people must be avoided,” ran the written directions to the leaders; “they must commit acts which will prevent them from going back.”²

Amongst the whole of this ferocious band, Rossignol, the former general of the revolutionary armies in La Vendée, showed himself the most bloodthirsty: “I will not have anything to do with your insurrection,” he cried, “unless heads fall like hail . . . unless it inspires so great a terror that it makes the whole universe shudder . . .”—a discourse that met with unanimous applause.

The 11th of May had been fixed for the great day of explosion, when not only Paris, but all the large cities of France worked on by the agents of Babeuf were to rise and overthrow the whole structure of civilization. But Grisel had sought an interview with Carnot, and the Government, warned of the impending attack, was ready to meet it. On the morning of the day appointed, a placard was found posted up on all the walls of Paris bearing these words:

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTORY TO THE CITIZENS OF PARIS

Citizens, a frightful plot is to break out this night or tomorrow at the dawn of day. A band of thieves and murderers has formed the project of butchering the Legislative Assembly, all the members of the Government, the staff of the Army, and

¹ Fleury, *op. cit.* pp. 193-195.

² *Ibid.* p. 196.

all constituted authorities in Paris. The Constitution of '93 is to be proclaimed. This proclamation is to be the signal for a general pillage of Paris, of houses as much as of stores and shops, and the massacre of a great number of citizens is to be carried out at the same time. But be reassured, good citizens; the Government is watching, it knows the leaders of the plot and their methods: . . .; be calm, therefore, and carry on your ordinary business; the Government has taken infallible measures for outwitting their schemes, and for giving them up with their partisans to the vengeance of the law.¹

Then, without further warning, the police burst into the house where Babeuf and Buonarotti were drawing up a rival placard calling the people to revolt. In the midst of their task the arm of the law surprised and seized them, and on the following morning forty-five other leaders of the conspiracy were arrested likewise and thrown into the Abbaye. Alas for the support they had hoped for from the populace! The revolutionary army on which they had counted, impressed as the people always are by a display of authority, went over to the police in support of law and order. With the removal of the agitators the whole populace came to their senses and realized the full horror of the plot into which they had been inveigled.

"The working-man," a Government reporter writes, "no longer regards the conspiracy as a wild story, the pillage promised him makes him shrug his shoulders, and he feels that the brigands, hailing from no one knows where, would have pillaged the working-man himself. Their remark is, 'It would be better to stay as we are and to send all those rascals to the scaffold!' When the project of the massacre is read and these words 'all reflection on the part of the people must be avoided; they must commit acts which will prevent them from going back,' the readers are overcome with anger. They see that the scoundrels wished to make them the victims. 'Let the Directory have them all hanged, and may Hell swallow them up!'—that is their reflection. Some soldiers reading these dreadful documents say loudly: 'Soldiers of liberty will never have for friends thieves, brigands, and assassins!'"²

The appeals of Babeuf's friends to the working-classes urging them to rescue the prisoners fell therefore on deaf

¹ Fleury, *op. cit.* 216.

² Schmidt, *Tableaux de Paris*, iii. 197.

ears. In vain hordes of viragos enlisted by the conspirators paraded the faubourgs, telling the working-men of Saint-Antoine that their comrades in Saint-Marceau were taking up arms, and proclaiming in Saint-Marceau that Saint-Antoine was rising; the working-men of both districts indignantly repulsed these furies, who admitted with tears they had been paid to stir up insurrection.

On the 27th of August 1796 all the leaders of the conspiracy to the number of forty-seven were removed to Vendôme to await their trial, which, however, did not begin until February 20 of the following year and lasted until the end of May. Babeuf's behaviour in court alternated between brazen defiance and pitiable weakness. Already at his cross-examination in Paris he had declared himself to be merely the agent of a conspiracy :

I attest they do me too much honour in decorating me with the title of head of this affair. I declare that I had only a secondary and limited part in it. . . . The heads and the leaders needed a director of public opinion, I was in the position to enlist this opinion. . . .¹

Who were the mysterious chiefs referred to by Babeuf? The Illuminati? The Order, we know, was still active and co-operated with the society of the Philadelphes, which, according to Lombard de Langres, secretly directed the Babouviste conspiracy. Babeuf, whilst thus disclaiming responsibility, yet maintained his firm belief in Communism though admitting it to be an unattainable ideal. This final abandonment of his revolutionary programme, however, did not save him, and on the 27th of May 1797 sentence of death was passed on Babeuf and Darthé; seven of their fellow-conspirators were ordered to be deported, the rest acquitted. The two condemned men vainly attempted to stab themselves with stilettoes they had concealed beneath their clothing, but were removed to their cells by the police, and on the 28th of May the "Chief of the Equals" and his companion perished on the scaffold.

