IN 1929 the John Rylands Library acquired a bound series of pamphlets, originally from the library of the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, entitled Recueil de Pièces Intéressantes pour servir à l'Histoire de la Révolution en France.¹ These pamphlets are arranged in roughly chronological order, each volume having a manuscript list of contents at the end and a printed title page, with the number of the particular volume inserted in ink. The collection seems to have originally consisted of thirty-three volumes, of which numbers i, xii, xvi, xxiv and xxv are missing. Volume i apparently related to 1787. Volumes ii-x deal with 1788, xi-xvii with 1789, xviii-xxii with 1790, xxiii with 1791, xxvi-xxvii with 1792, xxviii-xxx with 1793 and xxx-xxxi with 1794. Volume xxxii extends as far as vendémiaire an IV (October 1795) and volume xxxiii, which was presumably the final volume, covers a five-year period extending as far as the Consulate. From 1789 onwards many of the documents, such as printed editions of speeches in the Assembly, are easily available elsewhere. The Recueil also contains, however, a certain amount of local material, with particular reference to Grenoble. This local bias and the fact that reprints of deputies' speeches were those executed in Grenoble, suggests that its anonymous collector was himself a Grenoblois. The pamphlets of the revolutionary period provide a good deal of material on the municipal politics of Grenoble, a certain amount of information about Dauphiné as a whole and isolated publications from other regions of southern France.

The collection is particularly valuable for the year 1788, when

¹ I am happy to take this opportunity of thanking the Librarian, Mr. R. Hall, for bringing this collection to my notice.
political controversy was largely a matter of printed polemics, with the leading rôle being played by the provinces, especially by Dauphiné itself. In addition to the individual pamphlets published in 1788, the following contemporary collections are included: Choix de Pièces et d'Écrits divers sur la Révolution qui a été tentée en France par les Édits du 8 mai 1788, et sur le Droit de la Nation de s'assembler elle-même en États-Généraux; Recueil de diverses Pièces concernant la Révolution du 8 mai 1788; Second Recueil d'un Choix de Pièces et d'Écrits divers sur la Révolution qui a été tentée en France par les Édits du 8 mai 1788; Recueil ou Choix de Pièces et Écrits divers sur la Révolution qui a été tentée en France par les Édits du 8 mai 1788; Nouveau Recueil ou Choix de Pièces et d'Écrits divers sur la Révolution qui a été tentée en France par les Édits du 8 mai 1788; Suite au nouveau Recueil ou Choix de Pièces et d'Écrits divers sur la Révolution qui a été tentée en France par les Édits du 8 mai 1788. These five collections occupy volumes VIII and IX of the Recueil in the John Rylands Library. A few pamphlets contained in them are duplicated in earlier volumes of this Recueil, but the latter offers a much wider selection of material than that in the collections published in 1788 and 1789. The following illustration of the resources of the Rylands Recueil will, I hope, help to make it more widely known to historians of the French Revolution.

I

As was to be expected, the pamphlets confirm and exemplify the pattern of events that has been so thoroughly analysed by Jean Egret. Where its emphasis seems to point in a different direction one must beware of accepting this particular collection as representative of the pamphlet literature of the time. It includes comparatively little from Paris and a great deal from Dauphiné. The royal or ministerial case is barely represented. The apparent tendency for the initial protests of the parlements against Lamoignon’s Edicts of 8 May 1788 to be taken up in July and August by members of the general public, noble or bourgeois, is

1 In his numerous articles on local history. See in addition his La Révolution des Notables; Mounier et les Monarchiens (Paris, 1950), pp. 1-33 and La Pré-Révolution Française, 1787-1788 (Paris, 1962), pp. 204-361.
not necessarily true of France as a whole. But the fact that the *Recueil* may not constitute a representative sample of the innumerable brochures of the period, while it discourages negative conclusions based on the absence of evidence, does not detract from the importance of what is there. Of particular interest to the local historian is the fact that most of the collective petitions, resolutions and minutes, reproduce the names of their original signatories, often with some indication of the occupation of members of the Third Estate. It would be rash to erect any hypotheses about the political attitudes of social groups on such fragile foundations, but there is tangible evidence for the participation of specific individuals.

The *Recueil* suggests that agitation against Lamoignon’s judicial reforms was limited to the seats of the parlements and the surrounding countryside and was strongest in areas where local Estates survived. Without the focus provided by these Estates, the protests of the lawyers often attracted little attention; for example, in Alsace, Lorraine and Normandy. “La capitale, surtout, est un exemple du peu de part que le Public prend à ce que les Parlements appellent leur disgrâce.”¹ What is not so clear is how far the remaining parlements succeeded in winning widespread local support. Linguet, a bitter enemy, conceded that “à Rennes, à Bordeaux, à Toulouse, à Grenoble, à Pau, etc., la législation nouvelle semble être envisagée par une partie nombreuse de la nation comme un désastre national”, and his view was endorsed, so far as Beam was concerned, by the local *curés.*² Toulouse, Grenoble and Dijon insisted that the prosperity of the town rested upon the activity of its parlement: “Toulouse n’a jamais été une ville riche... Son unique ressource est le parlement.”³ “Dijon n’ayant de ressource que son parlement... plus de six mille familles étaient ruinées.”⁴ At Toulouse the *curés* and the clergy of Saint-Sermin supported the argument of

¹ *Je m’en rapporte à tout le monde* (London, 1788), p. 81.
² *Annales Politiques, Civiles et Littéraires*, xiv, 287; *Représentations des Curés de Béarn au Roi, Recueil*, v. viii. Where a volume number only is quoted, the reference is in all cases to the *Recueil de Pièces intéressantes pour servir à l’Histoire de la Révolution en France.*
³ *Représentations des Capitouls, Gouverneurs de la Ville de Toulouse*, vol. iv
⁴ *Récit succinct de ce qui s’est passé en Bourgogne*, vol. ix.
The most vigorous statement of this case comes from Grenoble, where the municipality added that most of the seigneurial courts in Dauphiné—threatened, like the parlements, by the new legislation—were situated in the local capital. Even a small town like Saint-Vallier in Dauphiné feared that the curtailment of seigneurial justice would deprive it of one of its few sources of income. When due allowance has been made for the special pleading of the legal dependants of the parlements, such evidence does suggest that the lawyers had succeeded in enlisting some support from the representatives of commerce and manufacturing: at the meeting at Saint-Vallier the latter outnumbered the former by at least two to one.

