

an honest and earnest desire to get at the truth, and to set it forth when it has been ascertained. Certainly no important statement is ever made without ample authority being given for what he says.

It is interesting to mark the manner in which M. Taine's volumes have been received by the Radical press of France. When he produced the first on the "*Ancien Régime*," he was applauded as the first of philosophic historians, one who had gone to the very root of the mischief in pre-revolutionary France, and had shown that revolution was inevitable, if France were still to exist. Nothing could be much more terrible than the picture which he sketched of the brutal selfishness of the French Court and aristocracy and of the misery which it produced among the people of France. Certainly that part of his work was well and truly done—far more completely than it had been accomplished by De Tocqueville, although in mere gracefulness of narrative and description the elder writer must be considered the superior.

When, however, in the first volume of the section of his work on the Revolution, he depicted the anarchy which set in (the title of the volume was "*L'anarchie*"), and described the Revolution as a dissolution, the Radicals of Paris began to discover that their philosophical historian was an aristocrat in disguise. M. Taine had, in fact, undertaken, to explain the Revolution as he had explained the state of things which made it possible, or even necessary. A more thoughtful criticism would have seen that the Revolution, terrible and hideous as it was, constituted the strongest condemnation, not of liberty, but of the aristocracy and corruption out of which it had sprung. Just as in later times the frightful doings of the Commune of Paris in 1871 are the best evidences of the corrupting and degrading influences of the second Empire, so the hideous excesses of the Revolution are the best proofs of the degradation to which France had been reduced by the *Ancien Régime*.

There can, we think, be little doubt, however, that M. Taine has a somewhat clearer purpose in his later volumes than in his first. In the earlier work he was accounting for the state into which France had been brought; in the later he is sustaining the part of a teacher as well. He is warning his countrymen of their folly. In doing this he has set himself to destroy an idol, the idol of the Revolution, which the French, as a nation, have been worshipping for some fifty or sixty years. However bad, he seems to say, the old tyranny was, this will not do at all. It is a false, wicked, cruel monster, and not a god.

Such a protest is not unnecessary. Without denying the necessity of the French Revolution; without forgetting the impulse which it gave to thought and to literature throughout Europe—an impulse not always unwholesome—we cannot shut our eyes to the folly of the idolatry of which the French people are guilty in their thoughts of the Revolution. This was the meaning of the contest when the Comte de Chambord seemed on the point of being King of France. "Henry V.," he declared, "could not give up the white flag of Henry IV." That is to say, he would not accept the Revolution; and the French people would have no one that did not accept the Revolution, of which the *tricolore* was the badge.

M. Taine is determined that, as far as he is concerned, his countrymen shall know, not merely what he thinks of the Revolution, but also what it was. And this he has done in the three volumes which are now completed, the first on the "*Anarchy*," the second on the "*Jacobin Conquest*," and the one now published on the "*Revolutionary Government*": that is to say, on the government of France by the Convention and the Directory from the time of the execution of the King to the Consulate. In these three volumes, partly made up of graphic description, partly of philosophical disquisition, he sets the men, their principles, and their conduct clearly before us. But he is not contented with this. Lest we should fail to understand what he strives to explain, he gives us a clear idea of his intention in the preface to the last volume.

These are his words: "In Egypt," says Clement of Alexandria, 'the sanctuaries of the temples are overshadowed by veils woven of gold; but if you go towards the further end of the edifice and inquire after the statue, a priest advances with a grave air, singing a hymn in the Egyptian language, and raises the veil a little, as if to show you the god. What do you then behold? A crocodile, an indigenous serpent, or some other dangerous animal; the god of the Egyptians appears, it is a beast wallowing upon a purple carpet.'