So ended Babeuf, but not so Babouvisme. Buonarotti still survived to hand on the torch of conflagration to the revolutionary groups of the early nineteenth century.

¹ Fleury, *op. cit.* p. 230.

To-day, however, owing to the pretensions of German Socialism, Babeuf, even in France, is almost forgotten or is remembered only as a madman. But why is Babeuf to be regarded as any madder than his more famous successors in the science of revolution? On the contrary, a close study of the Babouviste conspiracy reveals its author to have been far ahead of his times, a man who, if he had lived to-day, would undoubtedly be hailed as a herald of the dawn.

The fact is that, as students of the Russian Revolution will have observed, *Babouvisme and Bolshevism are identical*; between the two creeds there is no essential difference. The third Internationale of Moscow in its first Manifesto rightly traces its descent from Babeuf. We shall return to this point later in connection with the programme of the Bolsheviks.

It may be objected that the Babouviste rising was lacking in the International spirit of Bolshevism; it is true that Babeuf confined his energies to France in the matter of organizing the day of revolution, but that he dreamt of the movement subsequently developing on a far larger scale is evident from those momentous words of his Communist Manifesto: "The French Revolution is only the forerunner of another revolution, very much greater, very much more solemn, and which will be the last!"

The conspiracy of Babeuf was thus the expiring effort of the French Revolution to realize the great scheme of Weishaupt. The universal nature of that first upheaval has been too little realized by posterity. Everywhere Illuminism had found its adepts; in Holland, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden, Russia, even as far as Africa, the disintegrating doctrines of Weishaupt had spread beneath the surface.¹ It was not merely the thrones of Europe that were shaken but civilization itself that trembled to its very foundations. England had entered largely into the projects of the conspirators; no less an adept than Cato-Zwack himself had, as we have seen, visited this country after his expulsion from Bavaria, and

¹ Barruel, *op. cit.* iv. 357-378.

spent a year at Oxford University, which, less receptive to illuminated doctrines than it is to-day, accorded him scant appreciation.¹ But the efforts of his fellow-countrymen, Röntgen, Ibiken, and Regenhardt who followed,² met with some degree of success, and Robison, himself a Freemason, admits with regret that a certain number of British masons were won over by the German propagandists. Amongst these was the celebrated Thomas Paine, who was later on to betray his connection with the Illuminati by his work, *The Age of Reason*, written in France whilst the "Feasts of Reason" were taking place in the churches of Paris. Largely, then, owing to the instrumentality of Paine several "illuminized" lodges were started in England, which Robison, writing in 1797, declared to be still in existence.³ It is thus that we find noble lords at their banquets drinking the health of the Sovereign People, "whilst in their lairs other Brothers are meditating how they shall set to work in order to put at the disposal of the Sovereign People the possessions of their Brother Lords, the treasures of the banks, and the shops of the rich merchants."⁴ Barruel is no doubt right in describing these upper class Subversives as the Brother Dupes (Frères-Dupes) of the Order, it was not such men as Fox, Sheridan, or even "the renegade Lord Stanhope" who desired to see a levelling down of the wealth they themselves enjoyed; but the plan of the Illuminati was always to use each section of the community for its own destruction. The real aims of Illuminism were embodied not in the political revolution devised by the Whigs to bring themselves into power, but in the social revolution organized by the middle-class malcontents, Paine, Price, and Priestly, and their allies amongst the disgruntled manual workers. It was by these men that, after the Revolution broke out in France, revolutionary societies were started in England, the most important being the London Corresponding Society, founded in 1792 by a shoemaker named Hardy, with branches all over the

¹ Barruel, *op. cit.* iv. p. 400.

² *Application of Barruel's Memoirs of Jacobinism to the Secret Societies of Ireland and Great Britain*, by the translator of that work (the Hon. R. C. Clifford), London, 1798, p. xxii.