The parlementaires were probably more successful in drawing the local nobility into their movement of protest. They carefully emphasized how the edicts of 8 May threatened fiscal privilege (Dijon); described the new right to by-pass seigneurial courts as “un abus dangereux et déstructeur de la propriété” (Nancy); invited the noblesse to sit with the parlement (Pau). The “gentilhommes, nobles et propriétaires” of Béarn complained to the king, “Vos ministres ordonnent l’uniformité pour détruire les privilèges.” Seigneurial justice was defended with more warmth than plausibility, and the épée joined the robe in common support of provincial privilege, though the former tended to identify this with the local Estates and the latter with the restoration of the parlements. The Recueil provides little evidence of the feelings of the provincial nobility towards the noblesse de cour. The Breton nobility, assembled at Vannes, presumably sympathized with the prophecy in a pamphlet read to them: “La cour sera bientôt purgée de cette foule avide, non d’honneur, mais d’argent, qui en écrite aujourd’hui les talents et la probité.” But the remaining denunciations of the “luxe des grands” and the “avides courtisans” come from anonymous pamphlets and

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2 Mémoire pour la Ville de Grenoble and Pétition des 41 Corps et Communautés de Grenoble, vol. iii.
3 Délibérations de la Ville de Saint-Vallier, 21 June 1788, vol. iii.
4 Dijon, 4 June; Nancy, 11 June; Pau, 19 June; all in vol. iii.
5 Lettres au Roi, vol. iii.
6 Le Bon Sens aux Français, vol. viii.
were not echoed by either the parlements or the various local gatherings of nobles.

The general impression given by the Recueil is one of serious disaffection amongst the provincial nobility, which found a focus, especially in Provence and Franche-Comté, in the demand for the restoration of the traditional local Estates; but not of any serious insurrectionary movement likely to present a dangerous challenge to the monarchy. The activities of parlements, nobility and one or two municipalities in the legal centres stirred up the dust but failed to set in motion any movement that looked like gathering momentum. To this generalization there is, however, one important exception. In Dauphiné, although the forces of division were by no means negligible, a precarious local union of the three Orders developed new tactics and presented the royal government with a serious threat.

From the beginning of the crisis the events in Dauphiné had a particular local colouring. While the majority of the parlements, in their initial protests against the new Edicts, stressed the threat to feudal privilege, that of Grenoble complained of the projected Cour Plénière, “qu'on n'y admet point le tiers-état, qui forme la portion la plus nombreuse des sujets du roi”. It was perhaps not surprising that a man like Barnave should call for unity: “Propriétaires d'offices, propriétaires de terres, commerçants, capitalistes. . . Unissez-vous, ralliez-vous tous au parti de la magistrature.” What was more unexpected was to find the noblesse of Grenoble offering at least a partial repudiation of “ces privilèges que nous serions prêts à sacrifier pour le bien de la nation”. “Ne voyons-nous pas même approcher l'heureuse époque où les privilèges, qui servirent trop souvent autrefois à diviser les corps, vont se réduire à régler l'ordre des rangs et la distribution des honneurs, vont devenir utiles et chers à la nation toute entière, au lieu de peser sur elle comme un fardeau insupportable?” An anonymous gentilhomme took the argument a stage further: “C'est aux corps distingués par des prérogatives à se signaler les premiers par de généreux sacrifices. C'est au Clergé surtout qu'il appartient de donner l'exemple. . . . Le

1 Procès-verbal, vol. iii.  
² Esprit des Édits, vol. iii.  
tiers état est la masse la plus considérable; elle renferme des
lumières, des connaissances; elle a des moyens."

This unique, if fragile, union of the three orders led to the
development of a local revolutionary movement based on the
municipalités. The town council of Montélimar asserted on 21
June that the municipalities had taken over the rôle of the parle-
ments as a counterpoise to the power of the king. The new
movement was launched at Grenoble on 14 June at a town-
meeting attended by 9 clergy, 34 nobles, the 3 consuls and the
procureur du roi, 27 lawyers, 2 doctors, 5 bourgeois and 25 repre-
sentatives of the corps de métiers. This meeting, asserting the
right of "les Citoyens réunis dans les municipalités" to speak
for Dauphiné, "pendant l'interruption des États et la dispersion
des Cours Souveraines", petitioned the king to withdraw the
Edicts, convene the local Estates—with half of the deputies
drawn from the Third Estate—and to summon the Estates
General. They then took the revolutionary step of inviting all
three Orders in Dauphiné to send deputies to "délibérer ulté-
rieurement sur les droits et intérêts de la Province".

The Intendant and the Grenoble meeting circularized the
towns and villages of Dauphiné with rival propaganda. The
town of Romans joined the revolutionary movement as early as 16
June and the Recueil contains the reports of meetings in 16 other
localities which agreed to participate. As Egret has observed,
the support for the movement came from only a small minority
of the communities, and the men from the Third Estate chosen
to represent these places were almost all lawyers. But the town
meetings themselves were often well-attended, merchants and
bourgeois predominated, and in some of the country districts,
such as the Comté de Clermont, the Communauté de Crévoux and
Saint-Martin-le-Vinoux, the majority of those present were illiter-
ate. Although Vienne, Valence, Gap and many smaller towns
remained aloof, the evidence suggests that, within a limited area,
the movement obtained the support of the population as a whole.

1 Lettre d'un Gentilhomme de Dauphiné à un Citoyen de Toulouse, 28 July 1788,
vol. viii. 2 Délibération de la Ville de Montélimar, vol. iii.
3 Délibération de la Ville de Grenoble, vol. iii.
4 Mounier et les Monarchiens, p. 17. 5 See vol. iv, passim.
A second meeting at Grenoble, in defiance of the orders of the royal Governor, the duc de Clermont-Tonnerre, convened the representatives of the province for 21 July. This subsequent meeting, at the château of Vizille, is too well-known to require further comment, except that the report of the meeting in the Recueil gives the names of all those present. Evidence of continuing suspicion between the orders is provided by an anonymous pamphlet attacking the Vizille gathering: "Leur [the nobles'] intérêt est précisément l'opposé de celui du tiers-état; donc le tiers-état doit être content et tranquille lorsqu'ils se plaignent." The disgruntled author alleged that the Vizille programme was prepared in advance by the parlementaires, the curés de campagne were "obligés d'y venir, à peine de ne plus manger la soupe au château," and those of the nobility present were not representative of their order as a whole. The royal government convened a rival meeting of the province at Romans, with the loyal Archbishop of Vienne in the chair. This was opposed by Grenoble, which once more summoned a meeting of its own for 1 September. The garrison in the town was reinforced and an armed clash appeared likely, when news of the resignation of Brienne appears to have allowed both sides to arrive at a compromise.