"There is no need," continues M. Taine, "to go to Egypt, or to travel so far back in history, in order to meet with the worship of the crocodile; it was seen in France at the end of the last century. Unfortunately an interval of a hundred years is too great a distance for the retrospective imagination. To-day, from the point which we have reached, we see in the horizon behind us only forms embellished by the intermediate atmosphere,

floating outlines which each spectator can interpret and fashion at his pleasure, no distinct and living human features, but an assemblage of vague points the moving lines of which unite or break around the forms of the imagination. I have wished to see these vague points close to me, and I have transported myself into the second half of the eighteenth century, and, like Clement of Alexandria, I have done my best to contemplate first the temple and then the god.

"But it was not enough to look with one's bodily eyes; it was necessary besides to understand the theology which underlies the worship. There is a theology which explains it: one which, like most theologies, is very specious, being composed of the dogmas which are called the principles of 1789. In fact they were proclaimed at that date; but before that they had been already formulated by Jean Jacques Rousseau: the sovereignty of the people, the rights of man, the social contract, they are well known. Once adopted they have, of themselves, developed their practical consequences; at the end of three years they took the crocodile into the sanctuary and installed him behind the golden veil, on the purple carpet. In fact, by the power of his jaws and the capacity of his stomach he was beforehand designated for this position; it is in his character of wild beast and devourer of men that he became a god.

"When this is understood there is no more trouble about the formulæ which consecrate him, nor about the pomp which surrounds him; he may be observed like any ordinary animal, and followed in his diverse attitudes, when he lies in ambush, when he seizes his prey, when he masticates, when he swallows, when he digests. I have studied in detail the structure and play of his organs, noted his nature and his habits, made myself acquainted with his instincts, his faculties, his appetites."

The author then mentions that the abundance of material for these purposes was so great that he has had to leave a portion of it aside, but he believes, and we believe, he has given enough for his purpose. He then goes on:

"Authentic cookery books inform us as to the expense of this worship. We can make out with tolerable accuracy what the sacred crocodiles ate in a space of ten years, their ordinary fare and their choice morsels. Naturally the deity chose fat victims; but his voracity was so great that, in addition to this, he blindly swallowed the lean as well, and in greater numbers than the fat; moreover, in virtue of his instincts and as an unavoidable result of his position, once or twice a year he ate his fellows unless he was eaten by them.

"Certainly this is an instructive kind of worship, at least for historians, for the simple students of truth; if any of his devotees remain, I do not dream of converting them; in a matter of faith it is of no use arguing with a devotee. This volume, like its predecessors, is written only for those who are fond of the study of moral zoology, for the students of the natural history of the mind, for seekers after truth, texts, proofs, for them only and not for the public which has taken its side, and formed its opinion on the subject of the Revolution. This opinion began to be formed between 1825 and 1830, after the disappearance or death of eye-witnesses. When they were gone, it was possible to persuade the amiable public that the crocodiles were philanthropists, that several of them had genius, that they hardly ever devoured any but the guilty, and that, if occasionally they ate too much, it was unconsciously, in spite of themselves, or from devotion, sacrificing themselves for the common good."

This is an exact description of the contents of the volume before us. If our space allowed, we would draw the reader's attention more particularly to the author's account of the manner in which the Jacobins persisted in their theory of the subordination of the government to the governed, while they were setting up the most detestable despotism that the world has ever seen, one in comparison with which that of Louis XIV., or Frederick the Great, or even the Russian autocracy was genial and tolerable. We should also have liked to draw attention to his sketches of Marat, Danton, and Robespierre, and to his account of the later days of the Convention. It must, however, suffice to say that M. Taine has shown the *culte* of the Revolution to be a foul superstition and idolatry, that the liberty which it promised was the worst bondage that any civilized nation has seen, its equality the equality of brigands who do not possess even the proverbial honour which is said to exist among thieves, and its fraternity the brotherhood of Cain.

C.

THERE are many curious anecdotes related respecting Grimaldi, says a writer in the *Current*, one of which is the following: During the riots of 1780 many persons, to save their houses from the fury of the mob, affixed labels to their doors, "No Popery." Grimaldi, determined to please all parties and make assurances doubly sure, hung out a label upon which was written "No Religion."