³ Robison, *op. cit.* pp. 478, 479.

⁴ Barruel, *op. cit.* iv. 414.

kingdom. Although conducting their agitation under the pretext of reform, it is impossible to see in this movement any connection with the working-class grievances that underlay the Industrial Revolution some thirty years later ; neither the doctrines nor the phraseology of these societies savour in any way of working-class mentality but are both obviously of foreign importation, whilst their plan of organization is simply that of the Illuminati. "These societies," writes a contemporary, "were formed on Weishaupt's corresponding scale," with a "Grand Council" to direct operations.¹ And we have only to read their correspondence to recognize the truth of the further assertion that "all their forms and even their modes of speech were servilely copied from the French"²—that is to say, from the French disciples of the Illuminati. It is certainly not British bootmakers or mechanics who devise such phrases as "Citizens of the World," the "Imprescriptible Rights of Man," or who would have bethought themselves of beginning a letter to the Convention of Paris with the words: "Illustrious senators, enlightened legislators, and dear friends!" The phraseology of Jacobinism is here clearly apparent. The "traitorous correspondence" that took place during the autumn of 1792, when immediately after the ghastly massacres of September the "English Jacobins" sent affectionate letters of good-will to their French brethren and even expressed the hope of setting up a National Convention in England, must not be traced to any native violence on the part of British working-men, but solely to the workings of Illuminism. Thus, owing to the international doctrines instilled in their minds by the adepts of Weishaupt, the English dupes who subscribed to these effusions little dreamt that the men to whom they addressed themselves were in reality their bitterest enemies.³

¹ Clifford, *Application of Barruel's Memoirs, etc.*, p. 33.

² Clifford, *op. cit.* p. 34.

³ It should be remembered that at this date—September to December 1792—the power of the Girondins, who had shown themselves friendly to England, was waning and Robespierre was gaining the ascendancy. And Robespierre's opinion of the English is thus concisely expressed in his speech to the Convention on Jan. 30, 1794: "As a Frenchman and representative of the people I declare that I hate the English people—I declare that I shall increase as far as in me lies the hatred of my fellow-

Internationalism has always redounded to the discredit of England.

By way of further expressing their esteem for the Jacobins of France, the English revolutionary societies had collected large sums of money which they dispatched to Paris and also a quantity of arms made at Birmingham and Sheffield.¹ Fired by this example, the leading revolutionary society of Scotland, calling itself the "North Britons," two years later armed itself with pikes for the purpose of open insurrection. The plot, however, was discovered, and no less than 4000 pikes were found to have been ordered for Perth besides those wanted for Edinburgh.²

By this time, 1794, the victories of the Republican armies had rendered the French formidable allies, and, before long, plans for the invasion of Great Britain began to be discussed by the agents of the Illuminati. Then, as now, Ireland was recognized as the most vulnerable point of attack, and for three years an Irish Society had been at work in that country. This association, first known as the Irish Brotherhood, then as the "United Irishmen," was organized in June 1791 on the lines of the Illuminati. "The proposals for it," writes Clifford, "are couched in the style and exact terms of the Hierophants of Illuminism." They recommend the formation of an association, or, as it is styled, "a beneficent conspiracy" to serve the people; assuming "the secrecy and somewhat of the ceremonial attached to Freemasonry."³ This was effected by means of a central society or lodge from which other

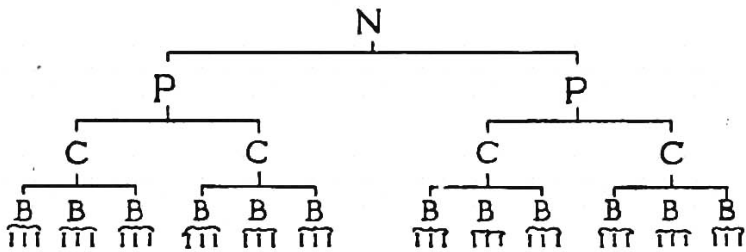
countrymen against them. What does it matter what they think of me? I only hope in our soldiers and in the profound hatred the French have for that people." Such were the "dear friends" at whose feet the English Jacobins saw fit to grovel.