In the meantime, attempts had been made to induce other provinces to imitate Dauphiné. On 10 July the nobility of Toulouse went to the hôtel de ville to demand the convocation of a meeting of the general council, reinforced by all of the local nobility and two deputies from each corps de métier. The Dauphiné doctrine of municipal sovereignty—"les droits naturels des municipalités, communs à tous les hommes, sont inaliénables, impréscriptibles, éternels comme la nature qui en est le fondement"—appears in the undated Avis d'un toulousain patriote à ses concitoyens. The link between the two provinces is clearly

1 Assemblée des trois Ordres de la Province de Dauphiné, vol. iv.
4 Protestations de la Noblesse de Toulouse au Comte de Périgord, 10 July 1788, vol. iv.
5 vol. v.
shown by the *Lettre d'un Gentilhomme de Dauphiné à un Citoyen de Toulouse* of 28 July: “Ne soyez point arrêté par la crainte que les municipalités refusent: assemblez-vous avec celles qui accepteront.” For the writer, the “point essentiel” was the convocation of a provincial meeting by the municipality of the local capital: “Vous manquez tout si vous ne l’obtenez pas.”¹ The *patriote* of Toulouse also claimed that the example of Dauphiné would shortly be followed by “nos frères les Bretons, avec qui nous sommes réunis, avec qui nous combinons toutes nos démarches”. In fact, however, the initiative of Grenoble was the only one to succeed, owing to the coincidence there of an unusual degree of co-operation between the three Orders and a vacillating, if not complaisant, military Governor. At Toulouse the nobility were checked by the resistance of the capitouls and the resolute attitude of the comte de Périgord, the local commander. Moreover the movement in Languedoc lacked a common objective since the local Estates still existed, although few seemed to approve of their composition. In Brittany the Third Estate was challenging the domination of the Estates by the nobility and the municipal revolt of November 1788 was directed against the aristocracy rather than the royal government. Demands for the restoration of vanished Estates in Dijon, Aix and Besançon seem to have been the work of the nobility alone, and hence were easily brushed aside. The noblesse of Franche-Comté were still talking about arranging a meeting with “Messieurs du tiers-état” on 10 September, and obviously unwilling to challenge the commander of the province, the marquis de Saint-Simon, whom they believed to be ready to oppose them by force.

It is impossible to speak of the “failure” of the revolt of 1788 since the resignation of Brienne and Lamoignon and the repeal of the May Edicts granted the opposition most of what it had demanded. Nevertheless the campaign which had developed to put pressure on the Government by the united action of the three Orders, had made little headway. Except in Dauphiné and Brittany, the Government had the situation under control. Even in Dauphiné serious fissures were appearing in the united front. One anonymous pamphleteer launched a bitter attack on

¹Vol. viii.
the clergy. Another criticized the insistence of the Romans meeting on demanding four generations of nobility from those who wished to represent the noblesse in the local Estates. The Lettre d’un Citoyen dauphinois à Monsieur M.S.D.E.D.D., in a long and confused complaint, criticized the noblesse for its rejection of the anoblis, the “bourgeoisie” for its exclusion of the “people” and the Third Estate for its presumption:

Les écrits du tiers-état, les pétitions des villes, annoncent trop de chaleur pour ne pas inspirer une juste méfiance aux deux premiers ordres. . . . Partout je vois les droits les plus sacrés mis en question; la propriété la plus légitime attaquée et proposée comme un objet de réforme: les uns veulent détruire la noblesse héréditaire; d’autres anéantir toute distinction; les plus modérés parlent de l’extinction des rentes et privilèges seigneuriaux, comme des restes impurs des siècles de barbarie. . . . On est parvenu, à présent, à faire regarder à la multitude e mot privilège comme synonyme de celui d’injustice.

The situation was summed up succinctly on 8 December by a Parisian writer: “Ce n’est plus contre l’autorité arbitraire des ministres, c’est entre les citoyens que la guerre est déclarée; et chacun dans son délire méconnaissant ses frères, dont les intérêts sont les siens, est au moment d’implorer contre leurs prétentions, le pouvoir arbitraire dont il a tant à redouter, et qui ne les craint déjà plus.” The situation was perhaps not quite so gloomy and an unusual measure of social harmony was to distinguish the representatives of the three Orders of Dauphiné at Versailles in the spring of 1789. Nevertheless the attempt at concerted action had failed to spread beyond the province and seemed to have come to a halt even there. So far as practical achievements were concerned, one can but endorse the opinion of M. Egret that the period which ends in 1788 forms “une étape intermédiaire” qui nous paraît devoir être détachée de la Révolution.

In other respects, however, it would clearly be nonsensical to assume that the French people forgot or ignored the experiences of 1788 when confronted by the greater crisis of the following

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1 Avis aux États de Dauphiné, séants à Romans, vols. vii and ix.
2 Chacun a fait ses Preuves, vols. vii and ix.
3 Vol. vii.
5 La Pré-Révolution Française, p. 1.
year. One has only to contrast the behaviour at the Estates General of the deputations from Brittany and Dauphiné to appreciate the extent to which attitudes in 1789 were conditioned by recent experience. The pamphlet war of 1788 had been originally concerned with the extent of the royal prerogative: was the king entitled, without the agreement of the Estates General, to transform the nature of the legal system? In particular, had he the power to create a Cour Plénière which would supersede the parlements of Paris and the provinces as the sole registering body for new legislation? On a tactical issue of vital importance to the magistrates, had the royal government the right to employ lettres de cachet, which alone enabled it to evade the veto of the parlements and to bring effective pressure to bear on their members? Questions of this kind had, of course, been debated throughout the previous generation, and in this respect the pamphlets of 1788 may be said to belong to the Ancien Régime rather than to the Revolution. But the debate now spread well beyond legal circles. The gentilhommes and patriotes who answered each other's pamphlets were participating in a national controversy. One can find them borrowing each other's metaphors as well as arguments. In this way the conflict raging in a few provinces became the intellectual property of the country as a whole. Political theories which might have seemed harmlessly speculative in more settled times acquired a new significance when preparations were being made for a meeting of the Estates General, and it would seem reasonable to suppose that the boldness and maturity of the ideas of the revolutionaries of 1789 owed a good deal to the experience acquired in the debates of the previous year.

