

the old social order, and the dawn of the new era in which we are living. It means the abolition of class-legislation, and of all the forms, shows, disqualifications or privileges feudal or otherwise that had for centuries been connected therewith all over Europe. It was the assertion of the Sovereignty of the people and of the doctrine of the liberty, equality, fraternity of all men. France is professedly based on these modern principles: so is Italy: Germany in 1848 made a dead lift to realize them but was thrown back, only however to rally for other efforts. And mutterings of them are heard over all the rest of Europe.

The French Revolution meant two things: (1) The destruction of old lies; (2) The assertion of a new truth. The work however, was accompanied with so much noise and fury that it inspired universal terror, and the men in other countries who at first hailed its approach with hope and joy, soon drew back from it as a terrible portent, instead of understanding it as the death throes of old falsities and injustice, and the birth throes of a new birth of time; and so for nearly half a century, no one was able to look at it calmly and compute its exact meaning. Two other reasons prevented its being understood in Britain. (1) Bad as the state of things was in Britain, politically, morally, socially, there was not a tittle of the rottenness and hollowness that was in France. A century and a half before, the British people had got up a considerable conflagration on their own account, in which they had burnt up a lot of abominations, such as Star Chambers, pillories, Divine right of King and Bishop to do wrong if they liked, and so forth. The French conflagration was long delayed, and so when it did come, it was an enormous one and very thorough, and the brightness of it and the sound of it, went through all the earth. But in Britain they could see no necessity for such a fire, and so attributed it all to the devil. They thought that there could be dragonnades, and the glitter of the *Grand Monarque* bought by the drudgery of millions, and *parcs aux cerfs*, and France burdened with debt to adorn a Pompadour, and sent to war because she willed it; that there could be hungry crowds whose petition of grievances was answered only by a new gallows 40 feet high; that there could be Bastilles and *lettres de cachet*, and laws enacting that when a seigneur returned from the chase with his feet cold, he was not to kill more