¹ Oswald's speech to the Jacobins of Sept. 30, 1792 (Aulard's *Stances des Jacobins*, iv. 346). It was Oswald, an English Jacobin, who seems to have suggested the idea of the terrible "Loi des Suspects" to the Convention and even advocated a more extreme measure still, namely to *put to death* every suspected man in France. This suggestion, emanating from a vegetarian (for Oswald had adopted the diet of the Brahmins after some years spent in India), drew from Thomas Paine the ironical remark, "Oswald, you have lived so long without tasting flesh that you have now a most voracious appetite for blood" (*Letters of Redhead Yorke*, 1906 edition, p. 71).

² Clifford, *op. cit.* p. 35.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 1, 2.

lodges in the different towns radiated ; chairmen or Masters presided over the lodges, and secretaries were appointed belonging only to the higher degrees. "The concatenation of the degrees," Clifford goes on to observe, "perfectly coincides with Weishaupt's plan," and he illustrates the fact by a reproduction of the pyramidic scale of adepts, starting with the one controlling brain at the top and widening out into the lower ranks of the less initiated, resembling the one shown in the code of the Illuminati :¹



Committees were then formed all over Ireland, but "no person whatever could mention the names of the Committeemen : they were not even known to those who had elected them in the case of the National or Executive Committee. . . . Thus was the Society entirely governed by unknown Superiors."² The exact similarity between this system and the organization of the Babouiste conspiracy will be readily perceived. The official leader of the movement in Belfast was Wolfe Tone, in Dublin Napper Tandy, and, at first, Parliamentary Reform and Catholic Emancipation were held out as the only objects of the society, but in time plans of a more subversive nature were admitted. Thus, when military co-operation with the French was contemplated and it became necessary to win over the troops, the soldiers were adjured "to be true to the French Republic." "The better to propagate the system it was held out to the military that, when the French should come, the soldiers were to be such as them ; that there were to be no rich but *All Equality*."³ Accordingly the barracks were to be burnt down, the country set on fire from end to end, and

¹ Cf. diagram in *Nachtrag . . . Original Schriften*, p. 60.

² Clifford, *op. cit.* p. 6.

³ *Ibid.*

all arms seized until the French should land. It should be noted that by this date, July 1797, even the appearance of liberty under the name of Jacobinism had ceased to exist, and it was with the troops of the despotic Directory that the Irish soldiers were asked to coalesce.

In all this agitation the Irish peasants played no part at all; indeed, on the only occasion when the French effected a landing the people offered vigorous resistance. The contemporary account of the incident is so curious that it must be quoted verbatim:

“ On the 24th of December (1796) the French really did make their appearance at Bantry; and, strange to say, they were not seconded in their attempts by the people, who universally rose in the south to oppose their invaders; but this is accounted for in a still more extraordinary manner. The Executive had received news that the French had deferred their expedition till spring; this circumstance threw them ‘off their guard,’ and in consequence of it no measures were taken to prepare the people for the reception of the French army. *The people were left to themselves.*” “I hope in God,” adds Clifford, “that this avowal made by one of their intended Governors may prove a wholesome lesson to that same people, and encourage them to follow the loyal and genuine dictates of their hearts.”¹

Indeed so little were the Irish people initiated into the real aims of “the beneficent conspiracy” at work in their midst that even the County Committees were not in the secret as to the nature of the engagements entered into with the French.

What unhappy deluded people then were the lower associates, who were informed of nothing, but were to be the mere agents of rebellion and murder, and were hurried on into this abyss of horror by a few political libertines who grasped at dominion, and wished to wade to the helm of the State through the blood of their countrymen!²

These words well describe the workings of the conspiracy which from 1791 onwards has never ceased to exploit the

¹ Clifford, *op. cit.* 9, 10, quoting official report of the incident.

² *Ibid.* p. 12. This very curious pamphlet should be read by every one interested in the present state of affairs in Ireland, of which it offers an almost exact picture.

troubles of Ireland in order to bring about the destruction of England and of Christian civilization.

Whilst these events were taking place in Europe the New World had been illuminized. As early as 1786 a lodge of the Order had been started in Virginia, and this was followed by fourteen others in different cities. But the horrors of the French Revolution, followed in 1797 by the books of Barruel and Robison, which supplied the key to events that had hitherto appeared inexplicable, opened the eyes of the American public to the truth of the conspiracy at work in its midst. The alarm that spread through the States was not, as it has been foolishly described, a case of "panic," but the recognition of a very real danger on which the clergy had the courage to warn their congregations from pulpits all over the country.