The evidence of the Recueil suggests that the royal case was poorly defended, generally by writers who were suspected of being in ministerial pay, such as Linguet and the abbé Maury. The traditional conception of Divine Right monarchy was advanced by Lamoignon at the séance royale of 19 November 1787:

"Au roi seul appartient la puissance souveraine dans son royaume . . . Il n'est comptable qu'à Dieu seul de l'exercice du pouvoir

1 See the ironical Testament de Desbrugnières (vol. viii) for a list of such pamphleteers.
suprême . . . le pouvoir législatif réside dans la personne du souverain, sans dépendance et sans partage.”

1 Its only advocate in the Recueil itself was Le Franc de Pompignan, Archbishop of Vienne.2 Half-hearted attempts were made to justify royal absolutism on utilitarian grounds. “Les siècles turbulents de la féodalité nous ont trop bien prouvé combien cette unité est essentielle pour le bonheur général.”

3 The same author argued that the monarchy was the only possible vehicle for “une réforme désirée depuis longtemps”, whereas the parlements were primarily concerned with the defence of their own privileges. Their sudden opposition to lettres de cachet dated only from the employment of these weapons against their own members.4 Self-interest could be transmuted into political theory on either side: the local court of Bourg-en-Bresse, content with its promotion to a Grand Bailliage, issued a vigorous refutation of a pamphlet attributed to Barnave: “L’auteur parle souvent de notre constitution et de son anéantisement: mais cette constitution que tant de gens invoquent comme lui, n’est encore bien expliquée ni parfaitement connue. . . . Nous nous égarons dans l’histoire sans lui trouver une existence uniforme.”

5 A particularly forceful defence of absolutism came from Nîmes in November 1788, in the form of a Délibération à prendre par le Tiers-État dans toutes les Municipalités du Royaume de France. The king’s sovereign control over legislation was bluntly affirmed, with the single qualification that, although absolute, “il ne gouverne qu’avec des lois, toujours présumées être des émanations de la volonté générale, qu’il représente”.

The same attempt to put Rousseau into royal livery occurs in a more tentative form at Lyons, where “la loi doit être l’expression de la volonté générale” is explained as implying obedience to a good ruler, although not to “le pouvoir arbitraire que des grands, des ministres, des subalternes de l’administration se sont attribué”.

1 Quoted in Linguet, Annales, no. 98, p. 103.
2 Lettre pastorale de Monseigneur l’Archevêque de Vienne aux Curés de son Diocèse, 15 July 1788, vol. v.
3 Je m’en rappporte à tout le monde (London, 1788), p. 3.
6 Quoted in Linguet, Annales, no. 119, pp. 451-3.
7 Quelques Avis aux Citoyens de Lyons, vol. viii.
These isolated arguments in favour of royal absolutism are overwhelmed by the volume and vigour of the publications on the opposite side. It would be rash to conclude that this disequilibrium reflects either the strength of the two sides in the pamphlet war or the state of educated opinion. There are occasional accusations that ministers subsidized propagandists who aspired to win the support of the Third Estate against the aristocracy, and such productions may have been deliberately rejected by the anonymous collector of the Recueil. Against this, however, one must set the admission of Linguet: “L’autorité n’avait presque que des défenseurs anonymes.” So far as the evidence goes, the defence of royal sovereignty seems to have been lacking in both volume and ability.

The opposition case was based on two distinct forms of argument: the appeal to tradition and the invocation of natural rights. The former was naturally the preferred instrument of the parlements. As in seventeenth-century England, an attempt was made to identify a traditional constitution in which sovereignty was shared between the king and his most important subjects. Their agreed decisions formed a corpus of fundamental law which the monarch alone was not at liberty to set aside. The Estates of Blois, in 1579, were alleged to have delegated to the parlements the right of representing the national interest when the Estates General were not in session. It therefore followed that the absolutist developments of the seventeenth century were an illegitimate abuse of royal power and violation of this traditional constitution. The adoption by the Paris Parlement in 1787 of the principle that fiscal legislation could be sanctioned only by the Estates General, now allowed the parlementaires to present themselves as both the custodians of tradition and the spokesmen of the patriotes. In fact, however, any appeal to a past when the Third Estate had occupied an entirely subordinate position was of interest only to the aristocracy and the parlements, who alone could hope to profit from a return to the ancient constitution as defined by themselves.

1 La France plus qu’Anglaise (Brussels, 1788), p. 105.
It is therefore not surprising to find that most of the pamphlets which based their opposition to the Government specifically on the sanctity of tradition, originated from the parlements. That of Navarre, in January 1788, appealed to the king to respect “les formes antiques, établies pour le maintien de votre autorité, inséparable des droits de la constitution française”.

Rennes, which in January described the exile of the duc d'Orléans and the arrest of Fréteau and Sabatier as contraires à la constitution de la monarchie, lamented after the publication of Lamoignon’s Edicts la constitution est détruite.

The Cour des Aides at Paris objected that any new court was illegal and anti-constitutionnel until it had been sanctioned by the Nation assemblée. Such arguments were reinforced by a number of primarily historical tracts, in which the alleged liberties of the ancient Franks assumed the role that Magna Carta had played in seventeenth-century England.

Montesquieu had not based the case for a gouvernement modéré on historical precedent. He was concerned less with the sanctity of a traditional constitution than with the protection of civil liberties by a balance of political and judicial power. Nevertheless, his affection for his former colleagues of the parlements and his insistence that institutions should conform to a pre-existing esprit général made it plausible enough to invoke his authority for the strengthening of the parlements as the most effective pouvoirs intermédiaires in conformity with French traditions, while his identification of absolutism with despotism provided a useful weapon against the Government. Quotations from De l’Esprit des Lois abound throughout the Recueil. The Bordeaux Parlement naturally honoured its former président. Grenoble, Toulouse and Roussillon followed suit. So did the Commission Intermédiaire of the Breton Estates, and a pamphlet attributed to Condorcet. Of particular interest is the Examen impartial des nouveaux Édits by the distinguished Provençal lawyer, Portalis.

