

Carlsbad 1819

Like another Chouannerie

Patriotism and the social classes

August 20, 2018 by Nulle Terre Sans Seigneur

It is the necessity which makes the multitude of the poor feel that they can not exist without the small number of the rich; it is this providence, and its majesty is tranquil when it functions... Yes, necessity is more human than philosophy, because it is nature that makes it necessary, and it is we who make our philosophy.

The rich is made to spend a lot;
The poor are made to amass many things:
And work, won by softness,
Slowly open the road to wealth.

These relationships are eternal. It is from the inequality of conditions that the shades and days that compose the picture of life result. The innovators hope in vain to annihilate this harmony. Absolute equality among men is the mystery of philosophers. At least the Church was constantly building up; but current maxims only tend to destroy. They have already ruined the rich without enriching the poor; and, instead of the equality of goods, we still have only the equality of miseries and evils.

I understand what the philosophy of an individual is, what is a man freed from the manners of the people, and even passions, a philanthropist, a cosmopolitan, for whom all the nations form that one and the same family; but what is the philosophy of a people? What is this philanthropy, this general liberty of commerce, this charity which consists in renouncing all the advantages that others would not have? What would a people, without passions, who would open all its ports, destroy its customs, share unceasingly its treasures and its lands with all the men who would present themselves without fortune and without talent? A man is a philosopher only because he is not a people; so a philosophizing people would not be a people, which is absurd. The true philosophy of the people is politics; and while philosophy preaches retreat and contempt for riches and honors to individuals, politics cries out for nations to enrich themselves at the expense of their neighbors, to cover the seas of their ships, and industry and their activity, the preference in all the markets of the universe; for two nations are among themselves, in a state of pure nature, like two savages fighting over the same prey.

Besides, we must not be deceived; patriotism is the hypocrisy of our age; it is the ambition and the fury of dominating that disguise themselves under popular names. The places were taken in the social order; it was therefore necessary to reverse everything in order to come out. It is not in fact the people, it is not the poor, in whose name they have done so much harm, who have won the revolution, you see, the misery is greater, the poor more numerous, and compassion is extinguished: there is no more pity, no more commiseration in France. We gave much when we thought that we owed compensation, charity constantly filled the gap between children and adults, vanity and pride turned to the benefit of humanity: it was not a sword, it was prayer that armed poverty.

— Antoine de Rivarol, “Philosophie politique” (*Oeuvres de Rivarol*)

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