At Charlestown on May 9, 1798, the Rev. Jedediah Morse preached his famous sermon on Illuminism, taking for his text, "This is a day of trouble and of rebuke and blasphemy":

Practically all of the civil and ecclesiastical establishments of Europe have already been shaken to their foundations by this terrible organization; the French Revolution itself is doubtless to be traced to its machinations; the successes of the French armies are to be explained on the same ground. The Jacobins are nothing more nor less than the open manifestation of the hidden system of the Illuminati. The Order has its branches established and its emissaries at work in America. The affiliated Jacobin Societies in America have doubtless had as the object of their establishment the propagation of the principles of the illuminated mother club in France.

In July of the same year Timothy Dwight, president of Yale, thus referred to the work of the French Revolution in his sermon to the people of New Haven:

No personal or national interest of man has been uninvaded; no impious sentiment of action against God has been spared; no malignant hostility against Christ and His religion has been unattempted. Justice, truth, kindness, piety, and moral obligation universally have been not merely trodden underfoot . . . but ridiculed, spurned, and insulted as the childish bugbears of

drivelling idiocy. . . . For what end shall we be connected with men of whom this is the character and conduct? Is it that we may assume the same character and conduct? Is it that our churches may become temples of reason, our Sabbath a decade, and our psalms of praise Marscellaise hymns? . . . Is it that we may see the Bible cast into a bonfire, the vessels of the sacramental supper borne by an ass in public procession, and our children either wheedled or terrified, uniting in the mob, chanting mockeries against God, and hailing in the sounds of the "Ça ira" the ruin of their religion and the loss of their souls? . . . Shall our sons become the disciples of Voltaire and the dragons of Marat, or our daughters the concubines of the Illuminati?

Dwight then refers to the misery wrought by the Republican troops in Belgium, Bolivia, Italy, and Switzerland—"the happiness of the last named, and its hopes cut off at a single stroke, happiness erected with the labour and the wisdom of three centuries. . . . What have they spread but crimes and miseries; where have they trodden but to waste, to pollute, and to destroy?"

Needless to say, these warnings were met with furious remonstrances from sympathizers with the principles of Illuminism. *The Independent Chronicle* spoke of "the incorrigible impertinence of the clergy in turning aside from their legitimate functions to spread alarm about Illuminism"; Jefferson—whom Morse declared to be himself an Illuminatus—strenuously denied all imputations against the Order, and described Weishaupt as "an enthusiastic philanthropist" and Barruel's revelations as "the ravings of a Bedlamite." The very violence of these disclaimers shows how truly the shafts had gone home. The line of defence adopted had been laid down some ten years earlier by Weishaupt. "The great care of the Illuminati after the publication of their secret writings," says Barruel, "was to persuade the whole of Germany that their Order no longer existed, that their adepts had all renounced not only their mysteries and conspiracies but all connection between themselves as members of a secret society." It is very curious to read these words written more than 120 years ago, for this is precisely the course that has been adopted throughout by the Illuminati. Still at the present day any reference to the rôle of Illuminism either in the French Revolution or

after is immediately met with the assurance that the whole thing is a "mare's nest," and that in reality Illuminism was an unimportant and transitory movement, which finally ended with its suppression in Bavaria in 1786.

With regard to Barruel's and Robison's revelations, which we are asked to believe "fell flat"—but which in reality created so immense a sensation that the entire first edition of the translation of Barruel's *Memoirs* was sold out before the fourth volume reached the Press, whilst Robison's book went into at least four editions—every effort was made at the time of their appearance to counteract their effects and even to withdraw them from circulation. "The zealous brothers on the banks of the Thames asked for help from their German brothers" in order to destroy the copies of the obnoxious volumes.¹ Thereupon "Brother Boettiger" replied by an article in the *Monthly Magazine* for January 1798 in which he assured the British public that "every one concerned in unveiling Illuminism is now only pursuing a chimera on matters long since buried in profound oblivion, that since 1790 no one has paid the least attention to the Illuminati, that since that date there is no mention of them in the German lodges, and that, finally, proofs of this assertion are to be found in the papers of Bode, who had become the head of the Order." At least, as Barruel observes, Boettiger here admits "that the mysteries of Illuminism had become those of masonic lodges," and that the Order had not been annihilated in 1786 at the time of the discovery of its plots, as other writers of the sect had pretended, but that it had survived at any rate until 1790.