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1 Très-humbles et très-respectueuses Remontrances, 28 January 1788, vol. ii.
3 Arrêté de la Cour des Aides de Paris, 3 May 1788, vol. ii.
4 See, for example, Le Judicium Francorum and Le Moniteur, ou Suite au Réveil d’un Français, both in vol. viii.
5 See vols. ii, iii and vii passim.
6 Vol. vii.
This essay, avoiding the facile antiquarianism of the majority of the parlementaires, argued the case against the Edicts from first principles. Although Montesquieu's influence dominates the style of Portalis, whose language at times paraphrases De l'Esprit des Lois, the lawyer from Aix tried to arrive at a synthesis of his own. He began with an explicit rejection of Divine Right: "Les gouvernements sont donc des établissements purement humains, formés par le consentement des peuples ou par des événements et des révolutions qui sont toujours l'ouvrage des peuples." In a passage reminiscent of Rousseau's distinction between prince and sovereign he maintained that, in a monarchy, "le monarque a l'exercice du pouvoir législatif; mais la nation en conserve toujours la propriété". Returning to Montesquieu, he stressed the difficulty of making good laws, which led wise rulers to consult a corps de magistrature. The fruits of this joint consultation he declared to be eternally binding on the king and his heirs. Portalis's eclecticism in fact led him to a final position which had much more in common with Montesquieu than with Rousseau.

The alternative, and less frequently argued, case against the ministers of Louis XVI rested on the conception of natural rights. In practice, it was possible to combine tradition, natural rights and a contractual theory of sovereignty in a violent, if vague, onslaught on ministerial despotism, and no sharp antithesis divided the two schools. Nevertheless, the advocates of natural rights, not fettered to an aristocratic tradition, tended to be the more radical. The Recueil contains two examples from the parlements. Nancy on 12 January 1788 appealed to "les droits inviolables et sacrés de la liberté des Citoyens. La liberté et la propriété sont les droits essentiels et primitifs des Citoyens. Leur conservation est l'objet et la fin de la société". The avocat-général of the Conseil Souverain of Roussillon similarly declared on 25 October, "La forme des Gouvernements peut changer; les droits des Citoyens sont toujours les mêmes; fondés sur la nature, ils sont inaltérables comme elle." Conditions in Dauphiné, where the revolt against royal authority was too open for the subterfuges of legal skirmishing, favoured an

1 Remontrances du Parlement de Nancy, 12 January 1788, vol. ii.
appeal to natural rights. The meeting at Vizille justified its con-
vozation on this basis: "Ils tiendraient ce droit de la nature, quand même leurs titres et leur possession ne le leur assureraient pas." The Représentations au Roi drafted by the meeting included the bold slogan: "Ni le temps ni les lieux ne peuvent légitimer le despotisme; les droits des hommes dérivent de la nature seule."\(^1\) The same point of view was expressed by Barou du Soleil, procureur du roi at Lyons. "Qu'importent les autorités [i.e. historical texts] des règnes obscurs et barbares? C'est dans le cœur de l'homme que la nature a gravé . . . la grande charte de la liberté civile."\(^2\) The "noblesse de Guyenne, Gascogne et Périgord", in a Mémoire to the king of 25 June, spoke of "cette liberté sacrée, qu'ils [the French people] tiennent des mains de la nature. . . . Les droits des peuples sont imprescriptibles."\(^3\)

Whereas the advocates of tradition turned to Montesquieu, the partisans of the Rights of Man tended to look towards Rousseau. It would perhaps be excessive to see a systematic advocacy of the theories of *Du Contrat Social* behind every reference to the volonté générale. The noblesse de Dauphiné, for example, prefaced an attack on despotism, à la Montesquieu, with the text: "l'essence des lois est d'exprimer la volonté générale."\(^4\) Even a specific paraphrase of Rousseau, such as that in the Ami des Lois which begins "l'homme est né libre", and goes on to claim that the Government is the agent of the people and not a party to the social contract, continues with an appeal to historical precedent that reaches as far back as Tacitus.\(^5\) None the less, there was a difference of emphasis between the two schools. Where the traditionalists stressed the divided nature of sovereignty, the advocates of a contractual theory insisted that legislative power belonged to the people alone. The Moniteur, ou Suite au Réveil d'un Français took up a specifically Rousseauist attitude. "Dans la nation seule existe la source de tous les pouvoirs politiques. . . . Le pouvoir du prince n'est donc jamais qu'un pouvoir secondaire et dépendant, puisque sa force morale

\(^{1}\) Assemblée des trois Ordres de la Province de Dauphiné, 21 July 1788, vol. iv.  
\(^{2}\) Discours prononcé par M. Barou du Soleil, vol. vi.  
\(^{3}\) Vol. viii.  
\(^{4}\) Mémoire au Roi, par la Noblesse de Dauphiné, vol. iii.  
\(^{5}\) Vol. iii.
derive de la volonté générale. . . . Le pouvoir des états est donc supérieur à celui du monarque."

This division between the two theories is illustrated by a pamphlet which attacks the assertion, "répétée dans certains écrits que, la volonté générale étant la loi, le pouvoir législatif entier . . . appartient à la NATION ", on the ground that there is no historical precedent for this in England or France. In general, however, both Montesquieu and Rousseau were grist to the anti-absolutist mill, and both were linked by the author of the Questions d'un bon Patriote, who stressed their joint popularity: "On étale, on répète, tout ce que Montesquieu et Rousseau ont si bien déduit contre le Despotisme."

Both themes could be applied locally as well as nationally and the Recueil emphasizes the appeal to local sovereignty in Brittany, Normandy, Artois, Metz, Lorraine, Franche-Comté, Provence, Roussillon and Béarn. In most cases the parlements, speaking in the name of the nation provençale, etc., declared that legislation had no local validity unless locally registered. All the national arguments were reproduced in miniature. The liberties of Dauphiné were traced back—through forty-five pages—not to the Franks, but to the Allobroges. The pact of association between Normandy and the French Crown "a tous les caractères du contrat social des Normands". Brittany claimed similar status for the marriage contract of Anne. Such reasoning could be extended downwards to the municipal level. The toulousain patriot has already been quoted as declaring that "les droits naturels des municipalités, communs à tous les hommes, sont inaliénables, imprescriptibles, éternels comme la nature qui en est le fondement ". The roots of revolutionary fédéralisme lay close

1 Vol. viii.
2 Essai sur la Nature, l'Ordre et la Forme des Instructions qui peuvent être données par la Province de Dauphiné à ses Députés aux prochains États-Généraux, vol. vii. This appears to be a reply to the Instructions sur la Conduite à tenir dans les États-Généraux, par les Représentants des Provinces, vol. ix.
3 This Rylands pamphlet (R 83109) is not included in the Recueil.
4 Lettres d'un Avocat au Parlement de Dauphiné à un Milord Anglais, vol. iv.
5 Extrait des respectueuses Representations que presentent à Monseigneur le Garde des Sceaux, les Officiers du Bailliage d'Orbec, vol. viii.
6 Avis d'un Toulousain patriotte à ses Concitoyens, vol. v.
to the surface in the France of the Ancien Régime. The most vigorous assertion of local independence came from Brittany.

Il n'y a aucune loi qui ne devienne particulière à la Bretagne, dès qu'on veut l'exécuter dans cette province. ... Les états-généraux mêmes ne peuvent rien sur l'administration de la Bretagne, parce qu'elle se réunit, en corps de nation, parce qu'elle a tous les deux ans ses états-généraux, parce que c'est là, et nulle part ailleurs, c'est dans cette assemblée, et dans le parlement, qu'elle est représentée et défendue.¹

It was Portalis, however, who tried to find a contemporary justification for what might appear to be a mere historical anachronism. He maintained, in an argument that events were soon to make curiously ironical, that the expansion of European states had destroyed their national identity. "Il n'y a presque plus de caractère national chez aucun peuple." Beneath the state there therefore remained the local patrie, the nation provençale, which had the right to verify its own laws. If law were to conform to the volonté générale, it must be within Provencal terms of reference, and the theories of Rousseau were enlisted in support of local particularism.²

No doubt much of this discussion was familiar to the habitués of the parlements although the language employed was probably more forceful than in the past. The lawyers had been accustomed to disguise their limited professional objectives behind inflated general theories. If the revolt of 1788 had been followed by a generation of grumbling peace, it would be possible to discount its polemics as a fire of straw. In fact, it ushered in, if it did not actually precipitate, a revolution. Before the first movement had subsided, the country was already discussing the impending elections to the Estates-General. This overlapping probably led to the lawyer's speculations on sovereignty reaching a wider public than had formerly been customary, and it was unfortunate for Louis XVI that he had to confront the Estates General, on which he was dependent for financial assistance, so soon after a noisy and nation-wide debate in which the royal prerogative had been roughly handled. Moreover, men used to the discussion of political rights in terms of a social contract were likely

to regard the first meeting of the Estates General since 1614 as an opportunity to negotiate a new contract between king and people, rather than a return to the traditional practice of the monarchy.

As we have seen, educated opinion overwhelmingly rejected the claims of royal absolutism, unless the *Recueil* presents a completely distorted picture of the balance of forces. Different theories had been advanced concerning the nature and location of sovereignty. Indeed, the Revolution was scarcely to throw up an idea on the subject that had not already received an airing in 1788. The attitude behind the Constitution of 1791—that the king shared his legislative authority with representatives of the nation, both being held to embody the *volonté générale*—was perhaps the most common.\(^1\) Even this comparatively moderate view had awkward political implications with elections to the Estates General in the offing. It was at times accompanied by the argument *à la Montesquieu* that fundamental laws, being the joint products of king and "nation", could not be abrogated by the monarch alone. "*Le roi ne peut renverser les lois établies*," declared the author of *Les quand, les si, les mais, les car.*\(^2\) More frequently, the advocates of constitutional partnership insisted that in the last resort sovereignty resided with the people, whose implied assent was the source of royal power. "*Les rois tiennent leurs pouvoir des peuples : eux seuls ont le droit de se donner un gouvernement, une constitution.*"\(^3\) "*Le pouvoir du prince dérive du peuple. Le peuple a donc nécessairement le droit de nommer ses représentants sans l’impulsion de l’autorité royale.*"\(^4\) From this position it was a short step to the attitude which dominated the Constitution of 1793: sovereignty resided exclusively with the people and was exercised by their representatives, the executive being a mere agent of the popular will and subordinate to the legislature. "*Nous naissons tous citoyens, nous sommes tous enfants de la patrie, avant d’être sujets du roi. Le roi n’est que le premier sujet de son royaume.*"\(^5\) "*Je suis Roi. Qui m’a

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\(^1\) For a good example of this see *Réflexions sur le Poulvoir législatif en France*, vol. viii.

\(^2\) Vol. viii.

\(^3\) *Commentaire sur l’Arrêt du Conseil d’État du Roi, 20 June 1788*, vol. iii.

\(^4\) Avis aux Provinces, vol. iv.

\(^5\) *Lettre à M. le Baron de Pxxx, Officier des Gardes Françaises, sur les Devoirs du Militaire français*, 7 June 1788, vol. viii.
couronné? La Nation. Et pour quoi? Elle ne m'a pas donné le droit de contrarier ses voeux, de lui faire violence; et tous mes pouvoirs légitimes, je ne puis les tenir que d'elle. . . . Le Monarque n'est que le premier commis de la Nation." 1 Most explicitly of all: "Les états-généraux du royaume possèdent donc exclusivement l'autorité souveraine. . . . Dans la nation seule existe la source de tous les pouvoirs politiques." 2 Even the Robespierrist conception of a republic of virtue, that eighteenth-century anticipation of the Marxist utopia in which the repressive state would have "withered away", was foreshadowed in the pamphlet read to the Breton nobility. "Un roi peut-il exister avec un bon gouvernement? Oui; mais avec plus de vertus, les hommes n'en auraient pas besoin. . . . L'état de la royauté est utile au gouvernement des nations corrompues." 3

The question at issue is not the originality of such speculation: one could trace back the ideas in the Breton pamphlet at least as far as Montesquieu's parable of the Troglodytes. 4 No doubt many more of the views advanced in 1788 were the familiar clichés of the parlements in their long running fight with the absolute monarchy. Nevertheless, the renewed eruption of controversy, in publications that spread far beyond legal circles, must have contributed to the education of the public opinion which formed so formidable a force in 1789. So far as political theory is concerned, it is impossible to separate the "Pre-Revolution" from the revolutionary crisis itself.

III

There is another important respect in which the actions of 1788 anticipated and perhaps prepared the way for subsequent events, or perhaps one should invert the perspective and say that the events of the Revolution had not always the special character that is frequently assumed, but merely prolong attitudes and experiences which originated in the Ancien Régime. The crisis of

1 Les Réflexions et la Résolution d'un bon Roi, Recueil de Pièces Intéressantes, Sens, 1788, p. 57.
2 Le Moniteur, ou Suite au Réveil d'un Français, vol. viii.
3 Le Bon Sens aux Français, vol. viii.  
4 Lettres Persanes, nos. xi-xiv.
1788 produced situations closely parallel to those of the following year, and the reactions of the participants, their language, political symbols, fears and prejudices, were already those of the revolutionary period.