A further exoneration of the Illuminati which is frequently quoted to-day appeared some years later under the title of *De l'influence attribuée aux philosophes, aux Francs Maçons, et aux Illuminés sur la Révolution de France*, of which the author was no other than Jean Joseph Mounier, proposer of the Oath of the Tennis Court on June 20, 1789. According to this apparently reliable witness, neither Freemasonry nor Illuminism had the slightest influence on the Revolution, nor had philosophy either! Therefore, if we are to believe Mounier, the time-honoured opening to nearly

¹ Barruel, iv. 218.

every existing book on the French Revolution tracing its origins to the theories of Rousseau, Diderot, Voltaire, and so on, must be ruled out as fictions.

When we come to examine Mounier's attitude more closely, however, certain considerations present themselves, too lengthy to enter into here, which detract somewhat from the value of his testimony. Of these the most important is the fact that Mounier wrote his book in Germany, where he was living under the protection of the Duke of Weimar, who had placed him at the head of a school in that city where Boettiger himself was director of the college,¹ and, according to the editor of Mounier's work, it was from Bode, who was also at Weimar and whom Boettiger declared to be the head of the Illuminati, that Mounier collected his information!² And this is the sort of evidence seriously quoted against that of innumerable other contemporaries who testified to the influence of Illuminism on the French Revolution!

Space unfortunately forbids quotations from these authorities—Lombard de Langres, the Chevalier de Malet, Joseph de Maistre, the Comte de Vaudreuil, Zimmermann, Cöchhausen, and many others—but an important point to notice is that they belonged to no one party, religion, school of thought, or nationality, but though widely differing in their political or religious point of view, agreed on this one question. Thus the argument frequently advanced that Barruel wrote simply in the interests of the Catholic Church is obviously absurd, since Robison, who was a Protestant, arrived independently at precisely the same conclusions, and the American ecclesiastics quoted above can certainly not be supposed to have spoken in obedience to the dictates of Rome.

It will still be objected that all these witnesses and those who came after them were "reactionaries" eager to discredit the Revolution by every possible means. Was Louis Blanc the Socialist a reactionary? And who has more clearly indicated the workings of the occult forces beneath the movement?³ Was George Sand, revolutionary and

¹ Mounier, *De l'influence attribuée, etc.*, p. lviii (1822 edition).

² *Ibid.* pp. 130, 212.

³ See the whole chapter devoted to this question in the second volume of Louis Blanc's *Histoire de la Révolution Française*.

Freemason, a "reactionary"? And it was George Sand who, in referring to "the European conspiracy of Illuminism" and "the gigantic conceptions of Weishaupt," declared that Illuminism, "drawing from the inventive genius of its leaders and from the traditions of the Secret Societies of mystic Germany, appalled the world by the most formidable and the most learned of political and religious conspiracies," which "shook all dynasties on their thrones."¹ And Madame Sand adds: "Had these societies more effect in France than in the heart of the Germany that had given them birth? *The French Revolution answers energetically with the affirmative.*"²

How, then, in the face of all this evidence—evidence which, as we shall see later, other Freemasons confirmed—is it possible to deny the influence of illuminized Freemasonry on the French Revolution? How can we doubt the truth of those terrible words of Barruel which the subsequent history of the world and, above all, its situation to-day has surely justified:

You thought the Revolution ended in France, and the Revolution in France was only the first attempt of the Jacobins. In the desires of a terrible and formidable sect, you have only reached the first stage of the plans it has formed for that general Revolution which is to overthrow all thrones, all altars, annihilate all property, efface all law and end by dissolving all society.

Had not Weishaupt declared: "This revolution shall be the work of the Secret Societies, and that is one of our great mysteries"?

But for a brief spell after the fall of Babeuf the work of the conspiracy was arrested. The XVIIIth of Brumaire dealt a crushing blow to Illuminism, and the same hand that had locked the door of the Panthéonistes' meeting-place closed down the Secret Societies. Thus the fifteen years during which Napoleon held the reins of power were the only period in the last 140 years during which Europe had peace from the devastating fire of Illuminism kindled by Weishaupt.

¹ *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt*, ii. 219.

² *Ibid.* p. 260.