The communication to the regional parlements of Lamoignon’s Edicts of 8 May produced a number of incidents that foreshadowed the séance royale of 23 June 1789. The royal commands were transmitted to assemblies which considered themselves to have some representative functions, in the presence of considerable bodies of troops. The law-courts were then locked and put under military guard. Protesting against their expulsion from their premises, the Dijon Parlement declared, “Nous devons . . . nous réunir partout où nous trouverons sûreté dans nos délibérations”.1 A year later, the deputies were to swear, at the Jeu de Paume, “de ne jamais nous séparer de l’assemblée nationale, et de nous réunir partout où les circonstances l’exigeront, jusqu’à ce que la constitution du royaume soit établie et affermie sur des fondements solides”. More striking, perhaps, is the way in which the meeting of the Breton Estates in December 1788 anticipated the opening of the Estates General. The Breton Tiers demanded both doublement and the vote par tête as the means to securing the abolition of the fiscal privileges of the aristocracy. They refused to constitute themselves as an Order or to allow the Estates to transact any business until their constitutional demands had been conceded. When one remembers the rôle of the Breton deputies and their Club in 1789, the continuity of the political campaign that began in the previous winter is undeniable.

The language used by the protagonists of 1788 was frequently that of the Terror. There was some justification for Linguet’s acid comment: “Les papiers publics ont tous retenti de ces cris d’un fanatisme réel et intéressé contre un despotisme chimérique”.2 “Pendant quatre mois de cette année on n’a cessé d’outrager, de menacer, de maudire les Ministres encore en place, avec une license, une publicité, une fureur, qui n’a jamais eu d’exemple, même en Angleterre.”3 The language was not merely violent, it

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1 Protestations du Parlement de Bourgogne, vol. iii.
2 Annales, no. 112, p. 475.
3 La France plus qu’Anglaise, p. 103.
provided the later revolutionary orators with an inexhaustible mine of clichés. The parlements and conseils souverains of Rennes, Rouen, Metz, Nancy, Dijon, Grenoble and Pau all denounced Brienne and Lamoignon as "traitres à la patrie." Linguet objected to "la formule devenue vulgaire, qui les déclare infâmes et traîtres à la patrie." The Grenoble Parlement added "perturbateurs du repos public, faiteurs du despotisme," for good measure. The Bailliage Royal of Boulay created the category of "mauvais citoyen," the fore-runner of the future "suspect."

The passion for ready-made hyperbole which makes many revolutionary speeches so painful to read, was already well-developed. "Tyrans" were encensés, "despotisme a hydre" but such "monstres expiraient." The ducs et pairs and the Princes of the Blood were the first "enfants de la patrie" and Louis XVI was to win the title of "restaurateur de la patrie"—a reasonably close approximation to that of "restaurateur de la liberté française" which was actually accorded him on the night of 4 August 1789. There were "dtoyens" everywhere, but the use of the term "aristocrate" was more ambiguous. For Linguet, it was an abusive expression, to be applied to the parlements. In a similar way, the Paris Parlement defended itself against the ministerial charge of attempting to establish "une aristocratie de Magistrats." For the author of the Commentaire the word seems to have meant the "noblesse de cour": "Il y a longtemps que la France est moins une monarchie qu’une aristocratie de courtisans." Others, however, regarded the epithet as favourable. All monarchies except

1 Annales, no. 114, p. 97.
3 Second Arrêté extrait des Registres des Délibérations du Bailliage Royal de Boulay, 18 May 1788, vol. ii.
5 The author of the Tiers-État éclairé ; ou ses Droits justifiés, (vol. ix) assumed that "dtoyens" were also "citadins," and referred to all countrymen as "agronomes.
6 Annales, no. 118, p. 361, no. 120, p. 459.
7 Très humbles et très-respectueuses Remontrances du Parlement de Paris au Roi, 30 April 1788, vol. ii.
Montesquieu’s old bête noire, Turkey, were said to be “tempérées par une espèce d’aristocratie”. This ambivalence reflects the confused loyalties of 1788, when the parlements were both privileged bodies and advocates of constitutional reform. It was not until the Estates General had appropriated the latter role and the parlements turned to the monarchy for protection that aristocrate could assume its familiar counter-revolutionary connotations.

But already in 1788 the soldatesque was generally effrénée, with its “haches levées sur les portes du temple des lois”. The long-suffering officers, well aware how the regiments of Austrasie and Royal Marine had held their fire under the bombardment of the Grenoble tuiles, objected to their reputations being thus butchered to make a magistrates’ holiday. An anonymous militaire replied,

Nous n’étions pas les vils instruments de la volonté despotique des moteurs [sic] de la tyrannie. . . . Nous avons raisonné des ordres absurdes, et contraires même à notre délicatesse. . . . Si les ministres n’ont pas réussi, c’est que certains d’un refus démontré par nos opinions, ils ont craint de compromettre les faibles restes d’une obéissance passive, qui devient nulle lorsqu’on réfléchit, et qui n’existe aujourd’hui que dans les âmes faibles et ambitieuses de ceux que la faveur et les grâces placent, plus que leur merite, à la tête de chaque réunion individuelle. C’est aux subalternes seuls que sont départies la force et l’énergie.

One wonders how many of the subalternes remembered the arguments they had used against the noblesse de cour when the same language was turned against them by the rank and file in the next two or three years. The Recueil contains other pamphlets by militaires and officers of the Gardes Françaises, apologizing for their actions in May 1788—“il est douloureux et affligeant pour nous d’avoir été et d’être encore les instruments du despotisme”—or promising never to turn their arms against the nation. “Je suis militaire, mais homme. . . . Je naquis citoyen . . . et je suis devenu soldat.”

1 Le Judicium Francorum, vol. viii.
2 Discours de de la Boissière, avocat-général au Parlement de Dauphiné, 17 November 1788, vol. vi.
4 Arrêté des Officiers aux Gardes Françaises, 1 June 1788, vol. viii.
5 Profession de Foi d’un Militaire, vol. i v.
franchir . . . [The Ministers] n’eurent jamais la puissance de persuader à Louis qu’il peut avilir ses soldats, et qu’il trouvera leurs bras prêts à mettre leurs concitoyens dans les fers.”¹

At times the eloquence of the rebellious aristocracy could have been quoted in the Jacobin Club in the year II without altering a syllable. A citoyen dauphinois complained of the exclusion from the local Estates of the anoblis with less than a century of noble lineage, of whom he was perhaps one, “O équité sainte! rayon émané de la divinité! Toi que la main bienfaisante de l’Être Suprême grava en caractères ineffacables dans le coeur de l’homme en le créant et en le destinant à vivre en société”². D’Eprémesnil was a virtuoso of grandiloquence and the style larmoyant. His speech on the occasion of his arrest on 6 May began with the Gauls sacking Rome—where the senators, as usual, awaited them on their chaires curules—and continued with defiance of Agoult’s troops. “Qu’ils viennent souiller de car­nage ce temple, et égorger sous les yeux et sur l’autel de la justice, ses ministres, ses glorieux martyres! O ma femme, O mes enfants! Vous que je ne puisse pas même embrasser, vous que je ne verrai peut-être jamais....”³ He might perhaps have reflected, on his way to a brief and comfortable exile on the île Sainte-Marguerite, that those who spoke too much about égorgements might be helping to make them more likely. But perhaps the palm for the typically revolutionary combination of classicism and hyperbole should go to the femmes de Dauphiné who threatened the king with the tactics of Lysistrata: “Il pourrait arriver . . . que nous ne voulissions plus donner de citoyens à l’état!”⁴

There are other ways in which the ideas and assumptions of 1788 proved prophetic. As might be expected, the attitude to the Church which was to lead to both the sale of Church property and to the Constitution Civile du Clergé was rooted in the past. The Recueil contains several examples of anti-clericalism, generally directed against the upper clergy. Le Franc de Pompignan’s defence of Divine Right brought an indignant reply in which an

¹ Respectueuses Représentations des Militaires de France au Roi, vol. iv.
unkind comparison was made between apostolic poverty and the condition of the Church in France. "Est-ce bien religieux cela, que de voler les pauvres laboureurs pour avoir de quoi faire divertir les fainéants, certains beaux messieurs de la cour, qui nous regardent d'un air si fier?" Anti-clericalism did not spare the lower clergy, accused in Dauphiné of neglecting their parishioners for their silk-worms, living well at the cost of disregarding the maintenance of their church buildings and charging excessive fees for their casuels. The radical arguments of 1790 were already in evidence: "Les biens dont vous jouissez ont été donné à l'église et non pas à ses ministres. Ce sont les fidèles qui constituent l'église; vous n'êtes que la partie enseignante. Vous êtes incapables de posséder: votre royaume n'est pas de ce monde; le temporel ne vous regarde pas."

The controversy of 1788 anticipated the views of the moderates as well as those of the radicals. Men were already warning that the pursuit of equality would spread from the destruction of privilege to general economic levelling. That implausible bogey, the loi agraire, was chilling the spines of the credulous before the Estates General met. In December 1788 came a warning about the dangers of "un nouveau PARTAGE des terres". Also from Dauphiné came the advice "rappelez-vous toujours ces funestes effets qu'entraînèrent les lois Agraires".

Characteristic also of both 1788 and the revolutionary period was the assumption of a state of war between the two sides, whose mutual hostility was greater than that between France and her possible foreign enemies. "Nous sommes dans un état de Guerre, et nous n'avons d'autres ennemis que les Ministres." The noblesse de Dauphiné, with its argument that the defence of the frontiers was less important than the protection of the king from

1 Lettre de M. Blanchard, Magister du Village de Moivieux, à M. Georges Le Franc de Pompignan, Archevêque de Vienne, vol. iv.
2 Avis aux États de Dauphiné, séants à Romans, vol. vii and ix.
6 Avis aux Provinces, vol. iv.
his domestic enemies, was already anticipating Robespierre's "le véritable Coblentz est en France." \(^1\)

The powerful symbolism which is inseparable from the Revolution did not merely correspond to the moeurs of the Ancien Régime but had in part been created before 1789. The bonnet de la liberté had already made its appearance.\(^2\) The cheerful members of the Conseil d'État sous le Signe de l'Écrevisse dated their ironical arrêt of 21 June 1788, l'An de la refonte de la monarchie.\(^3\) Most striking of all were the triumphant fêtes which celebrated the victorious return from exile of the parlementaires in October 1788. The careful stage-management at Grenoble, the martial music, the laurel crowns and their bearers, "jeunes enfants, vêtus de robes blanches", since "c'est par les mains de l'innocence que la vertu doit être couronnée", all suggested a mise en scène by David.\(^4\) Even more prophetic were the festivities at Dijon, where a jeune divinité symbolizing the patrie, accompanied by children representing the different orders of citizens, presented the premier président with a bouquet and a laurel crown and read a poem in his honour. The société des patriotes had built a char de triomphe comprising "plusieurs rangs de gradins, sur lesquels siégeait une troupe de petites divinités—la France, la Liberté, Minerva, la Religion, la Justice, la Paix, l'Abondance", together with "la Patrie, les Muses et les Beaux-Arts".\(^5\) By 1794 la Religion, la Paix and l'Abondance might have been somewhat out of place but the costumes of the rest could still have served, and if the jeune divinité had a younger sister, she could no doubt have appeared as the déesse Raison, wearing the same robes.

In all these various aspects, therefore, there was no hiatus between the "Pre-Revolution" and the Revolution proper, but rather a continuous movement whose ideas, attitudes, language and imagery were rooted in the France of the Ancien Régime. The participants changed and the revolutionary actors were

\(^1\) Mémoire au Roi, par la Noblesse de Dauphiné, vol. iii.
\(^2\) Médailles à frapper, avec des Légendes sur les Événements présents, vol. viii.
\(^3\) Arrêt du Conseil d'État, vol. iii and ix.
\(^4\) Récit des Fêtes données à Grenoble, les 12 et 20 octobre, au Retour du Parlement, vol. v.
\(^5\) Récit succinct de ce qui s'est passé en Bourgogne, et notamment à Dijon, vol. ix.
mostly drawn from humbler ranks of society than their distinguished predecessors, but the *sans-culottes* probably took many of their standards in good taste from their social superiors. What the Twentieth Century may be tempted to regard as characteristic of the mentality of the *petit peuple*: political pageantry, a weakness for grandiloquence, a peculiar combination of sentimentality and self-dramatization, was probably true of French society as a whole, especially in the provinces, in the late Eighteenth Century. To divorce the Revolution from its immediate antecedents is therefore to risk misinterpreting political events by isolating them from a social and intellectual context in which continuity was paramount.